



Rethinking Public Participation in Citymaking within a Global Southern Context: The Case of Amman, Jordan

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Abstract

In early 2011, when protests erupted in the Arab region, most people, whether locals or foreigners, were caught by surprise. Authoritarian rule and culture had always seemed deeply embedded in the region, and citizens appeared to have adapted their lives to this fact. The demand for the downfall of the regime targeted entrenched structures characterised by corruption and autocracy, limiting the people's freedoms. Although the uprisings ultimately fell short of realising the aspirations and expectations of those involved, a number of manifestations of change in social, political and cultural life had emerged, calling for a profound rethinking of normative conceptualisations such as democracy, participation and liberty, in different socio-spatial aspects of the city. In the Jordanian context, which is the focus of this research, new grassroots activism aimed at creating novel spaces of participation in the production of the city emerged, creating new possibilities for alternative political ideas to surface beyond the formal confines of planning and development. In this light, this dissertation aims to understand the different approaches to public participation in citymaking in Amman and highlight the role of the emerging grassroots participatory approaches in shaping novel modes of engagement and existence within the confines of a restrictive political environment following the Arab Spring. These grassroots initiatives serve as countervailing forces against the authoritarian shaping of public participation and the production of urban spaces.

This dissertation and project complement this approach through empirical research and take a broader societal view to explore the conditions, inventive practices and values under which grassroots initiatives have contributed to promoting democratic change. Focusing on lived experiences of these initiatives in Amman city, the capital of Jordan, I devised a Southern, decolonial and collaborative approach relying on feminist thinking through relational and activist approaches to develop a perspective that questions the new sites of public participation in the authoritarian contexts of the Global South. While the characterisation of public participation as

either ‘invited’, state-led participation or ‘invented’, grassroots sites of resistance and direct confrontations with the state may be useful, I argue that a third mode of public participation is apparent in authoritarian contexts of the Arab region. The grassroots often act in ways that could be characterised as confronting or insurgent but do not aim to challenge the state. Nor are they adequately explained as apolitical, passive and individualistic. Instead, however imperfectly, they use various ways to navigate and manipulate the planning rules and grids of the state apparatus to create alternative modes of engagement in citymaking within a fraught urban landscape. I label this mode existing between rebel resistance and acquiescence as ‘tactical’ participation. Thus, in a broader sense, this project develops a perspective that has the potential to expand theoretical categories and contribute to the evolving lexicon of an alternative mode of urbanisation, enriching urban studies with empirical and practical knowledge from geographies beyond the conventional focus.

Preface

Six years ago, I spent every working day making technical drawings and thinking of design proposals while employed at a prestigious company involved in various large-scale projects under the Amman Plan. This project was meant to be a participatory citizen-centred one. During my time working on this project, I only came across the word ‘participation’ in a single official report from the Greater Amman Municipality. At the time, the term held little significance for me despite my background as a trained architect. Neither in my academic studies nor in my practical experience had I encountered or engaged with the concept extensively. I knew, then, as I had known a long time ago, that something was wrong. I chose to put a halt to my practice to fill the gaps in my knowledge and satisfy my ongoing curiosity. I aimed to find out what ‘participation’ is as well as how and why it occurs. I am forever indebted to Doina Petrescu, Melanie Lombard and Beatrice De Carli for reading my research proposal and seeing the potential in my critique.

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List of Abbreviations

ARDD	ARAB Renaissance for Democracy and Development
Ai	Amman Institute
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CfW	Cash for Work
CSO	Civic Society Organisation
CityRAP	City Resilience Action Planning Tool
GACDP	Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan
GAM	Greater Amman Municipality
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GONGOs	Government-organised non-governmental Organisation
GUVS	General Union of Voluntary Societies
IP	Insurgent Planning
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILCA	Improving Living Conditions of disadvantaged areas in Amman Green Infrastructure
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International non-governmental Organisation
JOHUD	The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development
JOD	Jordanian Dinar
JSB	Japan Supplementary Budget
MC2CM	Mediterranean City-to-City Migration

MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NC	Neighbourhood Committee
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NHF	Noor Al-Hussein Foundation
NYIT	New York Institute of Technology
PAR	Participatory Action Research
quaNGOs	Quasi-governmental non-government organisations
RONGOs	Royal non-governmental Organisations
SWANA	Southwest Asian and North African
TOR	Terms of reference
UML	Urban Micro Lungs
UN	United Nations
UNCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRWA	The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
USAID	the United States Agency for International Development

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research Context

‘To exist and not just resist – to re-exist resisting and to resist re-existing – as subjects, to build projects of society and life despite adverse conditions (of enslavement, dehumanization, racialization, and discrimination), and to surpass and overcome these conditions in order to occupy a social and cultural place of dignity: a re-existence as subjects and with others in radically distinct terms.’

- Walter Mignolo, (2018, p. 95)

On a warm Saturday afternoon in early May, I found myself immersed in the vibrant surroundings of an eastern Amman neighbourhood – or, as presented by the developer, a ‘disadvantaged area’ – observing a ‘participatory workshop’. The workshop was exclusively tailored for women, although the lively presence of children eclipsed the latter. The urban setting allowed the women to gather in small groups and engage in quiet chatting. Despite the organisers’ repeated requests to wear masks¹, most women opted to cover their faces with their *hijabs*, seemingly unaffected as they continued their chatter.

As the session drew to a close, the international developer and organiser teams left the site loaded with many white storyboards and numerous sticky notes and pens. Deciding not to leave (to familiarise myself with and *feel* the context), I introduced myself to a group of four women, two of whom carried small children in their arms. Despite my hijab and my speaking in native Arabic,

¹ This project was conducted amid the COVID-19 pandemic (in 2021–2022) when the wearing of masks in crowded settings was obligatory.

the first question directed at me was: ‘Do you speak Ajnabi² (اجنبى)?’ With a nervous laugh, I responded: ‘Let’s leave Ajnabi (اجنبى) for Ajaneb (اجانب)’ – that is, the foreign language should be left to foreigners. One of the women remarked: ‘They are everywhere in here [eastern Amman] nowadays. They must have loads of money!’ The voice of an older woman interrupted: ‘Let them spend it on papers, pastries and plastic bottled water.’

The conversations continued within the group, evolving into plans to visit Um Sou’ad’s *housh*³ (حوش) (see Figure 1.1). Polite as they were, they asked me if I would like to join them. Despite not knowing who Um Sou’ad was and not being sure whether I was intruding on their private space or talks, I agreed with gratitude. Our 5-minute journey led us to a parallel staircase, in significantly worse condition than the one where we were standing before, to be rehabilitated by the international developer⁴. Gesturing to show me, Um Ahmad⁵ explained:

‘We told them to start with this staircase. It is more dangerous than the one they want to develop (Referring to Staircase No. 7 Project). This one is dangerous; many deadly incidents happened in the past here.’

Um Mazen: ‘They want to choose whatever satisfies the mayor!’

Um Ahmad: ‘What mayor? This is from Al-Ajaneb [the foreigners].’

Um Mazen: ‘Whatever! What is the difference?’

Approaching a small gate surrounded by lush vegetation, Um Ahmad knocked before entering and called out for Um Sou’ad. Without waiting for a reply, she entered and called: ‘Um Sou’ad, where are you? We have a guest from Britain!’. Um Sou’ad, a woman in her late fifties, emerged from her house, wearing the traditional prayer *abay*⁶. Smiling, she shook my hand and invited me to sit down on some wooden seats in the *housh* (حوش). She asked: ‘Do you like my housh?’

² In English, ‘foreigner language’.

³ A small private courtyard within the boundary of a house.

⁴ Staircase No. 7 (explained in detail in Chapter 6) is one of the participatory initiatives undertaken by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Amman. This project is integral to a broader strategic vision aimed at establishing green infrastructure to enhance the development and amelioration of public open spaces. The endeavour is underpinned by a participatory approach, emphasising engagement and collaboration with different stakeholders in the pursuit of its objectives.

⁵ The first woman to whom I introduced myself back at the site of the rehabilitation project.

⁶ Traditional women’s clothes primarily serve a religious purpose and are commonly worn during prayer. Nevertheless, a significant number of women opt to wear these garments frequently, especially when engaged in daily tasks outside their homes in the neighbourhood.

Without awaiting my response, she continued: *‘It is much better than the El-Ajaneb [foreigners] project, isn’t it? I did all of this with the help of those nice people.’*⁷



Figure 1.1: Left: Near the entrance of the housh. Right: Different plants in the housh. Author, 2021

If anything, the familiar mundanity of using public properties as spaces for women’s gatherings makes such instances easier to dismiss as not having political importance of any kind. However, this dissertation is a call to focus on and (re)consider the everyday practicalities of what occurs in these moments in authoritarian contexts and outside the formal spaces of public participation. Within a politically constrained environment such as Jordan, where substantial financial support has been received after the Arab Spring from diverse western donors with the intent of fostering democracy, participation and decentralisation, a critical inquiry into how local social mobilisations and grassroots initiatives materialise to engage in socially and politically significant endeavours is needed. This prompts an examination of how these endeavours counter the capital-led, neoliberal production of spaces and what happens when they do.

Despite Jordan’s claim to be a democratic and stable nation in a region marked by volatility (Elliott et al., 2018), considering the presence of occupied Palestine to the west, the conflict in Iraq in the northeast and recent unrest in Syria in the north, the actual state of affairs is more

⁷ I learned later that part of the *housh* is public property, and the rest is Um Sou’ad’s private property. The women sought a venue for their gatherings and discussions that offered a degree of privacy and was not overly public or exposed to passers-by.

nuanced (see Figure 1.2). Jordan operates as a constitutional monarchy where the king assumes a predominant role in both the political and governance spheres. The endurance of Jordan's 1952 constitution reinforces a robust executive authority vested in the king, a bicameral legislature and an independent judiciary. Consequently, Jordan is often perceived as a 'hybrid regime' (Ryan & Schwedler, 2004) or a 'liberalising autocracy' (Brumberg, 2002), where the regime permits moderate political reforms not aimed at transforming the system but at preserving it (Ryan, 2011), as explained in Chapter 4. Navigating the crossroads between democratisation and a more authoritarian trajectory involves challenges as restrictive laws and governmental pressures impede the functioning of the media, the participation of civil society groups in the socio-political arena and activists' endeavours.

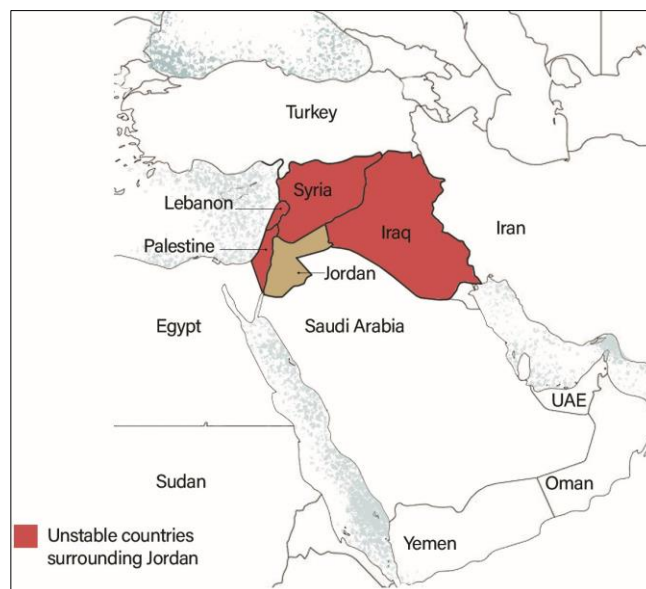


Figure 1.2: Surrounding countries with ongoing conflicts in the vicinity of Jordan. (Author)

Nevertheless, today, the Jordanian state claims to lead a decentralisation turn in governance that brings decision-making closer to citizens and increases their engagement in directing and planning policy interventions. In urban planning, this is realised by inviting people into the formalised planning processes to participate in urban development planning and designing processes. On the one hand, very little is known about these state-led spaces of public participation and their processes in a centralised state like Jordan. It is essential to critically examine and question the transparency and effectiveness of these processes. On the other hand, through empirical research, I argue in this dissertation that public participation is not built by political

institutions or developmental interventions alone. It is the specific conditions under which citizens' and residents' mobilisation, movements and resistance contribute to articulating *change*. In addition to an interest in understanding the formal state-led spaces of participation, this research also looks at the particular constellations that contribute to the production of subjectivity and a shared relationship with the materiality of the city that commonly serves its inhabitants. Importantly, following Thorpe (2017), this dissertation argues that 'planning is more than what planners do, and participation is more than what planners invite' (p. 577), expanding the concept of planning to incorporate the spectrum of activities that help in shaping and making of the city⁸. However, few studies have explored grassroots involvement in urban planning and public participation as vehicles for social transformation in authoritarian and restrictive contexts in the Global South. Despite their limited scope, valuable contributions have been made by researchers focused on the Arab region, such as Bayat (1997, 2000, 2013), Fawaz (2007, 2009, 2017) and AlSayyad (2013, 2021). However, regarding Jordan specifically, very little attention has been paid in the literature to the spaces that the grassroots aspire to create and the paths people take to participate in making their cities. This dissertation not only synthesises what is happening, why it is happening and – hopefully – how we might respond to it in this new realm of public participation in citymaking in Jordan but also what 'public participation' means and what constitutes it.

The latter concern has been raised previously by scholars in many contexts and from different emergent lines of critical thinking. However, the focus of research in planning generally and participation specifically has been on large metropolitan cities of the Global South. The exclusion of specific regions within the Global Southeast⁹ from academic inquiry has prompted apprehensions among scholars with a shared interest in the region (Robinson, 2002; Shin, 2021). Parida and Agrawal (2022) and Shin (2021) argue that academic research tends to focus on a select number of prime cities situated in India (notably Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai), Africa (particularly Johannesburg, Cape Town and, to a lesser extent, Lagos), Asia (e.g. Kolkata, Jakarta and Dhaka), São Paulo in Latin America and Jerusalem and Beirut in the Arab region. This is not a call for mere 'celebration of diversity,' as commonly advocated by liberal and multicultural planning theorists; instead, it is an invitation to develop new perspectives and explanations

⁸ A concept shared by many other strands of thinking, such as insurgent planning and co-production.

⁹ This study uses 'the Global South' and 'the Southeast' interchangeably because both terms represent an epistemology and not merely a geographic location to challenge domination in the production of knowledge and space (See section 1.3 in this Chapter).

through cases that diverge from existing frameworks and acknowledge the productive tensions of difference across and within the South/North (Hammar, 2022).

This research recognises the imperative to shift attention away from the previously mentioned large metropolitan cities and instead investigate the everyday dynamics of smaller and medium-sized towns in the Global South (Parida & Agrawal, 2022), especially those grappling with challenging political conditions, such as Amman in Jordan. Moreover, it directs attention to a regime sitting at a crossing of flows: although Jordan never became a full-blown police state, unlike many other states in the region, it has not allowed full liberalisation either and, for many reasons, has worked against opening up the political system to greater democracy and public participation in all realms of social activity.

1.2 Public Participation: A Western Construct

Although participation was first invoked in the formal political sphere, it has spread rapidly into the diverse arena of civil society (Goodlad & Meegan, 2005). Over time, the term ‘participation’ has been used with different meanings to name a range of activities worldwide (Rahnema, 2009), including recognising people’s voices in citymaking processes. In the early days of the post-positivist shift following World War II (1960s), public participation in planning emerged as a critical response to the modernist and technocratic rational planning rooted in positivist epistemology (Brownill & Carpenter, 2007). Before the 1960s, stakeholders and communities were conspicuously absent from the engagement process, with planners assuming predominantly technical roles as experts overseeing the planning process (Watson, 2016). The new planning paradigm drew on the new postmodernist, post-structuralist and post-positivist lines of thinking, which embraced a contextualisation of theories and disciplines within their social and historical contexts. Additionally, they emphasised the importance of incorporating multiple perspectives and voices in the planning process. This includes involving diverse community groups and stakeholders and recognising the legitimacy of different knowledge systems (Watson, 2016).

This transition gave rise to various theories, including neoliberal and postmodern planning, neo-pragmatism, political economy approaches and communicative and collaborative planning (Allmendinger, 2002). In particular, the latter called for a more inclusionary and deliberative approach to planning (Bedford, Clark, & Harrison, 2002; Legacy, 2017). These new perspectives

emerged in liberal contexts out of a climate that, in strong reaction to the established representative style of democracy¹⁰, was calling for a change in the form of a participatory political system (Brownill & Inch, 2019; Maier, 2001). Nevertheless, in western democracies, public participation was defined in government programmes, ignoring the longstanding activities of community-led planning outside the state (Brownill & Inch, 2019).

To understand the shared principles of collaborative and communicative planning that underpin participatory approaches in planning, it is essential to revisit Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative rationality and his insights into the dynamics of power within dialogical processes (Harris, 2002), on which both theories above depend. Habermas conceptualises communication as a mechanism for fostering mutual understanding among various interests (Brownill & Carpenter, 2007; Forester, 1989; Innes, 1995). In his commitment to safeguarding and broadening democratic principles, Habermas envisions the 'lifeworld' (or public sphere) as distinct from and external to the formal structures of the economy and government, known as the system. Within the 'lifeworld', rational individuals with inherent democratic values can achieve consensus and coordinate actions through communication (communicative rationality). This approach is utilised on the assumption that communities become empowered by participating in decision-making, which generates a sense of ownership over the outcomes and, therefore, a greater emancipatory potential for participation (Forester, 1989; Healey, 1997; Innes, 1995). The presumption of universal citizenship is fundamental to this stance, wherein distinctions among individuals primarily manifest in the realm of speech or ideas and can be surmounted through argumentation. Consequently, the assertion is made that 'the influence of prevailing discourses can be contested through dialogue; through knowledgeable and reflective discourse; through compelling arguments; and through the changes that occur as individuals gain an understanding of and respect for one another across their differences and conflicts' (Healey, 1999, p. 119).

¹⁰ Before the 1960s, the predominant governance model in western liberal countries was characterised by representative democracy, with citizens electing individuals to make decisions on their behalf. However, within the realm of urban and regional planning, this representative structure led to a discernible concentration of decision-making authority in the hands of planners, who assumed a strong role in formulating decisions on behalf of different communities. Skeffington (1969) and Arnstein's (1969) models of participatory planning were some of the very first to advocate for the right of citizens to be directly involved in decisions that affect their lives.

These perspectives travelled to the developing world¹¹ through participatory approaches in delivering the ‘development project’, usually mainstreamed by the World Bank and United Nations (UN) agencies, to ‘civilise the unruly masses by dragging them into procedural democracy’ in the early 1980s (Robins et al., 2008, p. 1084), offering an overarching framework into which an almost limitless variety of projects could comfortably fit (Shannon & de Meulder, 2009). This mission is deeply rooted in the nature of intervolved relations with the colonial histories of European and western culture, which ‘impos[ed] its paradigmatic image and its principal cognitive elements as the norm of orientation on all cultural development, either through political, military or technological power’ (Quijano, 2007, p. 170). This is promoted by developmentalist discourses, which have come to be known as the ‘scientific’ form of knowledge in the last 50 years and privilege the West as the model for development. These discourses offer colonial thinking on how to obtain what the West appeared to have (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 22) by treating the ‘Other’ as ‘underdeveloped’ (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012), excluding and ignoring subaltern knowledge (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 23).

In spatial and urban planning, these processes were seen as a response to the international urgency of the claimed *uncontrolled* crescendo of urbanisation in the Global South (Shannon & de Meulder, 2009). In the last decade of the 20th century, planning¹² became a critical tool in the development agenda as it introduced the dream of designing society by creating an urban-based civilisation in many parts of Africa and Asia. Such designed societies were characterised by growth expressed in master plans, political stability and rising living standards, echoing earlier modernist approaches to planning. They were designed to be delivered by experts from the ‘developed’ world with the help of international organisations while overlooking the rich local traditions, distinct values and lifestyles in these contexts (Escobar, 2009, p. 148).

¹¹ Despite the current global inclination to replace the terminologies of ‘developing countries’ and the ‘Third World’ with the term ‘Global South’ due to its more natural and appealing connotations, international donor agencies persist in categorising their projects using the old, traditional terminology.

¹² Escobar sees planning in the ‘Third World’ as ‘the central technique of development’. Planning redefines social and economic life in accordance with the criteria of rationality and efficiency, which are consistent with the history and needs of a capitalist, industrial society but not with those of the ‘Third World’. Escobar argues that the elites of these countries appropriated the European ideal of progress and ‘development’ in the ‘form of the construction of a prosperous, modern nation through economic development and planning, and when the living conditions of most people worsened and the traditional social systems were disrupted, the hold of planning grew ever stronger’. Those elites saw planning as a tool for social change because of its irrefutable scientific nature. Over the years of ‘development’, this planning process was facilitated in these countries through successive development strategies, of which ‘*participation*’ is one example (Escobar, 2009).

However, the participatory turn in planning received numerous critiques and refinements by early proponents and others. Primarily catalysed by the ‘cultural turn’ in social theory in the early years of the 2000s, there has been a heightened focus on understanding how culture and context influence knowledge and behaviour (Storper, 2001). This shift has significantly influenced an essential aspect of planning theory, explicitly addressing how planning can operate in situations characterised by social divisions and conflicts. Amalgamating cultural, political and economic perspectives on diversity and considerations of place and location, planning theorists have created the concept of ‘located politics of difference’ (Watson, 2006). Moreover, as shown by the failure of participatory development projects on the ground, ‘through routinisation, the capture and co-option of schemes, the reproduction of the power of village elites is both familiar and unsurprising’ in the Global South (Williams et al., 2014, p. 94). According to Miraftab (2018), the conceptualisation of participatory professional planning in liberal ideals ‘obscures, and at best is unable to address, complex layers of conflict, oppressive power, and imposition’ (p. 277).

The critiques and refinements of preceding participatory planning theories, notably communicative and collaborative planning, as well as participation in development have incorporated insights from various social science perspectives, such as feminism, inclusion, post-political considerations, race, ethnicity, informality, governmentality, insurgency and agonistic principles. These endeavours have contributed to the expanded conceptualisation of participation, transcending its traditional confines as contributions to processes overseen by the state and professionals. The broadened conception now encompasses more extensive activities conducted by citizens, groups and institutions. Current debates on public participation exhibit a distinct bias, either focusing on understanding ‘invited’ public participation in formalised planning processes (Cornwall, 2002, 2004) or exploring ‘invented’ spaces that citizens create to challenge existing laws and the status quo (Miraftab, 2004). This paradigm shift recognises the significance of alternative practices outside and beyond state-led participation initiatives. Building on previous perspectives, Frediani and Cociña (2019) usefully characterise participation as planning to capture the broader spectrum of activities, efforts and practices led by civil societies beyond the professional boundaries of citymaking. The authors referred to the Southern theorising perspective, which challenges existing knowledge production and circulation geographies to understand ‘participation as a practice of producing the city’ (p. 6).

These shifts echo the decolonial critique and post-development theory that emerged in Latin America in the late 1980s out of questioning both the ability of the Northern theories to understand

other worlds and the very objective of the development project as well as the way these shifts represent other worlds¹³. Proponent theorists looked to uncover *other* ways of understanding in indigenous context-specific knowledge (Mignolo, 2014), while others argued that cities cannot be understood without first being acknowledged as post-colonial sites given that the colonial past shapes the present (Jacobs, 1996). Moreover, it is dangerous to keep transferring knowledge only one way as context-specific knowledge is potentially lost or codified as ‘backward’ and wrong (Williams et al., 2014). In this context, the present study advances existing arguments and debates, recognising the role of public participation in a broader sense that encompasses a wide range of people’s experiences, particularly in the pursuit of creating more inclusive and equitable cities. This perspective draws on a Southern decolonial lens, which holds the potential to address a diverse terrain of knowledge production and practice. It further informs the theoretical understanding of these participatory practices and spaces in terms of both experience and action.

In this sense, the present research considers the Global South not merely as a ‘passive recipient’ of knowledge but as a diverse set of contexts in which concepts and ideas are redefined and possible alternative futures are imagined. Hegemonic knowledge is challenged by offering critical approaches to concepts of participation in urban development in general while considering the knowledge of the locals and, more importantly, the local understanding of these terms, as discussed in the following section.

1.3 Southern Theorising: Challenging Normative Discourses and Unsettling Binaries

‘They want our indigenous land, but they don’t want our bodies. They cannot swallow us but cannot vomit either. They need our labour but want our land. They want us to urbanise but not to their cities; they want us to modernise but not integrate. They want us to live like a shadow.’

- The activist Hussein Abu-Quieder¹⁴, as cited in Oren Yiftachel’s seminar presenting his co-edited book: *theoriSE*, November 29, 2023

¹³For example, in the work of Gustavo Esteva (1987), Wolfgang Sachs (1992), Arturo Escobar (1995) and Majid Rahnema (1997).

¹⁴ Abu Hussein is one of the native Bedouin activists working with Oren Yiftachel in the Naqab region of Palestine.

The failure of urban theory to adequately explain urban diversity and cities in the Global South¹⁵ (Roy, 2011, 2009; Yiftachel, 2006; Watson, 2013; 2009; Brownill & Parker, 2010) reinforces the argument that social sciences cannot be comprised of one universal body of knowledge that is produced in the Global North to interpret the rest of the world (Connell, 2007, p. xi). Feminists and post-colonial/decolonial theorists question the extent to which it is possible to accept Global North normative planning concepts that can apply to all parts of the world (de Satgé & Watson, 2018). Connell (2013) analyses what she terms a ‘political economy of knowledge’, contending that this framework governs the type of knowledge generated in Southern regions, simultaneously marginalising their contribution to knowledge (Watson, 2014). These theorists, among others, argue for going beyond the recognition of regional differences; they pave the way to new frameworks of thinking that cannot be understood without an acknowledgement of global geopolitics of power, often rooted in colonialism, which has set up post-colonial mentalities that elevate knowledge produced in the Global North over that produced elsewhere (McEwan, 2009). This emerging thinking expands on theories derived from practices and experiences in other geographical locations – in the words of feminist scholar Donna Haraway, ‘situated knowledge’ (Connell, 2007; Haraway, 1988; Watson, 2009, 2016). This understanding transcends mere geographic considerations and encompasses dimensions of subjectivity, politics and socio-cultural contexts. It emphasises the inherent subjectivity of knowing that recognises how personal experiences and perspectives shape how individuals interpret the world. Furthermore, ‘situated knowledge’ acknowledges the political nature of knowledge production, highlighting the power dynamics that influence what is deemed valid or authoritative. Lastly, it underscores the deeply embedded socio-cultural contexts in which knowledge is generated, advocating for an appreciation of diverse perspectives and ways of knowing within different communities and cultural frameworks.

In this sense, there is a need for theories and approaches that speak to the physical and social reality of our¹⁶ land, our colour, values and realities. We need a new way to understand the ‘Others’ who produce the urban and place them at the centre. ‘Others’ here are by no means the few urban/architect professionals and academics who can speak on behalf of all, but the

¹⁵ The Global South in this research is not a place but a relational geography (Bhan, 2019, 2022), where ‘the majority hold spatial, economic, political and ecological vulnerability’ (Simone & Pieterse, 2017). This refers also to the geohistorical processes of colonialism and globalising capitalism. Although political colonialism has been eliminated from colonised countries, this power structure is evident in the ongoing unequal relationship between western and Other. The structures of colonisation are now replaced with authoritative restrictive power structures that build on the same ethos and principles of the colonisers.

¹⁶ This stems from my own positionality in this research; refer to Chapter 3, section 3.2.4.

subordinates who seek new ways and alternatives to dominant formal planning often serve elitist profit agendas. The different modes of production built into all kinds of processes must be acknowledged. Therefore, as argued by Mignolo (2007), we need to delink theories from the North/West and learn from ‘Others’ to offer new geopolitics of knowledge (Lugones, 2010). In this context, the Southern theorising project is perceived as a provocation, a tease, a locus of thought (Ortiz, 2022) that recognises ‘Other’ forms of knowledge, such as everyday practices, as forms of planning. More crucially, it is a necessity that aims to bring new angles into the debate on planning and city making. As highlighted by Garth Myers (2014), there is a need for new terms to explain the different urban realities in the Global South, particularly in light of the ‘apparently fading dichotomy of formal and informal given how interwoven they are’ (p. 103).

This thinking through new vocabularies¹⁷ can ‘contribute to delinking from the western thought and find avenues to involve new idioms against universal grammars’ (Ortiz, 2022, p. 75). However, clarifying the dangerous binaries that the terms ‘North’ and ‘South’ can set is essential. Southern theorising does not aim to establish a binary relation between the South and the North. Nor does this research suggest that planning for the South should be separate from planning for the North (Watson, 2014); rather, it calls for imagining urban planning as a global process, where it is possible to source ideas from any part of the world to explain urban processes and their novel responses (Roy, 2011b). Southern theorising offers alternatives that do not represent the power relations in the North. These categories are not distinct or binary divisions between the economic and cultural spheres; they constitute dynamic ‘diagonal assemblages’ (Yiftachel, 2022, p. 20). These assemblages involve a blend of economic, institutional and political elements, encompassing both domination and resistance. Urban societies and relationships have been moulded and stratified through these complex dynamics in recent decades (Yiftachel, 2022, p. 20). Thus, this distinction challenges the coloniality and the white privilege of authoritative knowledge about citymaking practices of knowledge that created unease in the South and elsewhere.

This call to action arises in reaction to the epistemic violence identified in the application of Northern urban theory (Spivak, 1988), for example, colonial powers’ historical dismissal and

¹⁷ This dissertation acknowledges the many different voices and practices that proliferate in the context of public participation in Amman. However, I draw on the feminist ethics of care to reconfigure ways of coming to know and situated vocabularies for understanding public participation and its values in the specificity of Amman city. See Chapter 3, section 3.6.4 and Chapter 9, section 9.5

denigration of indigenous knowledge systems. Consequently, there is a crucial need to promote epistemic justice knowledge production and praxis (Spivak, 1988). The Southern theorising project is seen as a collective political project, wherein the cardinal direction (South) is not an indication of a locality but rather of marginality, a reference to the colonial world. In building this theorising project, many theorists¹⁸ have recently turned to terms such as ‘Southeastern’, ‘Southeast’ or ‘the East’; these different geographies carry epistemological symbolism because various Easts and Souths exist (see Chapter 2, section 2.5). According to Yiftachel (2022), ‘this move attempts to highlight the ‘pluriversal’ understanding of urban change typical of ‘Southeastern’’. However, the Southern theorising project does not attempt to create ‘theories’ for the South or the East as universal theories. Instead, it advocates for a meso-engaged theorisation (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.1) that still acknowledges the idea of generalisation but at the same time does not claim universality (Watson, 2022; Yiftachel, 2022). This sort of methodology requires taking into account the micropolitics of everyday life and how these practices co-constitute the meso level of larger, more visible processes (Miraftab, 2022).

Thinking of the Southeastern turn as a collective political project is finding guidance in anti-colonial/decolonial feminist thinking through its relational approaches, which are able to see the everyday practices and politics of resistance in life-making (Miraftab, 2022). Therefore, Southern theorising and its proponents have called for not only creating disobedience knowledge (Mignolo, 2009) but also learning how to make a praxis of epistemic disobedience that focuses on life-affirming infrastructure and tries to bring life to the centre (Miraftab, 2022). Centring solidarities and care has the methodological potential to serve this theorisation of urban processes from the perspective of subordinate groups (Miraftab, 2022), where practices of radical care change the way we see each other and how the city is produced in terms of territorial circuits but also, more particularly, in the solidarity networks that are sustaining themselves and expanding. In this sense, Southern theorising hopes to build new theories and new vocabularies in language and action by continuously unearthing and dismantling the colonial planning project and building translocal solidarities over a repertoire of resistance and (re)existence (see Chapter 9).

From this perspective, my dissertation acknowledges the epistemological dominance of western theory and praxis in shaping the current debates around public participation in the Global South

¹⁸ For example, Oren Yiftachel, Vanessa Watson, Libby Porter, Jennifer Robinson, Amanda Hammar, Catalina Ortiz, Gautam Bhan, Sophie Oldfield, Faranak Miraftab, Colin Marx, AbdouMalik Simone and H. B. Shin.

and elsewhere. It also highlights resistance to it in very different contexts, through a focus on Amman, Jordan. It seeks to bring to light often-unacknowledged configurations of knowledge in the context of Arab cities in the post-Arab Spring era by exploring grassroots processes of participation. I aim to highlight the importance of capturing what falls outside existing explanatory frames by looking at contextualised empirics and how these relate to and differ from current explanations of public participation. To do this, I adopt a Southern, decolonial approach that relies on feminist lines of thinking to include ethical principles of care and an engaging and moral commitment to challenging the unjust social and political systems of knowing and doing. Thus, I rely on participatory action research (PAR) premises, not merely as a method but rather as a ‘social-political orientation’ (Stewart & Lucio, 2017, p. 537), which guided my commitment to co-production of knowledge towards social justice. In other words, my dissertation brings to the fore practices and case studies and makes them visible in a context where they have long been ignored. Besides, the activist urge in this PhD journey led to the establishment of a collective of grassroots organisations, activists, researchers and others, called *makāna*, which continues and builds on this research and contributes to this decolonial living and pluriversal citymaking. It seeks to promote socio-spatial justice by actively engaging communities and individuals in knowledge building that leads to radical action towards positive change. Moreover, it aims to develop solidarity to confront and reverse a range of issues that collectively impact all individuals involved (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.3 and Chapter 9, section 9.6).

However, in order to position this research within the frameworks of Southern and decolonial premises, I have developed an approach that emerges from drawing on the principles of Southern theorising and feminist thinking, integrating them to serve as both a methodological and theoretical foundation. It extends beyond critique, evolving into a mode of doing that foregrounds the practices of care, relationality, and tactical resistance. By doing so, this framework connects and intersects with notions such as commons, agency, care, relationality, translocality, and time, acting as the method by which concepts like *hara*, tactics, and translation are navigated. Rather than presenting these as isolated theoretical notions, Southern Feminist Theorising proposes that they coalesce in a fluid and horizontal manner, with feminist care as the connective glue.

Leslie Lokko’s work at the Venice Biennale (2023) exemplifies this fluidity, where she highlights the relational practices of African and diasporic architects to decolonise architectural narratives. Lokko envisions architecture as a collective act of resistance and care, much like the process of gathering multiple stories and perspectives to form a cohesive whole. This echoes Ursula Le

Guin's Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction, which rejects linear, hierarchical storytelling in favour of a narrative that gathers diverse elements into a collective container. Both Lokko's approach to architectural practice and Le Guin's metaphor offer alternative ways of understanding space and narrative—as relational, collective, and deeply intertwined with care practices. This resonates with my approach in this project, as I propose a framework that relies on collective, horizontal, and evolving acts of collaboration and co-creation that I adopt as well in my approach to *makāna*, as discussed later.

1.4 Research Questions, Aims and Objectives

This dissertation aims to understand the different approaches to public participation in citymaking in Amman and highlight the role of emerging grassroots participatory approaches in forming new modes of engagement and existence in a restrictive political environment. By critically looking at and beyond formal channels of state-led participation, the research attempts to reveal hidden spots of engagement that are often ignored in the formal apparatus of planning and understand what and how these forms of grassroots activism, which emerged in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, are developing new practices of citymaking to counter the authoritarian production of space. In doing so, the research will critically evaluate and engage with what happens within formal 'invited' and informal 'invented' spaces of participation. Furthermore, it will scrutinise how informal participation practices can foster and propose new modes of communication and negotiation between the state and citizens¹⁹.

Consequently, due to its Southern perspective and guided by decolonial feminist practice, this research engages with civil society, the state and the professions to unsettle and un(learn) hegemonic knowledge and instead co-produce knowledge with the peripheries and promote solidarities that promote decolonising the imaginary towards a more just sustainable future.

This overarching aim will be realised by answering the **main research question**:

How and under what conditions can grassroots activism based on everyday spatial practices foster more inclusive participation in citymaking? How does this counter the top-down authoritarian space production and change the networks of power in post-Arab Spring Amman?

¹⁹ In this dissertation, I use both 'citizens' and 'residents' interchangeably, although in many instances, when I refer to citizens, I do not mean those who have full Jordanian citizenship but also refugees or immigrants. I align my understanding of citizenship with Isin and Nielsen's (2008) approach, which focuses on acts that produce subjects and instantiate ways of being that are political – that is, acts that 'create a sense of the possible and of a citizenship that is yet to come' (p. 4).

This question is complemented by **subsequent research questions**, each aligned with a specific **objective** of this research.

Objectives:

- 1- To understand the ‘invited’ spaces of participation in the authoritarian context of Amman, the actors involved and how the state legitimises its intervention in the making of the city.
- 2- To critically examine the ‘invented’ spaces of participation and the actors involved in the process with a focus on grassroots organisations and activities.
- 3- To implement a Southern decolonial research praxis that unsettles concepts of participation and imagines new ways of thinking and doing.

Subsequent research questions:

- 1- How does public participation articulate Amman’s neoliberal, top-down governance system after the Arab Spring?
- 2- What is the nature of the institutional form of public participation in Amman following the 2011 events?
- 3- What new forms of relationship between citizens (participants) and the government are emerging in the ‘invited’ spaces and how do they manifest?
- 4- What grassroots participatory practices emerge in Amman and challenge the normative top-down structure and how? What are the conditions under which they operate?
- 5- How do they shape the urban everydayness in Amman? How do the formal authorities respond to these spatial practices?
- 6- How can ‘Other’ moments be imagined between the grassroots and the institutional formats to better support a more just approach to participation in authoritarian contexts of the Global South?

1.5 Significance of the Research

The dissertation provides a comprehensive overview of the complex nature of public participation in citymaking in the authoritarian context of Jordan in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The importance of this research stems from a lack of academic discourses conceptualising the many forms and practices of participation driven by either the authorities or the grassroots in restrictive

contexts in the Global South, like the one in Amman, Jordan²⁰ (Khirfan, 2018). It holds the rich potential to contribute to debates around a more situated understanding of ‘Other’ ways of doing participation and citymaking. In a broader sense, the new concepts and practices of participation aim to uncover ‘spaces of possibility for a more equitable urban future’ (Truelove & Cornea, 2021). This is achieved through an appreciation for alternative space-making practices grounded in situated knowledge and praxis. Indeed, these novel concepts and insights have the potential to expand ‘theoretical categories’ (Vasudevan & Novoa, 2022) and contribute to the evolving lexicon of an alternative mode of urbanisation, enriching urban studies with empirical and practical knowledge from geographies beyond the conventional focus.

Moreover, conceiving this research through a Southern, decolonial and activist mode of research aims not only to create a participatory process that taps into and engages with the local knowledge system, wherein the various knowledge systems of the participants can be valued, shared and exchanged (Kesby, 2000), but also to decolonise the imaginary of the normative, formal way of carrying out participation in a way that speaks and communicates with its people by working with them rather than merely writing about them. In this sense, this research delves into creating academia or research ‘otherwise’ (Ortiz, 2022), which can bring ideas, people, imaginaries and writings to support each other in radical spaces of hope and care.

1.6 Thesis Structure

Having delineated the purpose and objectives of this research, this last section of the introduction offers a synopsis of the subsequent chapters in the dissertation (see Figure 1.3). **Chapters 1–4** explain the aim and context of the research as well as the analytical framework and methodological approaches used to build a framework with which to analyse the empirical work in the following chapters. **Chapter 5** examines the actors of participation, who are categorised to investigate their roles further in **Chapter 6**, which explores the invited spaces of participation in Amman. **Chapters 7 and 8** explore the so-called ‘invented’ spaces of participation. Then, **Chapter 9** discusses the findings of all cases and synthesises the new conceptualisations and understandings of participation derived from the contextual data in the previous chapters. The dissertation ends with **Chapter 10**, which provides conclusions and outlines future research possibilities arising from the research findings.

²⁰ No scholarly research has been conducted on public participation in Jordan since the Arab Spring.

The first two parts of **Chapter 2** discuss how public participation is problematised through different academic discourses and debates, most of which come from the western approach to knowledge and theory. Moreover, it establishes the relationship between participation and space following the work of Henri Lefebvre and critical geographers such as Doreen Massey. In the second part of this chapter, the politics of everyday participation is discussed from a Global South perspective, building on a range of concepts such as resistance, urban everydayness and tactics. Together, these form a situated analytical framework that considers how Certeau's (1984) theory of 'tactics' provides a means of understanding participation and its governance in Global South contexts of oppression. **Chapter 3** lays the foundation for the ontological, epistemological and methodological approach that underpins this dissertation. It explains the Southern decolonial approach that also draws on critical feminist thinking and explores different strands such as translocality, care, relationality, PAR, tactical positionality and activist research that constituted my approach in carrying out the process of investigating, examining, collecting, working on the ground, analysing, writing and enacting this research as a whole. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the field methods used to collect data, the reasons why they were chosen and the type of data collected. Furthermore, the chapter explains the analytical procedures used in this research and ends with a discussion of the challenges experienced during the research, not only throughout the fieldwork phase but also in the holistic ethical approach of the study.

This is followed by exploring the empirical setting for the study in **Chapter 4**, which introduces the context of Amman. The chapter starts by explaining the shifting governance of the state due to historical events and local policies that have limited political participation and freedom in the country before focusing on the autocratic governance structure in Amman. This structure manifested in a neoliberal, profit-based urban setting, which was later challenged by the massive protests of the Arab Spring. In **Chapter 5**, to contextualise later analytical chapters, I examine the different actors that claim to produce and facilitate both 'invited' and 'invented' spaces of participation. The chapter also explores these actors' understanding of public participation and how they put this understanding into practice. It concludes with a further discussion of elite circulation among different actors in public participation framework policies and application in Amman.

Chapter 6 analyses two primary organisational case studies. Within each case study, two projects are subjected to analysis and discussion. The organisations involved claim to establish so-called 'invited' participation in post-Arab Spring Amman as a way to produce citizen-led urban spaces

that bridge the gap between the state and the people. The examination of each case in this chapter encompasses an evaluation of the initiation of participation, the underlying motivations, the inclusivity of the process, the tools employed, the projects' overarching goals concerning participation and the extent to which these goals are realised. The last part of this chapter discusses another critical aspect that helps construct the image of 'invited' participation in the context of the multi-layered relationship between the actors and how these relationships create the spaces of participation.

Chapter 7 begins by exploring and questioning the existence of spaces of 'invented' participation in Amman and argues for going beyond the limitation of the concept and opening the way for new meanings of bottom-up participation to be created and imagined. To further understand these new spaces and practices of participation, the chapter explores five case studies (projects and organisations) that create new meanings for participation through their everydayness, novel approaches and situatedness. **Chapter 8** presents a deep investigation of these cases. Their spaces and practices are explained through the tactics used to intervene, negotiate and sustain a process wrapped in multiple uncertainties, as further explored in the last section of this chapter.

In **Chapter 9**, I bring all the cases into a discussion to understand, first, the failure of invited participation spaces to achieve their goals and realise participation and, second, the agency of tactical participation in an authoritarian context of the Global South – that is, that these practices and spaces neither function as insurgents nor remain passive but instead occupy a new area between the 'invited' and 'invented', where modes of co-existence can be imagined as governance structures in hostile Southern contexts. Combining the findings of the empirical chapters, this chapter answers the overarching question of the research posed in the introduction chapter. In the last parts of this chapter, I reflect on what conducting Southern research entails regarding the new modes of practices and knowledge created and implemented. Finally, **Chapter 10** summarises my argument that a Southern decolonial feminist approach allows for understanding public participation in authoritarian contexts of the Global South beyond the normative practices and concepts of participation constructed and imposed by the West. This chapter highlights the dissertation's contribution to knowledge and presents areas for further research.

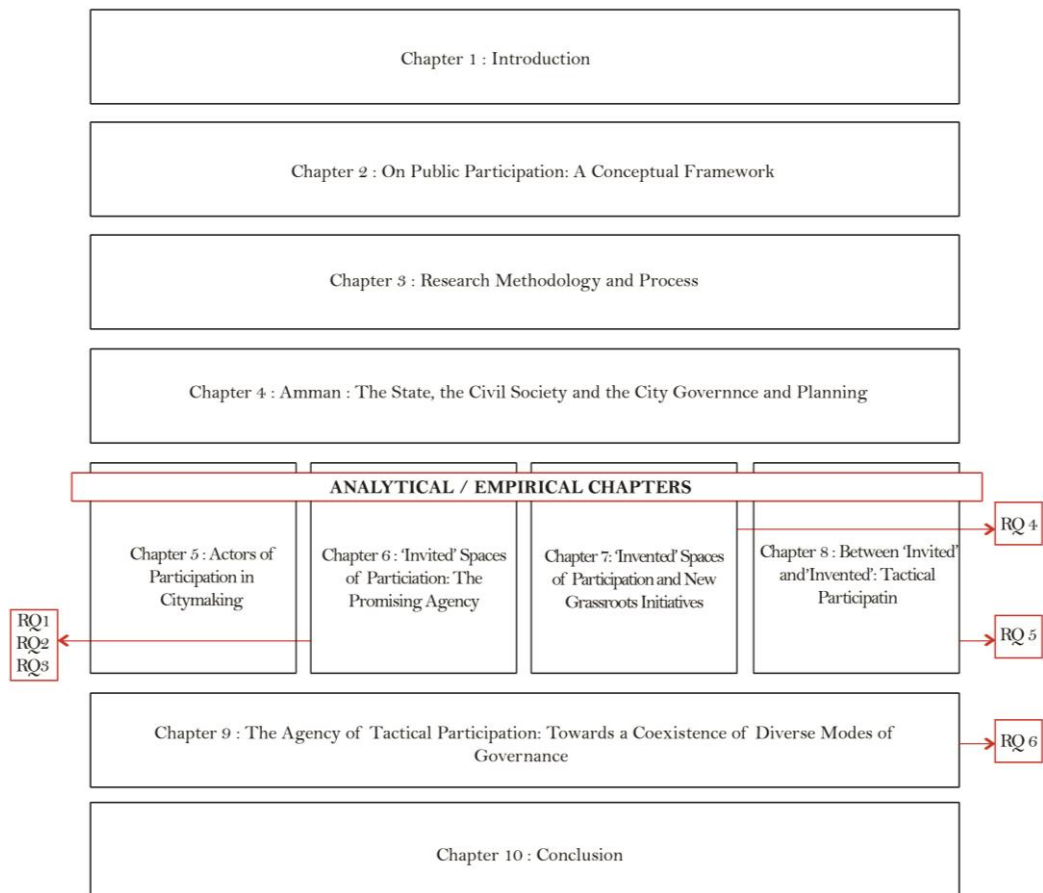


Figure 1.3: Dissertation structure. (Author)

Chapter 2 On Public Participation: A Conceptual Framework

‘There are many ways we resist, but we are resisting just by staying alive. To exist is to resist. (Young man, 25, at the West Bank)’

(Baumung, 2012, p. 31, cited in Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019)

2.1 Introduction

The quotation above is not from a prominent scholar or theorist; rather, it is the words of a Palestinian young man living in the occupied West Bank, articulating his personal approach to resisting colonial occupation. As he argues, simply being alive is a way to resist. From his own context (Palestine), he uses the word ‘sumūd’ (صمود), which denotes a Palestinian value that is not represented in any translation of resistance; its meaning spreads beyond its direct translation to ‘resilience’. To understand the particularities of actions, practices and their values, immersion into the complexities, messiness and realities of everyday life is needed, within their contexts and meanings. This chapter aims to clarify and develop a conceptual framework to introduce the issues related to the research questions, which hold the potential to speak from and with the lived experiences of those involved in the research. Before discussing the various roles these key concepts play in understanding the cases analysed during fieldwork, this introduction will briefly overview the genesis and evolution of these perspectives throughout this project’s journey.

The first section of the chapter starts by briefly reviewing the history of discourses on public participation. It offers a critique of some influential theories that have exerted a noticeable influence on policy and the implementation of participation in different contexts. This informed the first stages of the research, notably in structuring my interview questions and fieldwork plan. As I progressed with my fieldwork, I began to understand that the enactments of practices of public participation are spatial initiatives that exhibit differences across the cases. These

variations depend on factors such as the practices' regulation of public expression, goals, methods of engagement, actors involved and cooperation with the authorities. The second section delves into a relational conceptualisation of participation as a spatial practice, exploring its connections to time, experience and events. I argue that these spaces, emerging as a result of the 2011 events in the Arab region, served as platforms for individuals collectively engaged in political activities to voice their demands.

The third section of this chapter was informed by the analysis of the data, which led to a new set of analytical lenses. These lenses enabled a situated understanding of public participation and emergence from the cases under study without presupposing what the significant ideas would be. Hence, the theories and literature covered here emerged as a need from my direct fieldwork rather than being imposed a priori. In section four, I address ongoing debates before transitioning to the concluding theoretical segment. This section draws from specific readings, discussions during fieldwork and 2 years of analysis and writing, involving collaborations with researchers from the Global South. Introducing a 'pluriversal' approach to the built environment and planning, this framework builds on challenges identified in earlier discussions, emphasising the entangled nature of public participation.

Investigating the different approaches to public participation under different political conditions in authoritarian contexts of the Arab region is the main aim of this project. This dissertation focuses primarily on social and political space-related activism, as discussed in the following chapters. In addition to establishing the conceptual and analytical frameworks for addressing the research questions and case studies, this chapter also examines how participation, as both a concept and a practice, could be critically revised and re-appropriated within authoritarian contexts in the Arab region as part of the overarching goal of this dissertation in interpreting the concept of participation and participatory spaces.

2.2 A Brief History of Discourses on Public Participation in Planning

This section seeks to understand the notion of public participation by critically engaging with the concept. The section is organised into four sub-sections. The first sub-section delves into the notion of 'invited' participation spaces, more commonly recognised as a contextual aspect of everyday existence in modern western societies characterised by liberalism, capitalism and

advanced technology (Barney et al., 2016). This perspective has been critiqued thoroughly as the systemic issues associated with the participatory development approach have been scrutinised, including its potential to, among other consequences, ‘obscure, and indeed sustain, broader macro-level inequalities and injustice’ (Cooke & Kothari, 2001, p. 14), as discussed in the second and third sub-sections. The last sub-section extends the discussion beyond state-authorised and planned participation to examine debates on how citizens appropriate and assert their presence in participatory spaces.

2.2.1 ‘Invited’ Spaces of Participation

This discussion builds on the discourse on participation in the introductory chapter. Public participation is often viewed through a normative lens, which is typically intertwined with the legacy of western democracies. These conceptions of participation predominantly centre on the institutional aspects of politics and emphasise that political engagement should be purposefully directed towards shaping public policies, primarily through means such as elections, political parties and parliamentary processes. As a result, participation is intricately associated with normative concepts of citizenship.

In western liberal contexts, public participation emerged as a broad concept for a more inclusionary and deliberative approach to planning (Bedford et al., 2002; Legacy, 2017). Two publications – the Skeffington Report (Skeffington, 1969) and Arnstein’s ‘Ladder of Participation’ model (Arnstein, 1969) – substantially shaped the way that participation was considered and enacted (Brownill & Inch, 2019). While both analyses encapsulated many key arguments about public participation, they defined it within government programmes in western democracies, ignoring the long activities of community-led planning outside the state (Brownill & Inch, 2019). Despite its considerable influence, Arnstein’s conceptualisation of participation around rebalancing power (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007) between the state and the citizens for more just outcomes was later met by a critique centred on oversimplification in theorising power and the ability of citizens to exercise and share power (Sharp & Connelly, 2002). Since then, debates have continued about how to conceptualise power and how other power frameworks can be fixed in the citizen/state dichotomy reflected by the ladder.

In the past three decades, states worldwide have advocated for greater citizen involvement in local democracy through novel forms of local governance. Although these new institutions have the potential to engage marginalised and underprivileged individuals in participation, significant concerns, problems and hurdles are associated with both governance structures and the procedures within them. International aid agencies frequently promote these state-led spaces of participation in less-democratic contexts, in particular, collaborating with the state or the local government to deliver participatory projects with the locals to initiate urban governance. For example, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) have funded states in so-called ‘developing countries’ to open more participatory channels with civil society (Harpham & Boatang, 1997; Pieterse, 2002). These formal arenas, often labelled ‘invited spaces’ (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007), claim to offer opportunities for grassroots participation in shaping local development and governance policies. Nevertheless, because they are established and overseen by the state – in many instances, funded by international aid agencies – they are also bound by numerous constraints. These statutory, state-created and regulated spaces (Mohanty, 2022) reveal very different and far less emancipatory agendas pursued by governments in different contexts where elites and experts can easily dominate these proceedings (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Fung & Wright, 2003; Mohanty, 2007). Hence, they easily undermine and devalue some citizens’ voices by failing to acknowledge the temporal and spatial political geographies onto which they are projected (Lemanski, 2016).

The idea of participation in development can be traced back to the 1966 US Foreign Assistance Act, which aimed to ensure what Cornwall (2006) refers to as ‘maximal involvement of the people in the developing countries in the process of economic development, by promoting democratic private and local government institutions’. The UN endorsed these principles in the 1970s (Chambers, 1997), and participatory and community-based models gained increasing influence in response to the shortcomings of centralised government service delivery (Moriarty et al., 2013). Top-down approaches were perceived as disempowering and inefficient, whereas participatory development empowered the underprivileged to be informed and active participants (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). During the 1980s, the concept of participation underwent a transformation with the rise of neoliberalism and structural adjustment. In this era, ‘beneficiaries’ were expected to play an active role in the execution and bearing of the development costs (Cornwall, 2006, p. 71). Structural adjustment introduced economic reforms aimed at reducing the state’s involvement and bringing service delivery closer to communities, bypassing centralised bureaucratic governments and addressing the issues of political manipulation and corruption associated with top-down

programmes (Ribot, 2002). By the 1990s, participation and decentralisation had become integral components of the broader ‘good governance’ agenda, which, as per a World Bank report, promoted ‘involvement by NGOs and communities to enhance service delivery significantly’ (World Bank, 1997, pp. 3, 60). To this day, participation remains a prerequisite for development funding in numerous Southern countries. Notably, academics have advised caution regarding the utilisation and abuses of participation in development processes (Cornwall, & Brock, 2006; White, 1996), as well as the disempowering ramifications of neoliberal forms of ‘empowerment’ (Miraftab, 2004).

Although public participation has been practised for many years and remains a key aspect of planning across the world, it has also been a subject of much critique. In particular, debates focus on the continuing gap between the rhetoric of participation and the reality of its practical application to influence decisions (for example, Brownill & Carpenter, 2007). Voluminous critiques have been written on the disconnect between the participatory mechanism and planning outcomes, highlighting governments’ frequent lack of attention to the preferences of citizens (Brownill & Carpenter, 2007; Fainstein, 2010; Margo Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000; Rydin, 2007; M. Taylor, 2007; Teernstra & Pinkster, 2016). Planning theorists debate the extent to which communicative rationality (discussed in Chapter 1) prevails and consensus emerges (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Fox-Rogers & Murphy, 2014; Fraser, 1990; Gunder, 2003; M. Huxley, 2000; McGuirk, 2001; Pløger, 2017; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998). Fainstein (2010) noted that there is no automatic connection between just and democratic processes and just outcomes, and the often unrealistic assumptions offer a problematically normative view of what participation should do (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Williams, 2004) rather than a realistic assessment of what actually happens on the ground (Harris, 2002).

In summary, then, although public participation has been implemented widely in cities throughout the world, there is a general consensus in the literature that state-led participatory processes – whether implemented by donor agencies or by the state – ‘failed to translate their idealism that including citizens and civil society in decision-making creates more just and inclusive cities, into practice’ (Lemanski, 2016, p. 3). Moreover, within the field of development studies, there have been critical discussions about the nature and purpose of participation itself (for example, Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Davoudi & Hague, 2015; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Jones, 2003).

2.2.2 Participation: Tyranny or Transformation

In development studies, public participation is argued to be conducted under an umbrella concept of ‘development through cooperation’, which promotes participation as an essential dimension of development that will enable the needs of all to be met (Rahnema, 2009 p. 133). This approach gained prominence in the 1970s as international aid organisations encountered challenges in achieving meaningful impacts on the lives of impoverished populations (Sachs, 1992, p. 117) and suggested the lack of involvement of people as the possible cause for shortcomings. However, the participatory approach has faced criticism, often being characterised as a form of ‘new tyranny’ (Cooke & Kothari, 2001)²¹. This criticism contends that the participatory paradigm is fundamentally flawed because it fails to address underlying structural inequalities and is perceived as a mere facade for top-down development initiatives. This implies that when they engage with ongoing development processes, marginalised populations are limited to negotiating with those in positions of power to secure resources that are more culturally and contextually relevant, typically referred to as ‘aid’, within the confines of the neoliberal framework. In essence, this approach does not seek to challenge the fundamental structural power dynamics (i.e. economic and political) that sustain poverty.

In this view, ‘consultation is used as a means of legitimising already-taken decisions adding a thin veneer of participation to lend the process moral authority’ (Cornwall, 2008 p. 270) while minimising the potential for those with conflicting voices to be heard (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012; Inch, 2012; Swyngedouw, 2005). Objectors argue that although participation suggests ‘bottom-up’ involvement and legitimacy, it merely displaces power from the state to the market and those with real economic power, focusing on decisions that facilitate economic competitiveness and ‘alleviating burdens on the state’ (Brownill & Parker, 2010), ultimately enhancing depoliticisation (Miraftab, 2017b; Watson, 2002). Moreover, Flyvbjerg (1998) highlights that entrenched and powerful interests in the end results of planning influence the operation of power, resulting in outcome inequality while making participation a coercive act and producing new forms of surveillance and control as participation becomes a political technology (Foucault, 1991b). Consequently, Swyngedouw (2005) interprets public participatory schemes as spaces where citizenship is constrained rather than activated.

²¹ For Cooke and Kothari (2001), tokenistic attempts at participation can be categorised into three participation tyrannies. The first is the tyranny of decision-making and control emanating from the authorities overseeing the participatory process. The second is the tyranny of the group, highlighting power dynamics within the collective. The third is the tyranny of method, which dictates the inclusion or exclusion of specific interest groups.

These discussions reveal very different and far less emancipatory agendas pursued by governments that embrace the language of participation (McGuirk, 2001). Elites and experts can easily dominate these proceedings (Fung & Wright, 2003), leading to centralised control. Cooke and Kothari (2001) argue against revising participatory methods, insisting that the entire project of public participation is flawed because it does not challenge structural (i.e. economic and political) inequalities and is merely a mask for top-down development. Yet, scholars have argued that participatory approaches can still be transformative and empowering if implemented within a process of institutional change. Hickey and Mohan (2004, p. 168) assert that participation should be integrated into a project explicitly aimed at confronting prevailing power dynamics rather than merely circumventing them to enhance the technical efficiency of service delivery. Similarly, Cornwall and Coelho (2007) contend that there is potential for ‘invited’ participation spaces to serve as platforms for mobilising and empowering the public in negotiating their demands with the state, thereby evolving into what they term ‘spaces of autonomy’ (p. 14). The authors explore the notion that individuals involved in state-led or established participation spaces may transform these spaces into novel political entities²². Nonetheless, they further underscore the critical role of the state, context and political culture in determining the ultimate outcomes of these spaces.

Criticism of ‘invited’ participation (instigated by the government or international agencies) as potentially amounting to mere symbolic involvement has prompted individuals to take the initiative and assert their own demands (Mohanty, 2022). The following section delves into the politics of the spaces of participation beyond the confines of the state.

2.2.3 ‘Invented’ Participation and its Politics

‘Invented’ spaces of participation are spaces that citizens create or ‘invent’ to challenge existing laws and the status quo, usually through acts such as protests and demonstrations (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Gaventa, 2004; Mirafteb, 2004). As Mirafteb (2004) claims, the grassroots occupy both ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ spaces of participation. However, grassroots activity in the former spaces tends to ‘provide the poor with coping mechanisms and propositions to support survival’, whereas in the latter it ‘directly confront[s] the authorities and the status quo’ (Mirafteb, 2004, p. 1).

²² For more, refer to Cornwall & Coelho (2007), they reveal how participatory spaces could stimulate the creation of new political subjects as well as new subjectivities. For example, in some instances, contexts and conditions, these spaces of ‘invited participation’ could become ‘schools for citizenship’ where people can learn new meanings and practices of citizenship.

According to Miraftab (2004), limiting the recognition of participation to actions within officially ‘invited’ spaces constitutes another state-centred perspective. Approaches to understanding planning, such as insurgent or post-collaborative planning, agonistic participation or movement-initiated co-production, have moved the understanding of planning beyond professional boundaries, in which ‘some forms of participation become the very practice of planning’ (Frediani & Cociña, 2019). By recognising the potential activities and imaginaries produced through bottom-up processes and grassroots initiatives in creating alternative forms of planning (Ananya Roy, 2005; Brownill & Inch, 2019; Legacy, 2017; Miraftab, 2004, 2009b, 2017), Miraftab (2017) claims that ‘invented’ spaces can challenge power and incorporate difference, hoping for broader societal change. These methods of participation go beyond making local knowledge visible or accessible to the ‘experts’; they challenge the set of power relationships that marginalised this knowledge in the first place (Williams et al., 2014).

Much of the knowledge on urban processes and participation comes from research in South Africa and Latin America. For example, the work of Miraftab (2004, 2009, 2018) and Miraftab and Wills (2005) draws its conceptualisation of ‘invented’ spaces of participation and citizenship from the Anti-Eviction Campaign and Anti-Privatisation Forum in Cape Town in South Africa. These spaces constitute entanglements of resistance and direct oppositional practices such as protests, demonstrations and mass mobilisation (Miraftab, 2017; Sinwell, 2010). Furthermore, these spaces are occupied by an agglomeration of grassroots organisations that are explicitly counter-hegemonic and work against the structures of the powerful regime. The investigation of ‘invented’ participation spaces in the academic literature typically revolves around influential, powerful, nationwide grassroots organisations. These organisations have demonstrated an ability to foster solidarity and collaboration with similar entities sharing a common cause, as illustrated by examples like the Treatment Action Campaign (Friedman, 2005; Miraftab, 2006) and the aforementioned campaigns. However, scant attention has been given to micro-scale movements and the everyday practices associated with ‘invented’ spaces of participation in these debates (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2008; Bénit-Gbaffou & Oldfield, 2011).

While many scholars have discussed the dichotomy between ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ participation (for example, Brownill & Inch, 2019; Miraftab, 2004, 2009, 2017), particularly in western contexts or in limited Southern contexts (e.g. Frediani & Cociña, 2019; Miraftab & Wills, 2005; De Carli, 2016; Cawood, 2021; Horn, 2021), the situation in exclusionary political environments

of Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA)²³ is different. Few studies have interrogated the nature of public participation in the Arab region after the Arab Spring events and its impact on the relationship between citizens and the state.

Before delving into the intricacies of public participation in the Global South under restrictive, authoritarian conditions, the next section will elucidate the interconnectedness of participation as an initiative related to spatial dynamics. This discussion will set the stage for a nuanced exploration of the political dimensions inherent in public participation in such contexts.

2.3 Public Participation as a Spatial Practice

The discussions about public participation often include spatial metaphors, such as widening and creating opportunities for citizen engagement or deepening democratic practice (Cornwall, 2002). These arenas of participation convey a sense of space where voices and ideas jostle for attention, where people gather and are bounded in time as well as space. In this sense, a space can be emptied or filled, permeable or sealed; it can be an opening, an invitation to speak or act. Spaces can also be clamped shut, voided of meaning or depopulated as people turn their attention elsewhere (Cornwall, 2004). However, conceptualising participation as a spatial practice underscores the power dynamics that construct the spaces of participation. In this regard, this dissertation interprets space not simply as a physical area containing objects or hosting activities. Instead, it embraces a relational interpretation of space that encompasses its interconnectedness with time, lived experiences and various events (Low, 2017, p. 28). From this perspective, any novel space established for participatory purposes carries vestiges of pre-existing social relationships and earlier encounters with planned interventions in other spaces (Lefebvre, 1991; Long & van der Ploeg, 1989).

According to Cornwall (2004), spaces must be thought of ‘less as concrete locales than as sites that are constituted as well expressive of power relations’ (p. 83). This concept refers to ‘a dynamic, humanely constructed means of control and hence of domination, of power’ (Lefebvre 1991, p. 24). This suggests looking at spaces of participation in terms of how they might be

²³ SWANA is a decolonial and geographical term that represents the various communities located in Southwest Asia and North Africa. It is an alternative term for describing the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. SWANA is a ‘way to distinguish the region in geographical terms, rather than ‘political terms’ as defined by the western world’.

‘conceived’, ‘perceived’ or animated by the citizens (Lefebvre, 1991). As Lefebvre argues, space is not a neutral backdrop for human activities but is actively produced through social practices. Social relations and power dynamics are inscribed in space, and space, in turn, influences and shapes social relations. However, Lefebvre (1991) emphasises the importance of ‘lived space’ or the space of everyday life. This is the space in which individuals navigate their daily routines and activities. Through this lens, participatory spaces are social arenas in which the community has the potential to impact policies, discourses and practices of development rather than geographical spaces that are considered to be empty areas.

The establishment of participatory spaces can often become intertwined with existing power dynamics, potentially reinforcing established structures of authority. Spaces initiated by influential entities may be intentionally delimited through discourse, allowing only limited citizen influence. In doing so, they effectively control interactions and discourage dissent. Conversely, these spaces can also emerge from individuals’ collective practices, performances and re-appropriation efforts. Those actively involved in shaping and occupying these spaces are, as Cornwall (2002) suggests, positioned actors in this process. Importantly, the ‘spatial practices’ described by Lefebvre (1991) in the context of participation shape and are shaped by specific societal perspectives and constitute acts of power, reflecting the dynamic interplay between spatial engagement and the broader discourse on societal structures.

This research looks at both spaces created by the powerful that invite people to participate and the spatial practices in which new emerging collectives are self-organised to foster community participation and agency and claim rights to the city. Understanding these constructs of participation throughout spatial lenses enables an understanding of the positive effects of power as well as its negative effects in the process of creating and further working these spaces. This is crucial for this research as it offers a theoretical framework for understanding the intricate relationship between space, civil society and power, which consequently shapes the spaces the grassroots or the state inhabit and create. Moreover, the various relational operationalisations of space reflect the conception of space proposed by Low (2009), namely, as process oriented, which allows for agency and new possibilities and where the making of the space itself is an act of power. In this realm, rather than dualistically defining these spaces as ‘tokenistic’ or ‘transformative’, ‘invited’ or ‘invented’, viewing participation as a spatial practice helps draw attention to the productive agency of the actors involved as well as the negative effects of power.

Since the publication of Asef Bayat's *Street Politics: Poor People's Movement in Iran on Space-Related Activism in the Middle East* (1997b), which primarily examined the spatial dimensions of participation in waves of demonstrations and activism in the region, demand for more substantial empirical research on the politics of space has been increasing. This is particularly pertinent in light of the Arab Spring uprisings that commenced in 2011. It includes the ways in which the new emerging spatial practices of grassroots collectives mutate as the political context changes, as well as the interconnected dynamics between state and non-state actors within micro-spaces. Intriguingly, despite the prominent roles played by youth activists and grassroots movements during the Arab Spring, there has been a notable absence of studies examining their relationship, involvement and agency within the spatial dynamics of the city. The next section delves into the politics of participation in the Global South broadly but also considers authoritarian regimes within this context. It lays the path to understanding what constitutes participation in the Global South.

2.4 Politics of Participation in the Global South

Different approaches have emerged in the Global South and elsewhere to address the challenges of social and spatial injustices. As discussed in section 2.2, this includes perspectives inviting people to participate in citymaking or advocating for participation activities outside the formalised arena of the state. Both concepts are loaded with political contestations and imaginative potential (Frediani & Cociña, 2019). Whereas the former builds on collaborative approaches and consensus building, the latter draws on concepts of insurgency and resistance (Miraftab, 2009b). Although based on different grounds, that is, affiliated with different sets of groups, the literature argues that the public can still navigate both spaces to practice their citizenship (Miraftab, 2004). However, drawing on the scholarship of Cornwall and Coelho (2007), this dissertation moves beyond the significance of the context when understanding participation to intersect with the emergent call for 'other thinking' that aims at unsettling taken-for-granted assumptions about how planning addresses issues of participation. This call draws on an emerging body of literature that thinks from 'place' about urban issues that challenge the current geographies of authoritative knowledge production and circulation.

The Southern turn helps understand public participation beyond simple dialogue within 'communities' and planners in 'invited' spaces, which is unlikely to overcome major societal

divisions and differing rationalities (Yiftachel & Mammon, 2022) or the direct opposition and resistance in ‘invented’ spaces. Rather than concentrating on existing intellectual traditions, the emphasis is on cultivating ‘alternative perspectives’ aimed at accommodating subaltern knowledge that has arisen in regions with different modernisation trajectories (Harrison, 2006).

This section is divided according to four strands of exploration to facilitate an understanding of the dynamics of public participation in the Global South, extending beyond the formalised planning mechanisms or the confrontational sites of resistance and participation. The first three sections examine the dynamics of civil society’s involvement in citymaking processes. This perspective acknowledges the spectrum of everyday actions undertaken by subordinate communities either collectively or individually across various scales and contexts. The fourth section proposes a tentative position based on different key contributors within the field, which can serve as a bridge between different theoretical traditions and offer a lens through which to comprehend the particularity of the case studies and the context of this research.

2.4.1 Insurgent Social Movements: Rethinking Development Participation

Current approaches in participatory design have generally fallen short of addressing the needs of marginalised urban populations in the Global South (Boonyabancha & Kerr, 2018), as illustrated in the preceding sections, and scholars have long recognised the disparity between intentions and real-world outcomes (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Nevertheless, the outcomes of these top-down initiatives concerning improved democratic processes and stakeholder decision-making have been underwhelming in practice, leaving a persistent gap between the rhetoric of participation and actual citizen engagement (Mitlin, 2021). Regardless of the intended participation objectives, numerous scholars have extensively discussed the shortcomings of development projects in the Global South. These limitations can be attributed to various factors, including the prioritisation of donor organisations’ self-preservation over supporting grassroots movements and political reform (Cawood, 2021). Although aid agencies are ideally envisioned as advocates representing the interests of minority groups, they have frequently faced criticism for their co-option by neoliberal state agendas (Shrestha & Aranya, 2015). These challenges are intertwined with authorities’ reluctance to relinquish control (Mitlin, 2021). Scholars have long emphasised the ‘conflicting rationalities’ in the Global South that reflect societal divisions and differing logics, where world-views and the very meaning of development or planning diverge from the universal set of deontological values shaped by liberal traditions (Watson, 2003, 2006). These divisions are

not easily reconciled through a universalist notion of ‘dialogue’, as observed in communicative and participatory planning (Watson, 2022). Furthermore, scholars like Porter and Barry (2015) argue that contemporary planning theories centred on inclusion, such as communicative planning and radical planning, often fall short of critically examining the historical roots of planning as a colonial and oppressive practice.

In this arena, the recent planning and development debates on public participation have emphasised avenues for bottom-up participation initiated by social movements across the Global North and South, known as insurgent planning (IP). These IP practices are seen as responses to the limitations of participatory planning, particularly its co-optation by the neoliberal state, as pointed out by Shrestha and Aranya (2015). As conceptualised by Sandercock (1999), IP extends beyond mere ‘participation’ to involve active engagement with political power structures and formulating strategic actions. As Sandercock (1999) clarifies, insurgent planning practices are initiated by mobilised communities who take on the role of planners for themselves, a concept that draws inspiration from Holston’s (1995) idea of ‘spaces of insurgent citizenship’ and Young’s (1990) ‘politics of difference’. Furthermore, Huq (2020) positions IP as an oppositional movement that challenges the oppressive dynamics of civil society in heterogeneous neoliberal state conditions. This perspective underscores the significance of IP in addressing the claims and needs of diverse subjects in the face of neoliberal state dynamics.

Holston (1998) advocates for a new imaginary of the city, one that emphasises alternative sources of ‘citizenship rights, meanings and practices’ as an alternative to the assumed authority of the modernist state (p. 39). In this context, Holston suggests that planning theorists should broaden their understanding of urban practices beyond the confines of the state, a perspective that holds great significance. The inclination to perceive planning as a regulatory activity has sometimes led to an oversight of its potential for transformation, which can be linked to a history of resistance. As Sandercock (2003) noted in this framework, IP shifts the focus of research from only professional planners and their formalised methods to encompass a broader spectrum of practices collectively referred to as ‘planning’ and involving a wide range of actors (Miraftab, 2017).

A significant epistemological and ontological transformation in action-oriented planning theory is Miraftab’s (2009) repositioning of Sandercock’s insurgent planning globally, particularly in neoliberal capitalist environments. Although insurgent planning draws inspiration from radical

planning, it diverges from it in its conception of justice: it shifts ‘the understanding of justice from a liberal Rawlsian notion of justice as fairness to a Youngian notion of justice based on recognition of difference and its politics’ (Miraftab, 2017, p. 279). In the Global South and elsewhere, this resonates with the rise of urban social movements (Abers, 2000; Castells, 1983; Fox, 1996; Fox & Gershman, 2000; Friedmann, 1989; Friedmann & Friedmann, 1998) that became an influential force in the realm of development, actively seeking alternatives outside the traditional state apparatus (de Souza, 2006). Appadurai (2002) suggests that these movements represent a form of ‘deep democracy’ constructed through ‘governmentality’ from below and informed by highly politicised practices (i.e. enumeration), which is seen as a technology of power typical of the powerful. Rather than being orchestrated by the state or international organisations, these political practices are primarily driven by the urban poor. Similarly, Legacy (2017) points out the potential of ‘passionate’ and ‘active citizens’ who seek alternative solutions to urban challenges outside the formal spaces of participation (p. 430). Thorpe (2017) extends this discourse by broadening the concept of planning to encompass a wide spectrum of activities, ranging from ‘small-scale contributions by citizens and community groups to much larger interventions by corporate developers’ (p. 577), which may be connected to histories of resistance (Sandercock, 2003).

In this context, the idea of IP is strongly linked to resistance, as Sandercock articulated. Routledge (1997) defines resistance as ‘any action, imbued with intent, that attempts to challenge, change, or retain particular circumstances relating to societal relations, processes, and/or institutions’ (p. 69). Scott’s work has further broadened the understanding of the various methods, actions and behaviours encompassed by the term ‘resistance’: he distinguishes between overt, declared forms of resistance and covert, low-profile, undeclared resistance that falls within the domain of infrapolitics (Scott, 1990, p. 198). As detailed in the following section, these practices have the potential to serve as ‘infrastructures of action-foundations upon which resistance, in the form of collective action, can be constructed’ (Ismail, 2006).

2.4.2 Everyday Resistance

Drawing on the debates in the previous section, many scholars have sought to frame the practices of IP within a particular framework that takes place in ‘invented’ spaces. These spaces focus on distinct groups whose life chances are at risk of being jeopardised in specific circumstances. Simultaneously, these practices operate across interconnected power structures and must navigate

the various agencies of the state and state-like formations to ensure enduring solutions (Shrestha & Aranya, 2015). Within this framework, Huq (2020) proposes that IP practices are rooted in political society. In these spaces, groups and classes appropriate 'political associations such as parties' in ways that may not always align with the principles of association in civil society (Chatterjee, 2001 p. 176). Positioned within political society, IP practices assert collective demands on the state, at times contravening modern state laws, established customs, the police order and state sovereignty (Huq, 2020).

Nevertheless, theoretically, these scholars speak from contexts where social mobilisation is deeply ingrained in the planning culture and citizens are aware of the significance of political participation in general. For instance, this is evident in Latin America and post-apartheid South Africa (Shrestha & Aranya, 2015). The insurgent practices observed globally indicate the existence of well-established networks and the maturity of grassroots organisations, evolving as an ongoing process of engagement over time (Shrestha & Aranya, 2015). This phenomenon is not easily found in more hostile political climates, such as in the Arab region. However, the IP scholarship emphasises that the acts of insurgency should be defined by the specificities of both time and space (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001; Moore, 1997). Consequently, the analysis of insurgency must be driven by context, attuned to the particulars of everyday lived realities and shaped by empirical analysis (Meth, 2010). Yet, for many scholars, working with social movements and citizen actions may not resonate with the IP framework (Watson, 2012). To understand the sensitivity and particularity of the contexts, numerous scholars have analysed how marginalised groups react to the broader social processes impacting their lives. They investigate these responses in the form of everyday resistance rather than large-scale public movements.

The concept of everyday resistance was introduced by James Scott in 1985 to denote a form of resistance that is not as overt or visible as organised collective actions like rebellions, riots, demonstrations, revolutions or civil wars (Scott, 1990b, 1985). 'Everyday resistance' is characterised by its quiet, dispersed, disguised or seemingly invisible nature to elites, the state or mainstream society, a concept Scott interchangeably refers to as 'infrapolitics'. Scott (1985) illustrates how certain common behaviours exhibited by subordinated groups, such as foot-dragging, escape, sarcasm, passivity, laziness, misunderstandings, disloyalty, slander, avoidance or theft, are not always what they appear to be but are forms of resistance. According to Scott, these activities represent tactics employed by exploited individuals to both survive and undermine repressive domination, particularly in situations where open rebellion is too dangerous. Scott

argues that the form of resistance adopted depends on the nature of the prevailing power structures. According to him, those who insist that ‘real resistance’ must be organised and principled and have revolutionary implications overlook the crucial role of power relations in shaping various forms of resistance (Scott, 1989, p.51). The foundational theoretical frameworks for understanding resistance draw from the works of Karl Polanyi, Antonio Gramsci and James Scott (Gills, 2000), with Gramsci and Polanyi addressing collective politics and Scott focusing on individual everyday life – the central focus of this research.

According to Scott, it is crucial to recognise that everyday resistance is not a lesser or primitive form of resistance. Instead, it operates on a fundamentally different, even opposing logic compared to public and collective resistance. In instances or contexts where public collective resistance would be ineffective, counter-productive or excessively difficult, everyday resistance becomes a strategic alternative. However, Scott’s conceptualisation introduces a dichotomy between his ‘paired forms of resistance’: everyday resistance and public resistance. This dichotomy may obscure what, in empirical reality, appears to be a continuum of mixed forms of resistance (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019). Additionally, Scott’s conceptualisation of resistance has prompted an examination of the diverse mechanisms through which subaltern and working classes engage with their socio-economic circumstances. However, these analyses often rely on dichotomous categories of domination and resistance (Martínez, 2018). In the SWANA region, the everyday practices of popular classes are frequently depicted as either coping mechanisms or contentious acts of defiance, serving as foundational elements of popular mobilisation (Leenders & Heydemann, 2012; Tripp, 2013).

One of Scott’s fundamental assertions is that everyday resistance possesses a specific, intentional quality. According to him, any definition of resistance necessitates some consideration of the actors’ intentions (Scott, 1985). However, he acknowledges the complexity of the question of intention; even if the actors were queried and responded candidly, Scott (1985) suggests that determining their intentions would not be straightforward. While Scott’s meticulous analysis of various forms of everyday resistance remains grounded in a static and class-based perspective, Kevin O’Brien (1996) challenges this viewpoint. O’Brien (1996) contends that resistance by subalterns, particularly in severely repressed contexts like rural China, need not to be concealed or antagonistic towards elites. He argues that ‘rightful resisters seek rather than avoid the attention of elites... [and] mitigate the risks of confrontation by proclaiming their allegiance to core values rather than by opting for disguised dissent’ (1996, p. 34). Consequently, this form of resistance

disrupts the dichotomy between dominant elites and subordinated classes proposed by Scott. O'Brien (1996) asserts that in certain circumstances, framing 'subordinates' in opposition to 'superordinates' can obscure our understanding of resistance (1996, p. 31). Similarly, Weldeghebrael (2023), in his recent study in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, discusses the resistance of slum residents beyond trespassing formal laws (Chatterjee, 2004), quiet encroaching (Bayat, 2000b) or grassroots social movements (Mitlin, 2018). Slum residents strategically utilise authorised, formal channels, positioning themselves as supporters of the state's overarching policies while challenging interventions that jeopardise their livelihoods by attracting media attention or 'adopting confrontational relations with lower-level state officials, and seeking the support of senior officials' (Weldeghebrael, 2023, p. 11). However, Weldeghebrael, (2023) further asserts that this does not take place in isolation but along with other subversive strategies in the city.

In Scott's perspective, a deficiency exists in the dynamic interplay and evolution between power and resistance and an absence of transformation in the resisters themselves. Power is not perceived as influencing the discourses or practices of resistance, even though the life of the resistor is shaped by power. Scott asserts that the various forms, strategies and techniques of everyday resistance are connected to the material, status or ideological manifestations of domination (see, for instance, Deleuze, 2011 [1992]). Within this framework, to transcend the dichotomy established by James Scott's work, the contributions of de Certeau and Asef Bayat are key in advancing the conceptualisation of everyday resistance. The next section will more comprehensively explore the evolution of everyday resistance, shedding light on its utility as a lens for conceptualising the practices of subordinates in politically challenging and restrictive contexts.

2.4.3 Tactics, Quiet Encroachments and Beyond

According to the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1997), the practices of everyday life have the potential to cause significant changes in society. Lefebvre argued that the everyday practices of individuals and groups are an essential part of social reality and that they have the power to shape and transform social relations. Lefebvre believed that everyday practices, such as walking, talking, eating and working, are not simply routine activities but are instead deeply embedded in the social and cultural structures of society. He argued that by changing these everyday practices, individuals and groups can challenge and transform the dominant social relations and structures that shape their lives. Michel de Certeau shares a

sustained interest in the everyday with Lefebvre. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), de Certeau scrutinises how individuals engage with the social order by employing the very products and tools imposed upon them, neither succumbing to the dictates of hegemonic forces nor directly confronting them. His analysis of routine activities like talking, walking and cooking demonstrates how users of space creatively manipulate the technologies of rule, referred to as strategies, in their daily lives. De Certeau (1984) conceptualises the myriad practices through which ordinary individuals utilise and manoeuvre spaces organised by power as ‘tactics’. Despite somewhat obscuring the implication of the less powerful in the realm of power dynamics, de Certeau broadens the scope of politics beyond formal institutions and collective actions to encompass the diverse ways of navigating within ‘the practice of everyday life’ (1984, p. xxiv). According to him, these ‘tactics’ are temporally contingent as they ‘depend on time’ given that they do ‘not have a place’ (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix). They are inherently mobile, always vigilant for opportunities that must be seized, and whatever gains they achieve, (de Certeau, 1984). De Certeau (1984) contends that everyday resistance involves a ‘way of using imposed systems’ (p. 18) and how individuals employ ‘popular tactics’ in their routine activities to subvert ‘the actual order of things’ for their own purposes (p. 26). Consequently, ‘order is tricked by an art’ in this context (de Certeau, 1984, p. 26).

Often romanticised as the ordinary or associated with passivity, everyday life is described by Seremetakis (1994) as a realm that ‘harbours the most elusive depths, obscure corners, transient corridors that evade political grids and controls’ (p. 13). Notably, de Certeau’s (1984) narrative does not revolve around revolution or significant upheaval but instead centres on stubbornness, obstinacy and creativity in the context of everyday life. Throughout his body of work, he emphasises the numerous constraints and limited objectives inherent in tactics. The act of ‘tricking order by an art’ is frequently executed without the expectation that this order will undergo immediate change: it constitutes a manoeuvre ‘within an enemy’s field of vision’ and ‘within enemy territory’ (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 26, 37). Devoid of the means to directly challenge a social order, tactics may deflect power, escape or redirect its strategies, always operating within its field.

De Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics’ enables an examination of everyday practices beyond mere reactive ‘survival strategies’ or forms of resistance to fiscal retrenchment. Instead, these practices are seen as intricate sets of actions deeply embedded in broader cultural and political contexts (Smith, 2007). According to de Certeau (1984), tactics are procedures that derive their validity

from their relevance to time, the circumstances that the precise moment of intervention transforms into a favourable situation, the speed of movements altering the organisation of space, the relationships among successive moments in action and the potential intersections of duration and heterogeneous rhythms. These actions are neither revolutionary nor indicative of passivity. They carry the potential to serve as a political platform, creating a heterogeneous and diverse multitude with no political party backing them (Petrescu & Trogal, 2017).

However, Johansson and Vinthagen (2019) questioned whether any practice that differs from those produced by power can be qualified as ‘resistance’. While they argue that this may be the case in certain circumstances and contexts, it may not be in others. For them, the determining factor lies in the resistance relationship with power: whether it possesses the potential to undermine or destabilise power structures temporarily. This assessment can only be made by analysing the practice within the power dynamic. According to Johansson and Vinthagen (2019), this is where the limitation in de Certeau’s work lies: he does not directly and explicitly engage in a power analysis when discussing his forms of tactics. In this realm, the connection between Scott and de Certeau is evident. While Scott (1985; 1990) refers to the ‘weapons of the weak’, ‘hidden transcripts’, ‘infrapolitics’ as everyday resistance, de Certeau describes tactics as ‘an art of the weak’ shaped by the absence of a proper locus, operating as a manoeuvre ‘within the enemy’s field of vision’ (Von Bulow, as cited in de Certeau, 1984, p. 37) and functioning in isolated actions. However, as Johansson and Vinthagen (2019) note, both theorists fall short of fully integrating their frameworks as practices intricately entwined in a dynamic relationship with power²⁴.

Butticci (2012) proposes that de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics’ are ‘forms of adaption to the environment’ created by the powerful and their disciplinary strategies (p. 93). These tactics operate at the micro level as temporary and inventive manipulations of ‘events, spaces, practices, symbols, and materialities’ to transform them into opportunities (p. 93). Tactics can be interpreted as revealing ‘absences’ or gaps, indicating deficiencies within seemingly comprehensive systems (strategies) (Alonso, 2017, p. 329). De Certeau (1984) focuses on the specific and mundane actions of ordinary individuals, highlighting acts of everyday resistance for which they creatively

²⁴ This research employs a Foucauldian framework conceptualising power as ubiquitous rather than as located in certain groups. In essence, power is decentred, heterogenic and plural, relational rather than reified, emphasising its productive nature over a merely repressive function (Foucault, 1978, 1980, 1991a). In line with Foucault’s perspective, power operates on multiple levels, engages in ongoing struggles, negotiations and dynamic evolution.

utilise tactics within the framework imposed by hegemonic power (strategy). Conversely, O'Brien (1996) suggests the importance of recognising that everyday resistance, depending on the context, may occasionally manifest in somewhat public forms of resistance, even when the identity of the person resisting is public.

In another ground-breaking work, *Life as Politics* (2009), Bayat focuses on the urban poor in Third World societies and Muslim/Arab everyday articulations of resistance. He establishes a connection between individualised and covert manifestations of everyday resistance and the transient mobilisations of the urban poor. Bayat (1997, 1997a, 1997b, 2000) presents a resistance theory distinct from Scott's theory of resistance and social movement theories. He contends that political activism undertaken by 'ordinary' individuals in Third World cities, specifically the urban poor and those involved in the informal economy (e.g. the unemployed or underemployed, street vendors and squatters) varies significantly. Their activism is rooted in the everyday and involves resistance but may not necessarily be 'hidden', 'disguised', non-collective or informally organised, as Scott would suggest. Consequently, Bayat avoids the term 'everyday resistance' and proposes 'quiet encroachment'. Bayat argues that 'quiet encroachment', employed by marginalised and informal groups, is adaptable and responsive to circumstances, all with a specific purpose in mind. In contrast to IP endeavours or the overt actions of public social movements, instances of 'quiet encroachment' are frequently marked by persistent, lifelong struggles aimed at achieving a redistribution of social goods and opportunities. However, these efforts do not seek to generate broader political movements. Bayat underscores the agency of individuals in instigating change through everyday practices and adaptations, even in situations where overt resistance or activism may not be effective or possible.

In this context, the struggles associated with 'quiet encroachments' are not merely defensive acts within the realm of resistance. Instead, they are seen as cumulative as the actors involved aim to expand their space by gaining new positions for progress. These actors engage in their activities not as a deliberate political statement but are compelled by the imperative need to survive and enhance their quality of life (Bayat, 2000b). Asef Bayat, unlike Scott, concentrates on subtle, everyday acts of adaptation and resistance that are often concealed and may not be overtly or intentionally political. These struggles unfold calmly and quietly. They are not solely defensive measures, constituting 'everyday resistance' against the encroachments of 'superordinate' groups, nor are they merely hidden, quiet and often individualistic (Bayat, 1997a). This form of silent,

patient and prolonged resistance is employed by marginalised or disempowered groups, including migrants, refugees, the unemployed, squatters and street vendors (Bayat, 1997a).

Although these actions are unnoticeable and sometimes deliberately avoid collective efforts, large-scale operations and public attention, the defence of the gains they achieve carries the potential to be collective and audible. These passive networks become activated when they have to make public and collective defensive efforts and articulate collective claims for their rights against a state that they otherwise mostly ignore and from which they try to exist independently. Threats can trigger collective mobilisation. Bayat defends the politics of the poor against essentialist ideas of a fatalist and passive ‘culture of poverty’ or the idea that the poor are only active in the sense of survival (at their own expense in the long run or that of other poor people). Bayat claims that the poor indeed are political; however, they do not typically create sustained and ideological mobilisations like the middle class or other more advantaged groups (in the form of ‘social movements’). Instead, much of the mobilisations of the urban poor, especially in the SWANA region, circulate around kinship/ethnicity-based networks or ‘imagined solidarities’ in fluid and heterogeneous groups without permanent communication channels or a common identity. Thus, to Bayat, the urban poor sometimes perform political acts (of resistance) but not only and not primarily by being consciously antagonistic to the superior classes. They do not typically sustain these political mobilisations in the form of ‘social movements’ (with enduring organisation, identity, claims and communication).

However, as Bayat helps us to understand, in circumstances where the cumulative effects of their individual and scattered everyday politics make them targets of repression, despite their quiet and individual way of surviving, the urban poor are brought together and mobilised collectively and with public claim-making. This does not necessarily lead to sustained mobilisation – the key kind of resistance studied by social movement theory – but may be a process that, after a sudden mobilisation, returns to the original ‘quiet encroachment’ of individual families and persons until the next immediate threat (or major opportunity) arises. There is no better case than the Arab Spring to understand the effect of these groups’ long, slow encroachments in preparing the ground for new political positions and engagements (Aboubakr et al., 2021a). According to Bayat (2013b), the prolonged and sustained ‘quiet encroachments’ and ‘non-movements’ in the Arab region found a political opportunity in the late 2010s, which spread across the region in the mass confrontational political act of the Arab Spring.

Besides the several researchers who argued that public and hidden resistance can mix and combine (Katsiaficas, 1997; Simi & Futurell, 2009) and that the existence of mundane or non-dramatic resistance shows that resistance can fruitfully be understood as a continuum between public confrontations and hidden subversion (Bayat, 2013a; Ismail, 2013), others like Lee (2016) asserts that rights-based activism on behalf of groups that are oppressed and made into non-citizen 'objects' should combine with the innovative, ingenious and unsettling forms of everyday resistance applied by these 'objects' themselves. This includes 'hidden tactics', 'calculated abjection', 'morphing technologies' or 'sacrificial violence'. Thus, Lee's sophisticated theoretical and empirical analysis originally opened up a link between organised rights activism and everyday resistance.

In a recent study on everyday resistance, Johansson and Vinthagen (2019) attempt to go beyond Scott and de Certeau by focusing on understanding everyday resistance as a practice entangled in a dynamic with power, claiming that everyday resistance is best understood by accounting for different repertoires of tactics, relations between actors and struggles around constructions of time and space. The actors of everyday resistance do not necessarily regard it as 'resistance' but rather as an established or conventional part of their lives, personalities, cultures and traditions. Johansson and Vinthagen (2019) present a critique of Scott's work, which asserts the importance of displaying the resisters' particular (political) intention. Johansson and Vinthagen align with many scholars who attempted to show how a more elaborate understanding of the concept could be applied in empirical studies. For example, Frers and Meier (2017) suggest 'specific acts of resistance and their consequences: their political aesthetics and the way they link into practices of distinction, their temporal duration, and their spatial extension' (p. 128). Similarly, Iñiguez de Heredia (2017) develops a new framework based on de Certeau and Scott and her critical reading of the everyday resistance literature. She proposes a new definition and a framework that connects the everyday to 'patterns', that is, something that is repeated in people's lives but not necessarily literally the 'everyday'. Similarly, dominant power is reproduced in the everyday, in the way people accept, normalise, follow and enforce norms, rules, hierarchies, stereotypes, discourses, orders, laws and policies, often in an automatic, non-reflective way.

In this context, everyday resistance, according to Johansson and Vinthagen (2019), is a practice conducted in certain situations and contexts when public resistance is not an alternative, while resistance against power is still deemed to be motivated. Resistance is not a characteristic or quality of any specific group or people – be they peasants or subalterns (Roy, 2011a) – but a

particular type of activity among many other types of activities other ordinary people might perform. More importantly, it is historically entangled with everyday power (not separated or dichotomous) and must be understood as intersecting with the powers with which it engages (not one single power relation). Furthermore, it is heterogeneous and contingent due to changing contexts and situations, where the actors involved play a vital role.

The next section will tackle the dimensions of everyday resistance based on the different theorists and scholarship discussed in this section to propose a situated lens and standpoint from which to analyse the case studies in this dissertation.

2.4.4 Definitions of Tactics and the Need for a Situated Approach

Lefebvre's (1991) perspective, explored in section 2.4.3 above, underscores the significance of directing attention towards the everyday practices inherent in our lives as the key catalyst for instigating social change. He believes that by transforming these practices, individuals and groups can create new forms of social relations that challenge the dominant order and promote more equitable and just ways of living. To Lefebvre, the analysis of the everyday requires an understanding of the deep connections between consumer culture, urbanisation and state power. Therefore, everyday life practices are the most universal and unique condition, the most social and individuated, the most obvious and the best hidden. In other words, Lefebvre's approach to social change, similar to de Certeau's, can be used to emphasise the importance of grassroots activism and the power of small-scale actions to bring about larger societal transformations. According to Lefebvre, by changing the way we live our everyday lives, we can challenge and transform the social structures that shape our world. To understand these modes of practices in an authoritarian context in the Arab region in the Global South, where colonial history is coupled with a changing political atmosphere linked to a change in global politics, it is crucial to analyse these practices aligned with the specificities of everyday lived realities and shaped by empirical analysis. This means that a critical engagement with everyday resistance must have a very strong appreciation of the local context, awareness of the politics at various scales and a sense of the historical influences at play (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019).

This research claims that accounts of the dynamics of activities of the different urban groups in authoritarian regimes, known for their hostile and restrictive political environment (for instance,

in Jordan), as mere coping mechanisms or survival strategies, ‘quiet encroachments’ or everyday political resistance are inadequate. Although issues of survival, ‘everyday resistance’ or ‘quiet encroachments’ undeniably concern the urban disenfranchised in the Arab region and elsewhere in the Global South, paying attention to the diverse ways of operating within ‘the practice of everyday life’ (de Certeau, 1984 p. xxiv) embedded in specific histories and contexts is crucial (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019). Whereas some practices may appear significant and productive in some contexts, they may seem trivial or even counter-productive in other contexts (Marsh & Śliwa, 2022).

Johansson and Vinthagen (2019), as discussed in the previous section situate the concept of everyday resistance as shaped and practised within the dynamics of configurations of powers in the specificities of changing contexts and situations and argue for a better understanding of the entangled relations between actors in space within time. However, because the present research looks specifically at the practices of grassroots organisations after the Arab Spring, whose effects are still unfolding in an unstable political environment, using/applying the notion of ‘everyday resistance’ is quite problematic. The term introduces an additional layer of surveillance and restrictions, particularly as grassroots activities occur in a hostile, non-democratic environment. Furthermore, Johansson and Vinthagen’s (2019) analytical framework for everyday resistance primarily targets ordinary individuals²⁵. In contrast, this dissertation focuses on grassroots organisations that may occupy mid-level positions. According to Johansson and Vinthagen (2019, p. 184), this poses theoretical challenges to the use of the term. Moreover, in line with Bayat and in contrast to Scott, Johansson and Vinthagen (2019) conceptualise everyday resistance as simply patterned practices, forgoing an analysis of actors’ intentions or practices with ideology and consciousness.

Based on this discussion and taking up key contributions from different authors within the field (mainly, Scott, de Certeau, Bayat, Lefebvre, Johansson and Vinthagen), the present research uses a hybridised definition of everyday resistance. The study relies on a less ideological, decisive concept that represents a less politically visible form of resistance that aligns more closely with the complex grassroots practices in Jordan (AlNasser, 2016). This is achieved by operationalising the term ‘tactics’ (de Certeau, 1984) as a less ideological concept. However, it aligns with

²⁵ This is exemplified by their case study of Sumūd in the Palestinian context (Chapter 9 in *Conceptualising ‘Everyday Resistance’*).

Johansson and Vinthagen's (2019) study by linking the concept of tactics directly and explicitly to the contextual configurations of power(s). Thus, in contrast to Scott and de Certeau²⁶, this research looks into 'tactics' with continuous attention to power. In this regard, 'tactics' is better seen as in-between space that relies on time and must adeptly navigate and exploit gaps in power's surveillance and control, employing surprise, concealment, subtlety and strategic manoeuvring by manipulating events constantly, transforming them into opportunities (Johansson, 2009, 2017). This space of 'tactics' is not just another site of 'resistance' with a smaller form of power, loaded with political intentions (disguised or hidden, as argued by Scott). Nor is it a sustained, prolonged, silent resistance performed by ordinary people to survive and improve their lives (as discussed by Bayat). Rather, it is a continuum between public confrontations and hidden subversion. However, drawing on Johansson and Vinthagen's (2019) proposal to engage de Certeau's concept of 'tactics' with a power analysis, I argue that the concept is useful in analysing the different practices of the grassroots or other mid-level positions in a society subjected to a restrictive authoritarian regime.

Here, the concept of tactics is less political, non-violent and confrontational but subverts by manipulating the hegemonic power, depending on opportunistic conditions and the use of time. This understanding departs from Scott's and Bayat's view of everyday resistance as linked to the durability and sustainability of non-dramatic acts. Moreover, according to de Certeau (1984), a space of tactics exists within the realm of the Other, distinct from a strategy that can be meticulously planned and monitored in visible spaces. Analysing these spaces using the frameworks of power and domination highlights the importance of the multiple agents involved (subaltern, middle-class) and the relationships between them as well as with power. Therefore, in many instances, spaces of 'tactics' try to destabilise or even go beyond power, creating other ways of life and ways of being. However, this may not necessarily yield success over time (Anjaria, 2016). The key is how tactics relates to power, that is, whether it has the potential to undermine or destabilise power, at least temporarily; in contrast to sovereign power, which holds territorial control, everyday tactics operate spatially and are inherently temporary (de Certeau, 1984).

To conclude, this study takes the concept of 'tactics' as understood in the previous discussion (hybridised with theories of everyday resistance, power and quiet encroachment) as its point of

²⁶ Both theorists tend to perceive any 'act' by the subordinate classes as 'resistance'. Here, acting differently becomes resistance.

departure to investigate the different, everyday practices of participation of grassroots organisations in Amman by critically engaging with the configuration of power and resistance. Tactics is a less decisive and less ideological or politically loaded concept than everyday resistance. By highlighting how tactics are enmeshed in power relations, this dissertation seeks to attend to the various ways in which citizens navigate and manipulate the warrens of capitalist planning and the grids of authoritarian rule, without succumbing to the ‘romance of resistance’ (Abu-Lughod, 1990) or sanitising the politics of the subaltern (Ortner, 1995). Figure 2.1 illustrates the constructs of theories of participation and their relational links with spaces of everyday resistance and tactics.

To understand these rooted spaces of everyday tactics, participation and activism, the next section steers the discussion towards the utilisation of a Southern theorising perspective, which helps to recognise these concepts beyond the mainstream global urbanisms and challenges dominant forms of knowledge and practice. It helps formulate what spaces of participation could *mean*, *offer* and *reveal* beyond the existing binary of ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ and, more importantly, beyond the Northern paradigms of knowledge that created them. Such new understandings have the potential to extend ‘theoretical categories’ (Vasudevan & Novoa, 2022). Therefore, a Southern approach challenges broad assertions and carves out space for more nuanced theories of urban participation and reproduction grounded in justifiable logics that are specific to particular places (Lawhon et al., 2018). This approach enhances our understanding of the production and contestation of spatial orders. Nevertheless, to comprehend the practices of participation in a Southern context such as Amman’s, we must grasp the evolution of planning theory within the Global South context and what it does/means for context, theory and practice when applied.

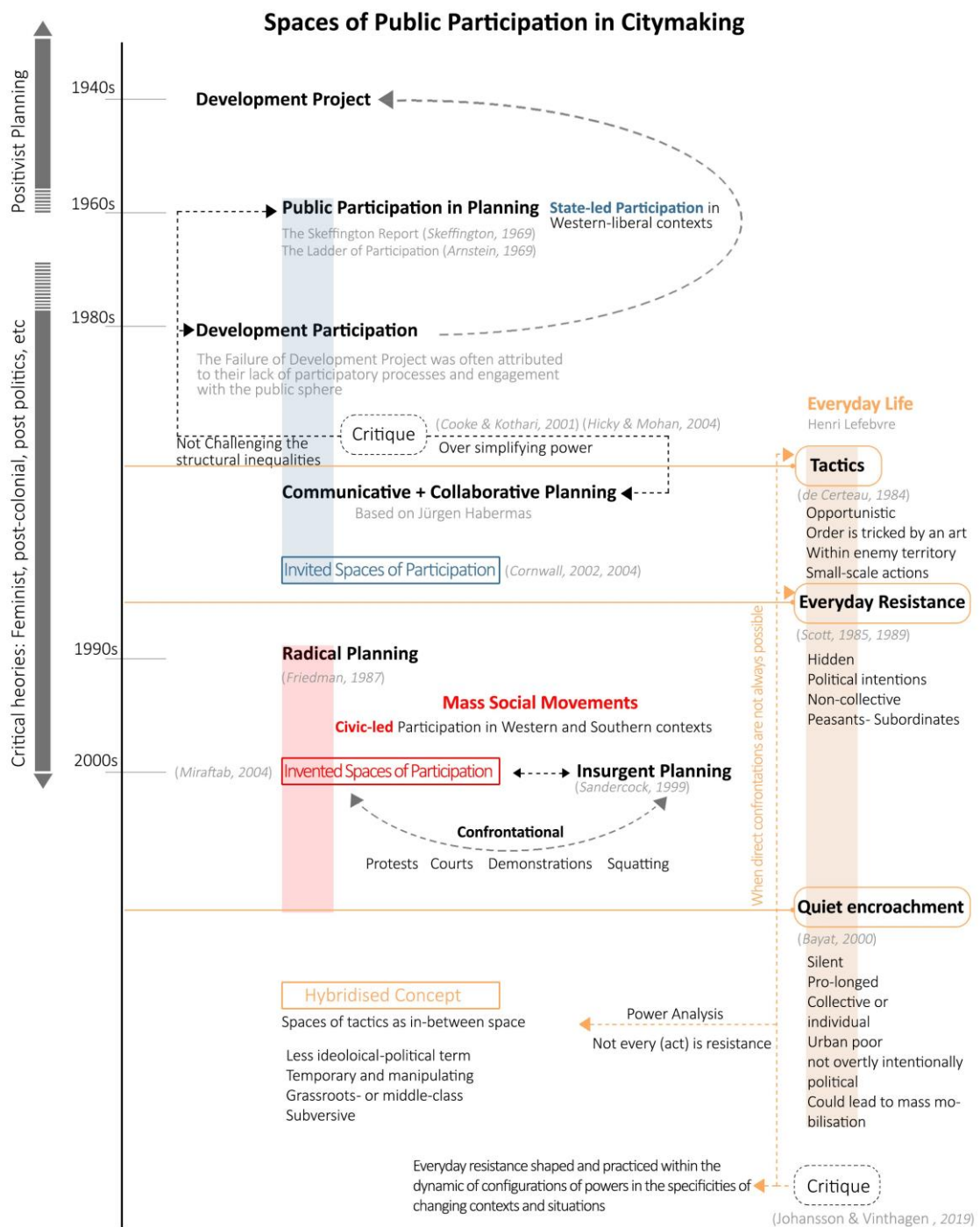


Figure 2.1: The constructs of theories of participation and its relational link with spaces of everyday resistance and tactics. (Author)

2.5 Moving the Planning Literature Forward: A Southern Geography as a Productive Landscape

As highlighted in prior works by Bhan (2019) and Watson (2002b), planning theories, primarily originating from the Global North, often present significant limitations and challenges when applied to diverse contexts. Bhan (2019) raises pertinent questions regarding the intricacies of finding suitable frameworks of knowledge capable of addressing the multifaceted practices of activists, researchers, planners and other stakeholders in the Global South. According to Bhan (2019), the core challenge lies in the multiple disconnects between theory and practice. In response to these challenges, a diverse group of critical theorists representing various disciplines and intellectual trajectories²⁷ advocates for a twofold approach to urban planning. First, they call for an approach that challenges prevailing knowledge production and dissemination geographies, which have been dominated by academic institutions in the United States and Europe. Second, they contest the conventional formal and professional modes of practising planning. Instead, they embrace a more inclusive perspective that accommodates a multitude of approaches employed by diverse actors and organisations, each guided by their distinct circumstances and motivations. As aptly noted by Harrison (2006), the collective efforts of these theorists revolve around the cultivation of ‘alternative thinking’. This new paradigm seeks to provide an alternative to established intellectual traditions and forms an integral part of a postcolonial endeavour to create a space for subaltern knowledge that has emerged in regions with unique trajectories of modernisation.

Acknowledging place and context plays a key role in the framework of Southern thinking. Simultaneously, a firm rejection of the South construed solely as a geographical concept exists. It is imperative to scrutinise and deconstruct the notions of North and South, disentangling them from their conventional categorisation as either theoretical or spatial binaries. This research aligns with Gautam Bhan’s perspective: the South transcends the confines of a physical location, manifesting as a conceptual construct, a locus of thought (Ortiz, 2022) and a relational geography rather than a mere collection of underdeveloped nations or the postcolonial sphere. Bhan (2019, 2022) contends that this conceptualisation facilitates the mobility of theories. It allows theories to originate from a specific locale but then extends their applicability to comprehend the urbanism of all cities. It enables the utilisation of concepts such as informality, originating from the South,

²⁷ Such as Jennifer Robinson, Vanessa Watson, Oren Yiftachel, Gautam Bhan, Ananya Roy, Caren Levy, Aihwa Ong, Libby Porter, Alexandre Apsan Frediani and Camila Cociña, to name but a few.

to gain insights into Northern cities, thereby bridging the categorical North-South divisions (Robinson, 2022). This approach underscores the fluidity of theoretical frameworks, enabling them to transcend geographical boundaries. Resonating with Connell's proposition, the term 'Southern' emphasises relations – 'of authority, exclusion and inclusion, hegemony, partnership, sponsorship, appropriation – between intellectuals and institutions in the metropole, and those in the world periphery' (Watson, 2022, p. 29).

Similarly, Hammar (2022) understands the development of Southeastern theory/theorising as a multifaceted political-intellectual endeavour encompassing repositioning and reorientation. This endeavour involves a dynamic interplay between retrospective practices incorporating refusal and recovery and forward-looking practices involving anticipation and inclusion. It requires challenging entrenched systems and structures, addressing both historical colonialism and coloniality along with persistent manifestations of patriarchy, racialisation, classism and related issues. To put it differently, the South is not a geographic place but one of the poles of a relationship. This relational context comprises dynamics of dominance and subordination, spanning economic, political, social, cultural and epistemic dimensions (Vainer, 2022). Similarly, Faranak Miratab (2022) asserts that the South serves as a socio-political reference point encompassing all communities adversely impacted by colonialism.

An expanded theoretical framework for a Southern perspective disrupts prevailing hierarchical structures, consequently reshaping the framework for acknowledging what and who is deemed significant in urban understanding, critique, theory development and envisioning. This transformative process requires adopting more inclusive, intersectional and interdisciplinary methodologies firmly rooted in empirical research in diverse urban landscapes (see Chapter 3). The incorporation of a broader range of empirical and epistemological viewpoints, transcending the confines of established conventions, opens the door to envisioning a significantly more extensive array of meaningful urban trajectories beyond the Northern/Northwestern paradigms (Yiftachel & Mammon, 2022), including those underpinned by principles of justice-based urban governance and comprehensive, participatory citizenship. Simultaneously, this approach should avoid the construction of reversed hierarchical structures and unintentional blind spots that may arise from idealisations of the South/Southeast (Hammar, 2022). Thus, the essence of Southern knowledge lies in its foundation upon the practical experiences of individuals at the grassroots level, from below (Miraftab, 2022), which would 'unearth the white privilege of authoritative

knowledge about citymaking practices and go beyond the cardinal determinants’ (Ortiz, 2022, p. 73).

According to Bhan (2022), the greater the diversity of the lifeworlds we encounter, the more extensive and profound the ideas become, enabling them to traverse geographical boundaries and enhance our comprehension of various cities. Simultaneously, a deeper understanding of these practical lifeworlds improves our capacity to ground engagement, practice and intervention in them. This grounding is derived from the lifeworlds themselves instead of relying on circulating models of ‘best practice’ originating elsewhere (Bhan, 2022).

2.5.1 Southern Approaches to Studying the Urban

There have been many debates on how to understand and articulate Southern theory. The present research relies on provocations, propositions and ongoing debates that are seen as helpful in shaping the understanding of the new practices of citymaking in Jordan. The following paragraphs review the lines of departure for this project.

Theory and Vocabularies

This research dismisses the possibility of one grand new theoretical intervention of a Southern theory that would unfold all the practices of the Global South and instead draws on ‘minor’ theory, as articulated by Katz (1996) and Watson (2022). In this perspective, ‘minor’ theory is not perceived as ‘local’ or ‘small’; rather, it possesses the ability to unveil nuanced variations with substantial impacts. According to Watson (2022), ‘minor theory’ disrupts established narratives and power dynamics, aiming to undo major theories and practices from within by embodying a situated politics of resisting and producing knowledge from the complexities of everyday life (Katz, 2017). Rather than constituting a separate theoretical entity, it represents an alternative approach to theory, involving ‘working from the inside out’ and considering emerging practices to be interconnected with significant knowledge productions. Minor theory ‘questions Major Theory and alters its constructions’. Thus, it goes beyond mere criticism and seeks ‘hope for other futures’ (Watson, 2022, p. 30). In this regard, Southern theorising is about replacing a body of theories and altering practices of theorising more broadly (Hammar, 2022). To do so, many theorists have suggested building a new conceptual vocabulary (Bhan, 2019, 2022; Oldfield, 2022; Watson, 2022) that offers a means to delink from western thought and explore avenues to incorporate new idioms that challenge universal frameworks – specifically, narratives that

interlace forces aiming at liberation from the modern/colonial development project. Examples include border thinking (Anzaldúa, 1999) and pluriverse (Escobar, 2018b; Vasudevan & Novoa, 2022).

These vocabularies can be ‘wielded and presented to amplify particular issues, places, and forms of knowledge at a particular time’ (Bhan, 2019, p. 2). The new vocabularies hold the potential to move in and across genres, destabilising paradigms, conventions and ways of knowing (Nagar, 2015) and shifting power dynamics in the specificities of cities. In this manner, Southern theorising extends beyond mere critique and instead ventures into the realm of inventing alternative planning methods, as highlighted by Bates (2018). This approach seeks to showcase the potential effectiveness of the planning profession in cities grappling with enduring political, economic, financial, health and social crises (Fawaz & Harb, 2022). It illuminates diverse ways in which cities can influence anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal and anti-racist initiatives, with a focus on the significance of spatial processes (Ortiz, 2022).

In this regard, this research looks at ‘participation’ beyond its normative meaning and conceptualisations (as discussed in section 2.2) in the more expansive sense of different ways of doing by differently situated and motivated actors and institutions (see Chapter 9, section 9.5). Following Bhan (2019, 2022), I contend that searching for newly situated vocabularies on the ground may produce theories that speak back to their origins and more broadly across translocalities. To put it differently, this research does not look at the case of Amman as a testimony to the universal theories of ‘participation’ rather than a locus of enquiry and theorisation. It is an opportunity to speak *for* and *of* an ex-centric location (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2015), which refers to perspectives that are outside the usual or expected viewpoint.

Collective and Collaborative Practice from Below

Based on the previous discussion, the progressive practice of planning is less about advocating for policy change in the traditional notion of advocacy planning than about working for radical system change (Sager, 2016) by destabilising the balance of power and shifting it to other sources of legitimacy. This commitment shapes our understanding and enables us to imagine ways of moving and acting in the lifeworlds in a way that allows us to find new ways of producing and intervening on the ground, which accounts for ‘modes of Southern urban practice’ (Bhan, 2019, 2022).

This approach to theorising and practice, as articulated by Edgar Pieterse (2014, p. 23), involves immersing oneself in profoundly challenging and contested realms of power and control. According to Oldfield (2022), these fraught spaces are deeply productive spaces, and the project of research becomes collaborative and collective. Geraldine Pratt (2012) aptly characterises this work as ‘always productively compromised’ (p. xxxiv). She suggests that it remains ‘open to other geographies and histories, putting the world together differently by erasing some lines on our taken-for-granted maps and bringing other borders into view’ (Pratt, 2012, p. xxxiv). Given that a key aspect of ‘Southernness’ is that the urban majority faces multiple vulnerabilities (Simone & Pieterse, 2017 p. 23; Bhan, 2019) and seeing as ‘Southeastness’ is marked by armed conflict, contested homelands and bordering practices based on ethnic and sectarian lines (Yiftachel, 2006b), it becomes crucial to contemplate the historical trajectories of human and spatial agency. This includes the networked practices of innovation embedded in these diverse places and an embodied consciousness of experiences of inhabiting the threshold (‘la frontera’) of hegemonic and alternative systems of knowledge production (Ortiz, 2022).

This entails embracing a broader understanding of various ways to transcend professional, formal or institutional modes of practice, focusing on collaborating and theorising with situated and motivated actors and institutions (Bhan, 2019; Miraftab, 2009a, 2018). As Katz (1996) argues, this requires continual movement and diligent effort to identify and amplify the potentialities in the in-between spaces. In navigating between and across multiple actors, sites and scales, the goal is to overcome the limitations inherent in adopting a singular, fixed position assumed by traditional methodologies (Miraftab, 2022). This approach aims to reveal the disjunctions that underlie Eurocentric fragmented planning, prompting a revaluation of alternative planning practices that genuinely serve the public interest (Miraftab, 2022). Crucially, these modes may involve uncertainty. They represent practices that challenge the concept of ‘evidence-based policymaking’, which assumes implicitly that specific actions will yield particular results within a defined timeframe (Miraftab, 2022). Bhan (2019) and Simone (2019) expand on this discussion by proposing certain characteristics of Southern urban practice, including incrementality, uncertainty, temporal fluidity, speculation, transversality and rootedness (Bhan, 2019, p. 652). However, recognising the necessity to ‘do something’ does not solely imply actions to fix or improve a situation. It can also suggest a continual movement to maintain a current position, uphold the status quo and solidify the ground beneath one’s feet a little longer. This perspective also implies that the ethos of such practices is more forgiving of imperfect, uncertain moves – they often closely resemble actions that may appear otherwise.

Lastly, I argue for adopting a contrapuntal, alternative perspective for the present research, drawing on Edward Said (1978). This perspective emphasises the importance of continually reassessing and acknowledging the world's shifting powers, struggles and negotiations. It advocates against adhering to a singular scalar viewpoint, be it micro (entangled in the everyday local context), macro (tempted by the universal claims of the global) or meso (attempting to encompass both the macro and the micro). These three positions assume stability and fail to capture the intricate and unpredictable movements within and across them. Thus, recognising the productive tensions of difference both across and within the 'South'/'Southeast' (and likewise the 'North'/'Northwest') becomes a foundational element for a more comprehensive, multi-layered critical urban theory (Hammar, 2022). This approach encourages a richer and fuller understanding of the city. In this sense and by utilising a collaborative, decolonial Southern approach (see Chapter 3), this research aims to uncover modes of Southern urbanisation by looking at empirical configurations of participation systems in Amman. The rootedness and specificity of these participation modes of practice may generate new 'terms' or 'vocabularies' rooted in space and time, which, as argued by Bhan (2019), would inform not only theory but also practice 'even if all of the evidence is not yet in an often hard to come by' (Simone & Pieterse, 2017, p. x). Those 'vocabularies' allow new counter-authoritative knowledge frameworks to emerge and learn how to further sustain them.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter located the conceptualisation of public participation in citymaking beyond the discussions occurring in the urban planning profession. Instead, the research endeavours to engage in a more fluid dialogue and holds promise in cultivating context-sensitive understandings of the meaning and nature of participation. The proposed analytical framework introduced in this chapter will be used for the analysis and interpretation of the case studies in the research.

Examining the main and key discussions surrounding participation over the past six decades reveals a contentious landscape characterised by persistent tensions inherent in the concept. Consequently, it is imperative to scrutinise the 'genealogies' of participatory spaces, acknowledging their substantial variations contingent on local political and social contexts and the temporal dynamics of participatory structures. Within a Global South context, people are often excluded from the government's development plans. Thus, civil society has focused much of its

energy on opening alternative spaces for participation in decision-making beyond electoral and institutionalised politics. However, these dynamics exhibit considerable divergence, influenced by political contexts, the society's capacity for autonomous organisation, the opportunities that manifest within the state at certain moments of transition and how community members strategically position themselves to capitalise on these opportunities. Covering 'invented' spaces of participation in IP as well as 'everyday resistance', 'quiet encroachments' and spaces of 'tactics', this research adopts a hybridised theoretical framework that aligns with (and at the same time departs from) multiple theorists and concepts to animate spaces of 'tactics' (analysed in relation to power/domination) as in-between spaces. These differ from sustained, organised and confrontational resistance and from the kind of resistance that is silent, prolonged and unintentional and holds the possibility for episodic political confrontations (i.e. Bayat's work) or the hidden, intentional, political resistance in Scott's work. In other words, 'spaces of tactics' are a repertoire of everyday tactics that is shaped in relation to specific configurations of power, opportunistic, temporary and working with 'whatever is at hand' (Simone, 2011).

Although the primary objective of this chapter was to elucidate these arguments within a planning theory framework, it also explored how individuals facing precarious conditions, imbalances or opportunities resort to commonplace acts of resistance, encroachment or familiarisation to assert their rights within the urban environment. This approach aids in acknowledging practices often overlooked in prevailing narratives about public participation. To accomplish this, I proposed using Southern theorising as an alternative analytical lens. This approach is valuable for conceptualising and comprehending participation and establishing a mode of practice grounded in non-dominant representations. Consequently, the chapter argued against the binary categorisation of public participation into invited/invented and defensive/resisting or coping mechanisms for survival. I posited that these spaces may neither function as insurgent nor remain passive. The next chapter introduces the methodological approach and process of this research.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology and Process

‘It matters what world worlds the world... it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what concepts we think to think other concepts with.’

(Donna Haraway in Le Guin's book introduction, 2019)

3.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I introduced theories and positions regarding public participation, everyday resistance, tactics and agency. The present chapter draws on these bodies of literature to summarise and outline the theoretical and methodological framework underpinning subsequent empirical chapters. It discusses the positions that support and illustrate arguments throughout the dissertation, such as positionality, rationality, ways of operationalising Southern theory and addressing the research bias, ethics and nuances of translation.

In addition to literature and theoretical analyses, to contextualise theoretical findings and explain and validate both the research problem and the proposed contradictions, the chapter details the project and how it was conducted using several methods. As proposed earlier, the bulk of these methods is geared towards attaining full engagement with the practices and communities in this research. The chapter continues with a presentation of the data and the limitations and challenges experienced during the fieldwork. Finally, the chapter concludes with reflections on the personal and collective challenge of continuously maintaining a discourse coherent with our values and what we propose in our daily practice, especially in urban planning, as Southern researchers drawing repeatedly on feminist and decolonial positions and standpoints. I am aware that we have socialised ourselves in an imperialist, patriarchal, capitalist and colonial structure of power, which can lead us to reproduce discriminatory roles and stereotypes. While remaining acutely aware of my privileged position, I am using the opportunity afforded by this PhD project and its outcomes

to help the construction of a humane urbanism based on practices of solidarity and radical care, and inspired by the efforts of various grassroots and urban movements.

3.2 Philosophical and Theoretical Positioning

Seizing the opportunity of this historical juncture, when the foundations of planning are being widely questioned, the aim of this research is not only to detect the everyday practices of participation in ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ (and beyond) spaces of participation but also to decolonise participation and re-invent its methods and language from a situated Southern position. This sub-section presents the ontology and epistemology that underlie the research questions and objectives and justifies the choice of methodological approach.

3.2.1 Decolonial Southern Ontologies and Epistemologies

The Southern emerging thinking, as discussed in the Introduction Chapter (section 1.3), expands on theories derived from practices and experiences in other geographical locations – ‘situated knowledge’ in the terminology of feminist scholar Donna Haraway – acknowledging not only the situated geographic context but also the political, subjective and socio-cultural position (Connell, 2007; Haraway, 1988; Watson, 2009, 2016). Decolonial theorists problematise modern theory and call for epistemic delinking from the ‘rhetoric of modernity’ to rethink its ideals within the processes and histories of coloniality (Mignolo, 2007) and learn from ‘Others’ to offer new geopolitics of knowledge (Lugones, 2010 p.742). After all, ‘the success of the political world order is the making of subjects that think, epistemically, like the ones in dominant positions’ (Grosfoguel, 2009, p. 14). To tackle this philosophical dilemma, this study is conceptually framed within decoloniality, which offers a ontological, epistemological and axiological foundation that deliberately diverges from Western modes of thought, as articulated by Mignolo (2011, 2007). Following Vainer’s (2022) proposal, the strategy of urban decoloniality involves critiquing prevailing urban concepts and models, along with re-reading and re-inventing the social morphology (Durkheim, 1894) inherent in our spaces and territories:

‘Any project of radical decoloniality of urbanism and urban thinking is only viable if anchored in the convergence of the practice of criticism and the criticism of the practice, of critical thinking and urban struggles, and of progressive intellectuals and social

movements that, on the battlefield that contemporary cities currently are, face the monster of urban capital, patriarchy, racism, and coloniality.’ (Vainer, 2022 p. 58)

In this sense, this study considers the Global South not only as a ‘passive recipient’ of knowledge but as a diverse set of contexts in which concepts and ideas are redefined, possible alternative futures are imagined, and hegemonic knowledge is challenged. As Spivak puts it, this implies that ‘listening to the subaltern voices... to ignore the subaltern today is, willy-nilly, to continue the imperialist Project’ (Spivak, 2010, p. 271). By offering critical approaches to concepts of public participation, this allows to consider the local knowledges and, more importantly, local understandings of public participation (for example, hybridised or rejected). Therefore, decolonisation does not mean a total rejection of all theory or western knowledge. Instead, it is about ‘centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives’ (Smith, 2012, p. 89).

It is important to note that this project rejects coloniality’s totalising impact and aims to avoid unintentionally reproducing hegemonic knowledge concerning the Southeast. The intention is not to replace Western systems of thought with Southeastern counterparts. Instead, the approach advocates for embracing pluriversal knowledge systems, favouring diversity over universality, coupled with an ethics of care. Moreover, as proposed by Winkler (2022), this research suggests the need to refrain from establishing unproductive binaries like state/society or formal/informal and from compartmentalising philosophical concepts such as relativism and universalism, which are rooted in Western constructs. Similarly, Arturo Escobar’s (2018) *Designs for the Pluriverse* delves into the significance of design and design thinking in constructing autonomous yet profoundly interconnected ‘local worlds’ based on a relational ontology. Utilising local case studies and design principles derived from the experiences of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Latin America, emphasising aspects like place-making, collaboration and decoloniality, Escobar (2018) encourages scholars to contemplate an alternative to modernity. He envisions a scenario where ‘all worlds need to broach the project of remaking themselves from the critical perspective of their historical location within the modern/colonial world system’ (p. 11).

To position this research within the frameworks of Southern and decolonial theories, I have drawn on feminist approaches to knowledge, theory, and praxis, where it serves as both a methodological and theoretical foundation. This framework extends beyond mere critique, functioning as a mode

of doing that foregrounds care, relationality, and tactical resistance. Southern feminists, such as Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyèwùmí (1997) and Gayatri Spivak (1988), argue for rethinking knowledge production from the Global South, challenging the epistemological dominance of the Global North. This framework positions practices of care, relationality, and resistance as central to understanding urban spaces and practices in marginalised contexts. These concepts connect with urban practices such as *hara*, tactics, and translation, essential to understanding how communities in the Global South negotiate and reclaim urban spaces.

Rather than treating these concepts as isolated, I aim to understand how they are interconnected and woven together. Following Raewyn Connell's (2007) call to move the "locus of enunciation" back to the Global South, these practices are understood not as mere responses to Northern paradigms but as standalone contributions that inform broader urban theory. Ursula Le Guin's *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (1989) serves as a critical metaphor for understanding the interconnectedness and fluidity of these feminist and Southern concepts. Rather than viewing theory as linear or hierarchical, Le Guin's concept imagines theory as a carrier bag—holding diverse and sometimes contradictory elements together. In this context, the carrier bag metaphor highlights how Southern Feminist Theorising gathers various narratives of resistance, care, and relationality in urban space, forming a non-hierarchical theoretical framework where care connects different forms of knowledge and practice from diverse urban contexts in the South.

Hélène Frichot (2022) extends this idea through the concept of knotting, a metaphor capturing the entanglement of feminist care, decolonial praxis, and tactical urbanism. Knotting reflects the relational ties that bind seemingly disparate ideas, practices, and spaces, acknowledging that knowledge is produced through a web of relationships between humans, non-humans, and the environment. This implies that theory and practice are not separate but co-constituted through ongoing engagement with the world. Knotting offers a way to understand how feminist care, urban practices, and decolonial theory come together to create new forms of understanding and action. In my work with grassroots communities, knotting unfolded through co-labouring, as articulated by Sepideh Karami (2022), where care and solidarity fostered collective resistance that disrupted dominant paradigms of urban participation. In the Southern context, care becomes a radical act, reflecting the situated experiences of marginalised communities through non-linear, iterative processes that mirror the complexities of everyday life.

The ethics of care within this framework challenge patriarchal and colonial structures that reduce urban life to transactions or extractive practices. As Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) emphasises, care is not merely an ethical stance but an ongoing, embodied practice requiring active participation in the lives of those we work with. In my engagement with grassroots communities in Jordan, the ethics of care were lived practices shaped by the realities of precarious housing, informal economies, and social marginalisation. This care, rooted in social reproduction, echoes the work of feminist thinkers like hooks (2000) and McKittrick (2015), who highlight the invisibility of care work in marginalised or subaltern communities. From this perspective, Southern feminist theory refuses to separate intellectual labour from the embodied labour of caring, nurturing, and sustaining life.

A crucial aspect of Southern Feminist Theorising is its rejection of gender-neutral framings of urban theory. Drawing on Joan Scott's (1986) work on gender as an analytic category, I argue that feminist care in participatory urban research must engage with gendered power dynamics, especially in the Global South. In Jordan, women's labour in maintaining social ties, ensuring community wellbeing, and facilitating participatory processes is often invisible, yet central to the formation of participatory spaces. As a female researcher in gendered spaces, I was able to foreground these dynamics, creating opportunities for women's contributions to be recognised as key components of urban activism and planning. Here, gender becomes not just a category of difference but a lens through which all participatory practices are interpreted and enacted. Thus, Southern Feminist Theorising, as operationalised in this research, weaves together feminist ethics of care, decolonial practices, and participatory methodologies. It acts as a relational web, entangling various theoretical notions—such as tactics, time, translation, and agency—refusing to treat them as discrete or hierarchical. Instead, they are intertwined in a dynamic process of knowledge co-production rooted in situated care, responsibility, and resistance. This horizontal field of inquiry not only informs the practical outcomes of this research but also offers a conceptual framework for future engagements with Southern urbanism and feminist theory.

To conclude, this study builds upon Southern urban theories to reframe urban experiences, moving away from European and Euro-American models toward the experiences of marginalised groups. The research is informed by contributions from anti-colonial feminist thinkers (e.g. Ahmed, 2004; Bakker, 2003; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991; hooks, 2014; Hyndman, 2004; McKittrick, 2015; Nelson, 1990; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Rose, 1997), foregrounding social reproduction and care in conceptualising urban processes. The framework of Southern Feminist

Theorising introduced in this research connects commons, agency, time, and tactics, creating a dynamic, collaborative, and situated mode of knowledge production that responds to the lived realities of marginalised communities. By centring relational, embodied practices, the research contributes to a broader understanding of urbanism as life-making and social reproduction (Miraftab, 2022), fostering new forms of resistance and solidarity within the urban fabric.

3.2.2 Participatory Action Research, Critical Ethnography and Ethno-Case Study Approaches

Informed by my critical decolonial and Southern theorising approach, this research draws on collaborative research. Approaches to the sensitive subject of participation in such a context cannot be culture- or value-free and must refuse any universal objective solutions and compartmental framing of phenomena to help people understand and reflect on issues and problems that they experience and, thereby, ‘develop consciousness with the potentiality to transform’ (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 1). To fulfil the objectives of the adopted approaches, this research was designed in accordance with the participatory action research (PAR) proposition.

According to Kindon et al. (2007), a PAR ontology suggests that human beings are dynamic agents capable of reflexivity and self-change and an epistemology that accommodates the reflexive capacities of human beings within the research process. According to Reason and Bradbury (2008), this standpoint embodies an ‘expanded epistemology’, incorporating diverse forms of knowledge to guide action. This epistemological approach challenges scientific positivism and advocates for a radical stance, contending that comprehending the world is insufficient as one must actively strive to improve it. PAR underscores a socially constructed reality wherein researchers and participants can offer multiple interpretations of a single phenomenon (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). This perspective creates opportunities for various forms of knowledge generation and the development of a rational framework for understanding everyday social activities through subjective representations (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000; Reason, 1994). PAR should not be viewed as a research approach devoid of power dynamics; instead, it adopts a situated, debatable and work-in-progress approach (Kindon et al., 2007). PAR integrates various methods to connect data collection with action, shedding light on overlooked aspects (Reinharz, 1992). This approach empowers marginalised groups by actively contributing to knowledge generation, promoting thoroughness, immediate responsiveness and establishing

credibility (Reinharz, 1992). This can be done in a twofold movement: challenging existing theories and making a difference in practice (Kindon et al., 2007).

PAR's commitment to challenging established theories and knowledge paradigms arises from its ontological stance that rejects the notion of a singular or fixed reality awaiting discovery. Instead, it embraces the acknowledgement of multiple realities. The emphasis is on collaborative knowledge production, conducted intersubjectively through research processes (Gibson-Graham, 1994; Kindon et al., 2007; Jupp, 2007). The political dimension within most PAR practices remains dynamic, characterised not by fixed ideologies but by a continual process of becoming (Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Mountz et al., 2003) and betweenness, where knowledge, analysis and action unfold among co-researchers and participants. The potential for action and the drive for social change emerging from PAR represent open and fluid possibilities contingent on the needs, wishes, reflections and actions of co-researchers (Chatterton, 2002). The transformative impact of PAR extends beyond a predefined agenda, with co-researchers actively shaping the co-production of knowledge in specific contexts. Consequently, those with whom we collaborate possess the capacity to alter our research practices and theoretical perspectives significantly.

Concerning its impact on practical applications, PAR has the potential, first, to enhance the capabilities of those engaged in the research. Participants acquire and exchange skills, enabling them to continue their research and advocacy independently, regardless of ongoing researcher support (Geraldine, 2007; Pratt, 1999). Second, the ongoing negotiation and dialogue between the researcher and participants require mutual inter-reflexivity. This practice is essential for addressing the dynamic power relations and understanding their effects on the research process and outcomes. This transformative process involves reshaping the nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants, often transcending conventional boundaries into the less defined realms of friendship and kinship (Mcfarlane & Hansen, 2007). Third, PAR places emphasis on generating diverse outputs that go beyond traditional journal articles. This may involve actively participating in social change movements as advocates or engaging in activism (Pratt, 1999). In essence, PAR requires academics to bridge the gap between academic and non-academic spheres, often involving interaction with policies and the public crucial to addressing the problems and concerns raised by PAR (Kindon et al., 2007).

In conducting this research, while I did not co-produce the interview questions with the participants from the outset, the process of research in the community was participatory in its mode. For instance, the interview questions were discussed multiple times with participants to ensure they were contextually relevant and meaningful. Additionally, the workshops were co-created in a participatory manner. Before each session, we held pre-sessions with participants to collaboratively design the workshop process, ensuring that their input shaped the structure and flow. Furthermore, the analysis of the themes and codes was also a participatory process. I engaged participants in mapping out and discussing the emerging themes, allowing them to influence the direction of the research. Based on their suggestions, some of my original codes were eliminated, demonstrating the fluidity and responsiveness of this approach. This iterative process reflects the core principles of PAR, ensuring that the participants played an active role in shaping both the research and its outcomes.

However, this methodology has been criticised and revised over the years. Theorists such as Cooke and Kothari (2001) urged practitioners to steer clear of the illusion of participation. They contend that PAR is typically portrayed as a contrast to the top-down development approach (Mohan, 2001), yet experts manipulate ‘new knowledge’ (Moose, 2001), tend to disregard power dynamics, neglect political activism and exhibit inadequate preparedness for cross-cultural management (Hailey, 2001). Nevertheless, Hicky and Mohan (2004), challenge Cooke and Kothari’s ideas of tyrannical participation by advocating for exploring new approaches to participatory work – for example, by questioning the different meanings of participation in different contexts and working towards (micro-level) interventions that may impact the macro level (e.g. oppressive systems of power). This line of thinking challenges participatory development by recognising that social change is a long-term, non-linear process and is sensitive to the specific contexts to which it is applied. Feminist researchers also critiqued and further shaped PAR. They called for an approach in which the researcher maintains a dual stance of being simultaneously distanced and immersed in the research. This involves a continuous awareness of one’s subjectivity, positionality, social position, privilege and power dynamics as well as underlying ideologies, biases, assumptions and prejudices (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000). These feminist researchers asserted PAR’s commitment to a liberationist movement and to honouring the lived experiences of participants (Brabeck, 2004; McTaggart, 1991).

Furthermore, PAR aligns seamlessly with critical ethnography as both methodological frameworks share common goals, attentiveness to power dynamics and a collaborative orientation. This compatibility allows for a fruitful and productive juxtaposition, creating

opportunities for synergistic integration (Hemment, 2007). However, critical ethnography diverges from traditional ethnographic methods by actively seeking emic knowledge and connecting ethnographic analysis to broader social, political and power structures and wider systems (Carspecken & Walford, 2001; Madison, 2005). Critical ethnography aligns with feminist and decolonial approaches, advocating for emancipation, scrutinising power dynamics and emphasising the political dimensions inherent in its analyses (Madison, 2005). As Coffey (1999) noted, this paradigm shift in ethnographic practice involves integrating perspectives from the insider and outsider (Clifford & Marcus, 1985). It recognises the researcher's positionality, viewing them as an 'interpretative lens' through which the study is conducted and acknowledging that the field can influence the researcher (Creswell, 2007).

Parker-Jenkins (2018, p. 18) introduced the term 'ethno-case study' to denote a fusion of case study and ethnography. She contends that this term more accurately captures an investigation that employ techniques associated with long-term and intensive ethnography, albeit with scope constraints, limited time in the field and restricted engagement with data (Parker-Jenkins, 2018). Ethno-cases involve the application of ethnographic methods to small-scale studies, encompassing a variety of ethnographic techniques. In the present research, I approached the case studies as ethno-cases due to time limitations and the constraints associated with studying multiple cases. From this standpoint, PAR is not merely considered 'another method' but rather an 'orientation to inquiry' (Kindon et al., 2007; Reason, 2004). This perspective requires methodological innovation to adapt and respond to the specific needs of contexts, research questions, problems and the dynamics between researchers and research participants. Intriguingly, this coincides with Southern theorising, which centres on social change and reproduction through the particularities of contexts, examining how power relations and histories construct them.

3.2.3 Translocality, Relationality and Care: Situating a Southern Approach

In this study, I try not only to understand the diverse claims for public participation in citymaking but also to forge opportunities and forms for different claims of a right to the city²⁸ that would

²⁸ This research aligns with Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city (1968), which asserts that individuals and communities should have the right to actively participate in the decision-making processes that shape their cities and advocates for more inclusive and democratic urban spaces, challenging the dominance of market forces and political elites in shaping cities.

help bring about socially just and sustainable futures in contexts where ‘the majority hold spatial, economic, political and ecological vulnerability’ (Simone and Pieterse, 2017) and are often invisible in the sweeping generalisation of ‘Northern’ theories. Therefore, no singular theory of ‘Southern’ or ‘Eastern’ urbanism exists; instead, various meso-level conceptualisations consider urban societies’ characteristics in post- or neocolonial contexts. These conceptualisations aim to derive insights into the nature of contemporary urbanism from these settings. Furthermore, the principles of Southern theorising, which seeks to disrupt the power hierarchy in knowledge creation by drawing from the practices of people on the ground, require the adoption of more inclusive, intersectional, relational and interdisciplinary approaches. These approaches should be firmly rooted in empirical research encompassing diverse urban geographies (Hammar, 2022).

With this perspective in mind, I draw on the work of several feminists, postcolonial/decolonial, Southern and critical scholars to support methodologies and approaches that create an ongoing, dynamic Southern approach (Hammar, 2022). I say that by holding planning theory’s central role in shaping practice. My point of departure in this complex realm is an acknowledgement of the translocal politics of interconnectedness across different scales in shaping cities, places, theories and practices. This serves as a fruitful starting point for challenging dualistic geographical concepts (Agnew, 2005), such as space versus place, rural versus urban and core versus periphery. Additionally, the actor-oriented focus on the social production of translocality enriches a more explicit exploration of the temporal dynamics, path dependence and time–space interconnections in socio-spatial processes.

Consequently, the concept provides a more nuanced viewpoint on how these processes exhibit social differentiation and acknowledges the role of ‘power in relation to flows and movements’ (Massey, 1991, p. 25). Translocality underscores significant spatial scales beyond national entities and their specific non-hierarchical interactions and configurations. Specifically, it highlights the significance of networked places, which, in Doreen Massey’s (1991) terms, are ‘constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as place’ (p. 28). Translocality facilitates research on mobilities by addressing flows and circulations of, among others, ideas and knowledge, offering a stimulating perspective for engaging with subjects. Thus, the present research is sensitive to the translocal horizontal and vertical relations across different locations of participation – that is, within the ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ spaces. This incorporates the tensions and interplay between the different actors in the same locality, their mobility and situatedness and

the movement and stability that are essential to understanding their translocal connections and differences with other localities.

This reframes the research through a relational approach that consistently traverses and engages various actors, sites and scales. The objective is to surpass the constraints associated with adopting a single, fixed scalar position, as is often the case in conventional methodologies. A relational approach possesses the methodological potential to advance the theorisation of urban processes from the perspective of subordinate groups (Miraftab, 2022). Its methodological emphasis on interweaving micro and macro strands across multiple sites, encompassing various forms of knowledge and action, as exemplified in Miraftab's (2016) work, can bring into focus the practices that conventional methodologies often render invisible. This implies more than just 'thinking from a location'; it involves a more rigorous form of thought that actively engages with and considers the significance of a place (Porter, 2022). In this research, I pay greater attention to how the actors and spaces of participation politics (in 'invited' and 'invented' spaces) are networked than to how finite the state or INGO representatives, among others, operate to run and initiate these spaces. These insights have led me to emphasise the relational networks between, for example, the grassroots and their contextual culture, values, ethics and knowledge and how they translate into different constellations of practices of participation. This approach entails a more demanding thinking *with* these places.

This emphasis on relations and connections as opposed to objective decisions aligns with the principles of feminist care scholarship (Gilligan, 1982; Held, 1995). Ethical decision-making and behaviour derive from a commitment to others within this framework. In an ethics of care, morality is viewed as a facilitator of effective engagement rather than a constraint limiting individual pursuits. In this context, care necessarily 'leads the carer to action' (Cohen & Fenster, 2021, p. 278). By actively assuming roles as caregivers and participating in potential critical acts of care, we progress towards 'care as a radical practice' (Miraftab, 2022, p 105). This nuanced socio-political philosophy of care complicates, reconnects, focuses pressure, protests and fosters forms of listening and mutuality. 'Thinking with' enables us to intricately weave together and disentangle elements. As Donna Haraway (2016) puts it, this approach also permits us to 'stay with the trouble' and narrate its story rather than propose a simplistic solution for the future.

This entails ‘acknowledging everyone contributing to the liveability of our cities and regions’, with consideration for all subjective experiences (Trogal, 2017, p. 192). Feminist scholars, including hooks (2000), Collins (1990), McKittrick (2015) and others, have highlighted the devaluation of the role of care work, particularly by women in subordinate communities, in sustaining the essential conditions for life. This leads to conceptualising care work as unpaid labour crucial for life-making (Miraftab, 2022). Miraftab (2022) suggests that a Southern perspective involves formulating a radical care practice inspired by ‘practices of alternative movements, committed to practices of care and solidarity but insisting on dis-enrolling/decoupling care work from the accumulationist agenda of patriarchal-racial-capitalism’ (p. 107).

These relational, translocal caring aspects also demand a rethinking of positionality. This refers to a consciousness – be it feminist, postcolonial, decolonial, Southern, other or a combination thereof – that there is always a particular somewhere from which a situated someone speaks (Chakrabarty, 1992; Haraway, 1990) and in which historically informed, context-specific relations of power are always present (Hammar, 2022). In the next sub-section, I reflect on how I enacted a tactical positionality that helped me navigate the fieldwork’s complexities.

3.2.4 Multi-Layered Tactical Positionality

To delineate my Southern methodology and interpretations and situate myself to reflect on relations of power in the field, I employed a decolonial feminist, reflexive and engaged approach to consider the knowledge produced between myself and the participants (Mullings, 1999; Rose, 1997). Feminist scholars emphasise the need for researchers to reflect on their privilege as it influences decisions about which questions to ask, whose voices to include and how to interpret shared information (Parr, 2015; Porter et al., 2012; Rose, 1997). Positionality encompasses social position and factors such as political persuasion, ontological and epistemological stance and assumptions about human nature and agency (Bahari, 2010; Marsh et al., 2017; Sikes, 2004). For this research, I acknowledge the complexity of my multi-layered identities, which played a significant role in the dynamism of the fieldwork and its outputs.

Being immersed in different sites with different roles in multiple cases during the fieldwork required me to be aware and practice self-reflexivity regarding how I situated and represented myself in these instances. Because positionality is not a singular concept but a multifaceted process (Lusambili et al., 2020), it can create tensions between the researcher and participants (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). The multiple positionalities are crucial to contemplate in this

study given that I challenged the binary nature of an insider-outsider relationship (McDougall & Henderson-Brooks, 2021) and actively endeavoured to move ‘beyond the ethnic lens’ (Schiller et al., 2006), where the distinction between insider and outsider was not clearly delineated (Bourke, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The intersection of my status as a Muslim (wearing the hijab حجاب) and a working female mother would be expected to neatly position me as an insider when interviewing and researching local grassroots organisations and their communities. However, this was not the case; many other positionalities had a significant role in leaving me outside their circle of trust. For instance, my middle-class position²⁹ as a researcher based in a Western country with Jordanian-Jordanian³⁰ origins shifted my position immediately to an outsider researcher. However, these positionalities were crucial when interviewing officials from the Great Amman Municipality (GAM)³¹ or other institutions, for example. Positioning myself as a young woman conducting ‘qualitative’ research³² could potentially undervalue my work and research, necessitating me to switch hats. I recognise that developing a tactical positionality (see Figure 3.1) where I moved between the multiple identities I carry helped me achieve a position closer to that of an insider or sometimes even a friend than that of a researcher. During my research, I was cautious about how and where to reveal my multiple identities, with some being more prominent than others given the context, space, actors and intersections.

Nonetheless, as delineated in Figure 3.1 (dashed lines), the intricate web of my multi-layered positionalities in one locality exerted influences on other positionalities in distinct localities. Hence, a heightened level of caution was imperative in determining when and where to manifest these positionalities. For instance, my approach to communities engaged in participatory design programmes led by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), such as GIZ, differed from my approach to high-ranking officials at GAM. As shown in Figure 3.1, with officials, I

²⁹ Participants made direct assumptions about my background when they inquired about my place of residence in Amman, which is situated on the Western side of the city (i.e. the more affluent part, as discussed in the previous chapter).

³⁰ Jordan is mostly characterised as a binational society. Most Palestinians were given the right to citizenship after the 1948 and 1967 Arab Israeli wars, which created conflict between Jordanians and Palestinians. Although this tension has been relieved for the time being, it still exists in the former neighbourhood camps settled by Jordanians/Palestinians. The three sites of the GIZ projects were located in Jordanian/Palestinian communities.

³¹ Most of GAM’s high-ranking officials are Jordanians from well-known tribes.

³² In the academic and professional spheres of Jordan, there is a prevailing notion that qualitative research holds less significance than quantitative research, often associated with stereotypical perceptions of qualitative research as predominantly conducted by female researchers.

deliberately highlighted my Jordanian identity, considering that the majority of individuals employed in governmental entities are local Jordanians, affiliated with established kinship and tribal networks rather than a Palestinian background. However, I employed a different approach in my interactions with local communities. Given that most sites featured a mix of Jordanians and Palestinians among the residents, I opted to convey my 'locality' primarily through language and appearance, avoiding explicit emphasis on national identity.

Yet, this does not mean that tactically revealing specific positions made me a true insider. For example, during meetings with the communities involved in the participatory design, my position shifted continuously from insider to outsider or in-between, contingent on the dynamics of my interactions with participants. In certain conversations, I was addressed as a 'daughter', a term loaded with cultural significance in the Jordanian context and suggesting a kin relationship. However, this dynamic shifted in other instances when participants introduced me to their acquaintances as a 'researcher from the UK'. My status as an insider or outsider changed at various moments of my engagement in field research. Consequently, I must acknowledge that throughout the research, my position leaned towards an in-between stance, in line with what Bayeck (2022) refers to as 'betweenness'.

Crucially, I did not always find satisfaction in the dynamics of this relationship and the associated entitlement. A notable instance was when I interviewed architects from UN-Habitat GIZ and their architectural partners in the participatory projects, as detailed in Chapter 6. They perceived me as a privileged architect and researcher who should comprehend the challenges of working with participation in the context of Jordan. Although some of them urged me to turn off my recorder, they treated me as an insider when they learned about my technical architecture background and my pursuit of a PhD at a reputable foreign academic institution. This position presented a dilemma for me, as recorded in my fieldnotes: *'On the one hand, it allowed me to obtain their full, honest perspective; on the other hand, I am aware that their honesty was influenced by the assumption that I share their perspective. Perhaps, given my positionality as a young researcher, a trained architect in commercial firms in Jordan, and a middle-class woman'* (Fieldnote, 05/07/2021).

It is essential to highlight that many members and leaders within grassroots organisations readily formed friendships and established trust with me given that they had experienced similar challenges in the past. This common ground served as an entry point, facilitating the establishment

of trust within the communities. Building on these relationships with leaders and members of grassroots organisations, I fostered friendships and close connections with the communities they served. For instance, as I discuss extensively in Chapters 7 and 8, I volunteered for 6 months at the Hara organisation and contributed to the Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail project. Over time, this involvement positioned me as an insider in the area, notably because I collaborated with the founder of the Hara organisation, which is trusted and held in high regard by the community.

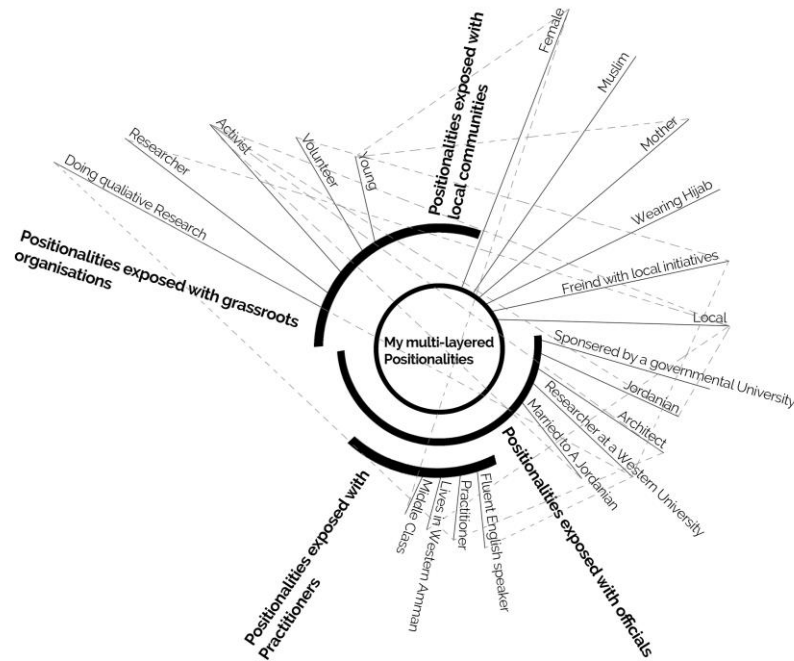


Figure 3.1: The researcher's multi-layered positionality. (Author)

I am aware that my role as a Southern decolonial researcher inevitably shaped my interpretation of participants' responses, influencing the formulation of questions in interviews and focus groups and the selection of participants to engage with (Rowe, 2014; Skeggs, 1997). Still, I actively endeavoured to maintain self-awareness during the fieldwork and data analysis, consistently reflecting on my positionality and its potential direct or indirect impact on the research. Furthermore, I documented in my reflexive fieldnotes how my positionality changed and evolved throughout the research process (see Appendix H). For instance, during interviews with activists, our relationship was initially built on shared values and backgrounds, fostering a positive connection. This dynamic evolved throughout my PhD journey, notably when we collaboratively established '*makāna*' (discussed in more detail in section 3.2.5). This transformation expanded our relationship into one of friendship, cultivating a more open and honest rapport. This shift allowed me to better understand their perspectives and where their positions originated from.

Finally, I acknowledge the significance of recognising the nuances in the positionality of insider and outsider and how these positions are intricately tied to power dynamics (Collins, 1999). It is crucial to explicitly articulate the privileges inherent in the researcher's role and how they influence the design, processes and knowledge creation in PAR, as Kapoor (2005) emphasises. Throughout the entire research journey, I have remained mindful of the multifaceted power dynamics and the power vested in the choices I made, from the selection of specific actors for study to the translation and representation of this network in academic written work. I am also aware that my interpretation constitutes what McDowell (1998) terms 'a single narrative told at a particular time to a particular audience', whereas a spectrum of potential alternative translations exists beyond what is presented in this dissertation. This awareness has prompted continuous reflection on how to share power with participants, including community members, co-researchers or grassroots organisation members. Throughout my research, I sought various approaches (i.e. collaborative approaches in the workshops and the active involvement of the participants in the prolonged iterative 'fieldwork' process, as discussed in section 3.5), primarily enacted in the collective effort I co-founded with others, namely, *makāna* (further discussed in Chapter 9).

3.2.5 Activist Research: Practicing a Southern Approach

Over the years, there has been a continuous effort to 'pluralise' and 'rejuvenate' urban studies (Yiftachel, 2022), where many scholars 'critiqued', 'challenged' and 'produced' new thought to extend planning theory by drawing from other fields. However, critical questions still surface in the debate around the 'Southern/Eastern' turn. In the recent publication by Yiftachel and Nisa (2022), many scholars³³ critically ask: How do we theorise action? How do we move forward? 'How is the knowledge we produce enabling us to find new ways of understanding, moving, and intervening into "our" cities in different ways?' (p. 83). For Bhan (2022), the ethos of the Southern positionality and theorising is to move beyond merely producing knowledge and theories to imagine new ways of moving and acting in the lifeworlds that create new modes of practice that challenge the dominant forms of practice (Bhan, 2019). For the planning scholar engaged with communities, this means an expanded and flexible role due to constant reflexivity (Vasudevan & Novoa, 2022). These involvements elicit fresh viewpoints and foster a feeling of connection that can only arise when individuals actively participate in action and exert effort (Latour, 2004;

³³ For example, Vanessa Watson, Gautam Bhan, Mona Fawaz and Mona Harb.

Simone, 2015). Drawing on my methodological choices and what Bhan (2019, 2002) calls the ‘core ethic’ of the Southern inquiry, that is, its commitment to producing thought and praxis and seeing what happens when we do, this research is dedicated to meaningfully contributing to and ‘acting’ at scale and with urgency in ongoing community work by addressing the vulnerable majority (Bhan, 2022). In this context, I position myself as an activist committed, throughout this research, to social transformation and advocating resistance alongside those defending public rights or opposing entrenched structures of oppression.

As articulated by Pain et al. (2007), an activist research approach devoted to social change must confront power dynamics, demonstrate solidarity and build spaces for critical dialogue. This approach aims to inspire audiences to alter their perspectives and world behaviours. It involves collaboratively generating knowledge with others to produce critical interpretations and readings of the world that are accessible, understandable to all and actionable. In this framework, substantial social transformation does not emerge solely from employing participatory techniques or assessment methods to extract the opinions of participants and involved communities. Instead, it entails collaborating with these participants to comprehend how policies operate, enabling them to resist and construct shared futures. Participants may contribute diverse skills and perspectives to the discourse, united by their shared commitment to collaboratively addressing and rectifying various issues impacting all involved individuals. From this context, opportunities for collective action (Robinson, 2022) and the establishment of solidarities arise.

However, this commitment also added a new positionality and standpoint to my research and the way I carried it out. Figure 3.2 illustrates the activist aspect that later produced my practice in this process (establishing *makāna*), a position that was also played tactically for this research. While my engagement with communities, following numerous meetings and collaborative efforts through *makāna*, positioned me more as a citizen activist, adopting such a role posed challenges when I interacted with officials or practitioners due to the politically charged nature of activism in Jordan’s authoritarian context. Furthermore, my association with *makāna* now identifies me more as a scholar activist within the broader landscape of activism conducted by grassroots organisations and urban collectives.

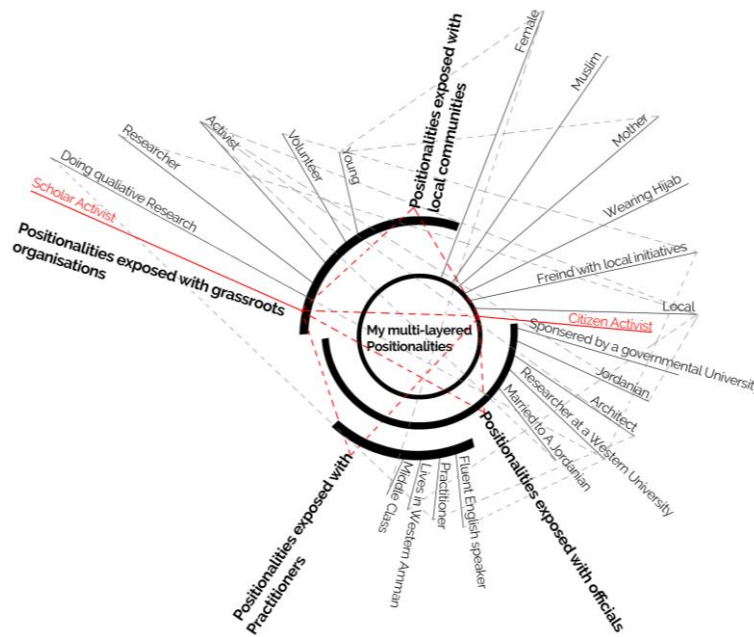


Figure 3.2: The positionality of activism within the context of multi-layered positionalities. (Author)

At the local, session-based level, effective and impartial facilitation remains attainable even as the overarching goals of the work maintain a highly political and strategic orientation, with a focus on transformation (Wadsworth, 2000). Furthermore, the approach involves co-producing contextually relevant knowledge beneficial to groups in their endeavours (Pain et al., 2007). This political stance eschews predetermined blueprints for change in favour of a relational and ethical approach, acknowledging that everyone can build change daily (Pain et al., 2007). In this undertaking, it is crucial to contemplate the inflexibility of social roles and categories, which may obscure our awareness of the potential for transformative dialogue during the research. For instance, throughout the research process, I refrained from applying labels such as ‘researchers’ or ‘activists’. Instead, I aimed to discern the numerous ruptures between groups, embracing and questioning differences and conflicts to foster an environment in which everyone felt empowered to contribute to social change. This mostly occurred when carrying out the workshops or group meetings. First, we would meet to discuss the methods and key questions perceived by all as essential, without imposing pre-planned criteria. Then, after conducting the workshop, we would hold another reflection section to discuss further how everyone felt about the previous meeting and workshop. Through this approach, I have come to recognise that oppression is not solely external and directed at the ‘other’; instead, I, too, am subject to oppression and inadvertently subject others to it. This realisation prompted me to acknowledge my own role in perpetuating inequality and injustices and compelled me to address broader instances of systematic oppression (Cloke, 2002; Kapoor, 2005).

In this research, which was conducted collaboratively with the participants, some of whom later became co-researchers (as shown in Chapter 9), my objective was to expand the spaces for encounter and solidarity. The creation of ‘makāna’ (see sections 3.3.3 here and 9.6 in Chapter 9) was intended to bring people together for dwelling, communication and discussion, transcending the dichotomy of activists and those considered ‘Others’. Chatterton (2002) has emphasised the crucial role that temporary autonomous spaces and social centres play in environments not mediated by consumer relations or profit in our neoliberal era (Chatterton, 2002; Chatterton & Hodkinson, 2006). These spaces offer opportunities for transformative dialogue, mutual learning and, inevitably, conflict (further discussed in section 3.3.3).

In sum, this research goes beyond merely informing policy or enhancing service delivery; it can be viewed as a vehicle for liberation. It offers a relational framework that acknowledges the significance of place-based history and lived experiences concerning how our knowledge is produced and shared (Smith, 1999) (see Figure 3.3).

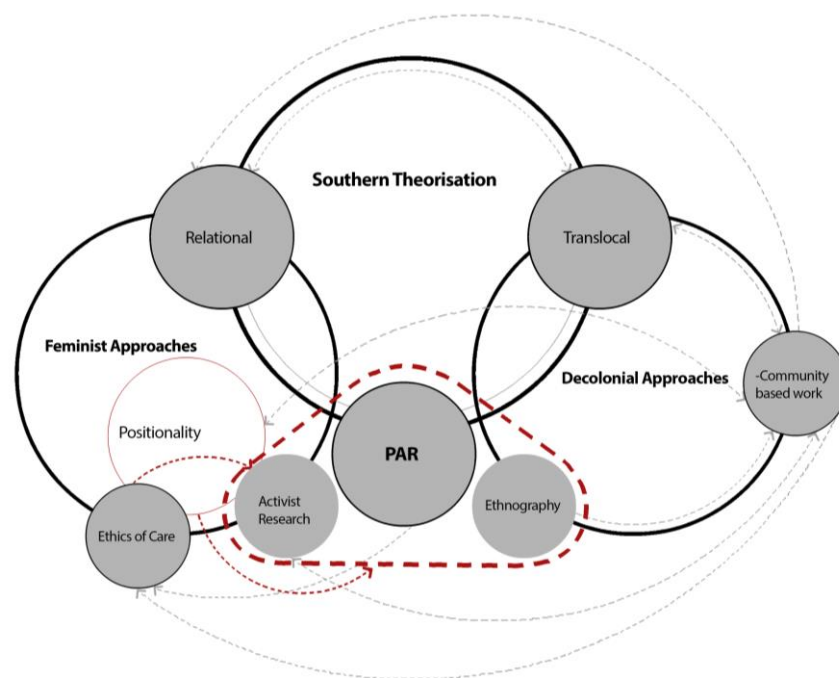


Figure 3.3: The operationalisation of Southern theorisation in this research. (Author)

‘In every encounter, across every site, and within each moment, I find myself navigating the spaces in between, caught amidst various positionalities. I am neither solely a researcher nor exclusively an activist. I do not hail from these locales, nor have I resided here. Yet, it feels inherently correct to be present, to bear witness to the narratives unfolding. There is no sense of

alienation; instead, a sense of belonging begins to emerge. Perhaps, in the end, this is where I belong. I carry within me multiple dimensions of in-betweenness, enabling me to fully immerse myself, to embody these experiences, but also it allows me to uncover the other sides.' (Fieldnote reflecting on how I felt about my positionalities when conducting this research, 03/10/2022)

3.3 Fieldwork Phases and Methods

Various qualitative methodologies have been employed to underpin the research problem and address the research questions. The study's first phase involved theoretical analysis, a review of formal documents and semi-structured and in-depth interviews. These methods were instrumental in situating the research within its disciplinary framework and understanding the participants' roles and conceptualisations of participation. Subsequently, in the second and third phases, an assortment of qualitative methods was used, primarily guided by the ethno-case study approach. The next sub-sections will provide a concise examination of the structure and application of these methods.

3.3.1 Phase 1: The Selection of Actors, Cases and Sites of Participation

This phase played a significant role in facilitating subsequent stages of the research. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the discourse, activation and evolution of participation across various levels – namely, at the institutional level (i.e. GAM), civic organisations and individual levels (i.e. activists and academics) – the primary focus was not only on mapping how participation is discussed but also on identifying the facilitators of participation and understanding their motivations. Beyond contextualising participation, the in-depth interviews conducted during this phase with leaders and members of grassroots organisations and urban collectives served the dual purpose of informing the selection of ethno-cases for analysis and establishing a foundation for subsequent interactions. This step involved manifesting my positionality, delineating various methodological aspects and addressing the research's impact. Moreover, it played a crucial role in establishing relationships with participants, who provided valuable suggestions for potential cases, actors and participants.

Given the relatively nascent status of the concept of public participation in the Jordanian context, this research began at a foundational level. Consequently, a preliminary exploratory step arose as

a necessity, aimed at acquiring a nuanced understanding of the actors and their perspectives regarding public participation, along with the spaces they create and promote. Moreover, the scarcity of documentation, archives and data sources compelled me to produce a comprehensive overview through in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews and an analysis of grey literature. This encompassed online documents, blogs, oral presentations in local workshops and conferences, fact sheets, newsletters and bulletins, policy documents and records, visual and mass media, formal reports and publications from GAM, documents and reports from INGOs, unpublished theses and posts and comments on social media platforms.

The selection of interviewees at this stage relied on a purposeful sampling strategy, aligning with the non-random approach recommended by Morgan and Scannell (1998). As Bryman, (2012) described, purposeful sampling facilitates the strategic selection of interviewees to ensure their relevance to the research questions. According to Morgan and Scannell (1998), ‘purposive sampling’ intentionally selects participants based on the project’s aims and objectives to generate pertinent and unbiased knowledge. In this research, the selection process was intentional and concerned individuals working in, activating and educating about public participation after the Arab Spring. Among the various purposeful sampling strategies available (Cresswell, 2007), two were employed in this research: maximum variation and snowball sampling. Maximum variation, a widely used qualitative research approach, involves selecting interviewees based on predetermined criteria to capture diverse perspectives (Creswell, 2007). Concurrently, snowball sampling was used to identify participants suggested by others during this phase, expanding the pool of individuals beneficial to the pursuit of the research objectives.

Table 3.1 below identifies the actors interviewed at this stage and the selection criteria (see Appendix F) that led to the identification of the ethno-cases and a general understanding of the different approaches to and meanings of participation. The criteria were designed to be inclusive and intersectional regarding multiple factors, such as gender, age group, educational background and nationality. The sampling process was stopped when no new information emerged, following the principle of redundancy as the primary criterion (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202). Over three months, from March 2021 to June 2021, I conducted a comprehensive set of interviews involving a diverse group of participants. This included 12 activists, six practitioners, seven current/former participatory consultants, 16 leaders and/or founders of civic or grassroots organisations, 22 officials from GAM, 6 current/former official planners at GAM, two students and nine academics and researchers. All interviews were conducted in Arabic or occasionally in a combination of

Arabic and English, depending on the preferences of the interviewees. Furthermore, each interview session was recorded, and the content was transcribed verbatim.

Table 3.1: Categories of actors interviewed in the first phase of the research.

Interviewee Typology	Method		Role (Description of their relation to practices or spaces of participation)
	In-Depth	Semi-Structured	
Activists			Different activists interested in advocating for spaces of participation
Academics and researchers			Educate and research urban planning
Practitioners			Working or have experience in working with participatory approaches
Current/Former Participatory Consultants			Working with different practices, organisations, INGOs and institutions around developing and designing participatory approaches
Current/Former Civic or Grassroots Organisations leaders and/or founders			Producing, imagining and advocating for participation and urban rights in the city
Officials at GAM			Authorising and funding urban design and planning activities.
Current/Former Official Planners at GAM			Designing former strategic and master plans for Amman
University students			Studying architecture

3.3.2 Phase 2: The Ethno-Case Approach

The second fieldwork phase employed a case study approach within the ethnographic framework. The main objective of incorporating case studies is to enhance the comprehension of complex social phenomena by preserving the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003), using multiple sources of evidence (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 150). Payne (2004) noted that the case study is particularly well-suited for investigations requiring a clear and in-depth understanding of several social units. Given that this study seeks to unravel the dynamics of participation in both ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ spaces in Amman, examining how grassroots participatory practices and spaces (re)shape the everyday aspects of the city, a focused and comprehensive analysis of specific locations is essential. This approach allows for exploring how participation and resistance theories intersect with reality, enabling the imagining of new counter-practices. Acknowledging that knowledge is intertwined with people and their environments has led me to adopt the case study approach. This choice enables active engagement with individuals and situating myself within a specific time and place, facilitating a better understanding of tacit

knowledge for learning and practical application. Consequently, I selected multiple case studies, including two representing ‘invited’ spaces of participation and five representing ‘invented’ spaces of participation. The intention was not solely to compare and contrast each case but to comprehend people’s constructions in their respective contexts (Mertens, 2010, p. 226). This approach aimed to synthesise an understanding of the dynamics of public participation across the city.

Researching multiple cases offers diverse perspectives on the research issue and promotes richness by gathering data through various research methods involving ‘multiple sources of information’ (Creswell, 2007, p. 73; Denscombe, 2007). The objective here was to conduct in-depth research based on an extensive investigation period in a specific location, aiming to deepen the understanding of complex ‘real-life’ events and relate them to conceptual understandings of phenomena. Additionally, this approach sought to enhance ‘the precision, the validity and stability of the findings by looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 29). The in-depth and semi-structured interviews conducted in the initial phase of the research guided the selection of case studies. However, distinct criteria were introduced for the different spaces of participation. One criterion common to both spaces was the timing of the cases, emphasising the importance of investigating ongoing cases during the research period. This approach allowed immersion in the site and participation in various activities to form a comprehensive picture. Combining methods and triangulation techniques strengthened the research methodology (Merriam, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

In the context of ‘invited’ spaces of participation, following the completion of the initial phase of this research, I deemed it essential to adopt a case selection strategy based on the organisations spearheading the participation process. This choice was informed by the organisations’ distinct operational methodologies and structures within the Jordanian context. Furthermore, within each organisation, I chose specific projects as subjects for study and analysis. This selection aimed to unravel the intricacies of the participation process and its outcomes, which requires a comprehensive understanding of the actors involved and their roles within each organisation. Distinct actors and approaches emerged from diverse projects within the same organisation. As a result, I selected two organisations, GIZ and UN-Habitat, as case studies to investigate invited spaces of participation in Amman, with two projects chosen for each organisation (see Table 3.2).

The selection of the two organisations was guided by specific criteria. As discussed earlier, one criterion was the ongoing status of the projects during the fieldwork. Another criterion was their recognition as exemplifying best practices of ‘public participation’ within the framework of government policies on participation and citizen-centred approaches to governance. Both case studies are situated in eastern Amman, in keeping with the government’s emphasis on addressing issues in economically disadvantaged areas of the city (see Figure 3.4). In the context of the bottom-up approach to participation through grassroots, the five case studies were chosen based on several criteria (see Figure 3.5). These cases exemplify the practices of grassroots organisations and urban collectives, as detailed in Chapters 4 and 5. They fall outside the purview of any other civic organisation in Jordan (see Table 3.3). The selection also considered their diverse activity typologies, relationships with the state, organisational structures, sizes, social groups involved and locations. Additionally, their social accessibility played a practical role: all selected practices expressed interest in participating in this project and accepted my requests for an extended engagement period within the organisation. Figure 3.6 shows both ‘invited’ state-led spaces of participation and ‘invented’ or grassroots spaces of participation in Amman. State-led participation primarily targets the eastern parts of the city, which is identified as inhabited by marginalised and economically disadvantaged communities. However, as detailed in Chapter 6, these spaces are conceptualised and initiated by INGOs, driven by, for instance, relief programmes or service provider projects. Their exclusive focus on eastern Amman is justified by the fact that these areas are deemed the most ‘disadvantaged’, requiring rehabilitation for sustained community development through participation (see Chapter 6). In contrast, grassroots participation spaces, discussed in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, are dispersed throughout Amman and beyond. Unlike state-led initiatives, these spaces emerge not solely from a need tied to the most marginalised economic class but are formed based on shared goals or common needs, encompassing diverse areas of the city and inclusive of all individuals.

In this context, this research phase lasted 1 year and 3 months, and part of it was conducted remotely from Sheffield using online methods. The research unfolded during two visits to Amman in 2021–2022. The initial visit occurred between March 2021 and September 2021, extending online until April 2022. The next visit took place in July 2022 and lasted two months. During this second visit, the first case study, which concerns the ‘invited’ spaces of participation (Improving Living Conditions in disadvantaged areas in Amman and Urban Micro Lungs projects, as detailed in Chapter 6), had been ongoing and established for over 6 months. This extended period allowed for the on-site analysis of the participation goals articulated by the project stakeholders.

Additionally, for the other cases, it provided an opportunity to delve deeper into the processes over an extended timeframe.

During this phase, my primary research activities can be briefly summarised as in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with various stakeholders, as outlined in Table 3.4. The interviews were characterised by an ‘open-ended nature’ (Yin, 2003) and comprised discussions about facts, opinions on events and attitudes towards other involved actors. Participants were also encouraged to suggest other individuals for interviews. Informal chats (see Figure 3.7), particularly with community members, were crucial during this phase. These spontaneous and unstructured conversations were deemed to ‘convey a deeper feeling for or more emotional closeness to the persons studied’ (Jayaratne, 1983). Ann Oakley (1981, 1998) argued that establishing a close and equal relationship with the researched individuals can lead to more fruitful and significant data. Howard Becker (1971) advocated for a conversational interview approach, supported by feminists like Ann Oakley (1998), who contended that prescribed interviewing practices are morally indefensible in feminist research. This approach aimed to elicit more valid information, allowing respondents to express their thoughts freely. Feminist scholars (see, e.g. Ahmed, 2014; Hooks, 1994; Lorde, 2013) assert that emotions are integral to the pursuit of truth and unstructured in-depth interviews where interviewees feel at ease are preferred for studying emotions. Such conversational interviews aim to eliminate the hierarchy between the researcher and the subject, enabling them to engage more deeply with their experiences and their role in producing knowledge. In this context, the interview process was more open, fluid and informal, allowing people to feel safe and open to expressing their emotions as I also engaged emotionally with them. This motivated me further to respond with *care* and responsibility to support their causes and challenge the oppressive structures (see section 3.3.3).

In this research, deep observations served as an additional methodology. Throughout my field visits, I received numerous invitations to participatory workshops, community meetings and various gatherings. I employed fieldnotes³⁴ and photography as tools to document these events meticulously. Frequently, these observational experiences evolved into opportunities for more profound engagement with the participants. I was often welcomed into their homes, sharing meals with their families, fostering stronger relationships and building trust. Furthermore, these

³⁴ I reflected daily in my fieldnote journal as I was observing or sometimes during an interview or after informal conversations or long walks.

moments transformed organically into urban walks while conducting observations on-site or engaging in informal conversations. Participants would accompany me, offering insights into the spatial conditions of their sites or sharing narratives about their people and communities. This, in turn, created new avenues for meeting additional individuals during walks and engaging in more informal conversations. Some of these encounters led to in-depth interviews.

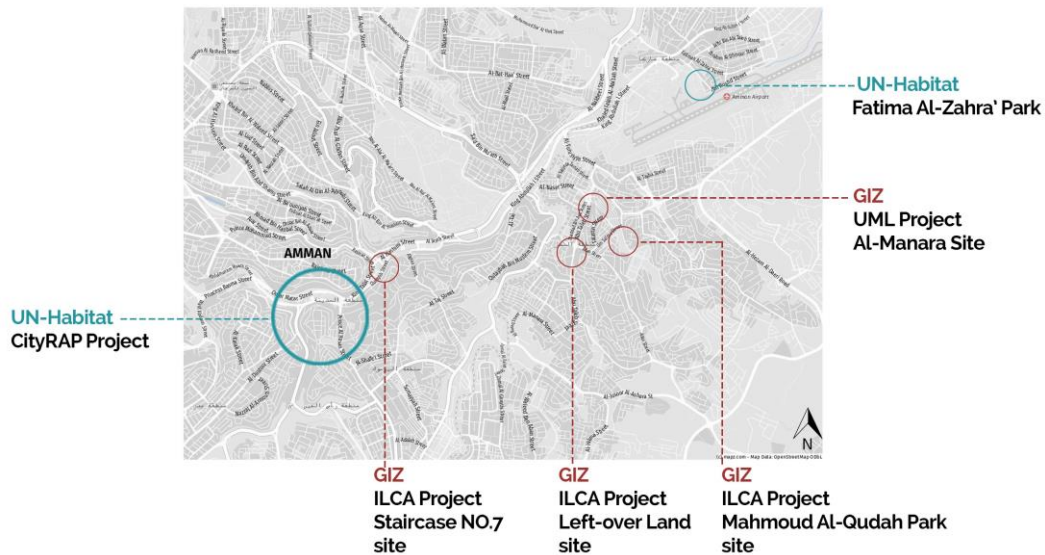


Figure 3.4: The site locations for the ‘invited’ spaces of participation case studies. (Author)

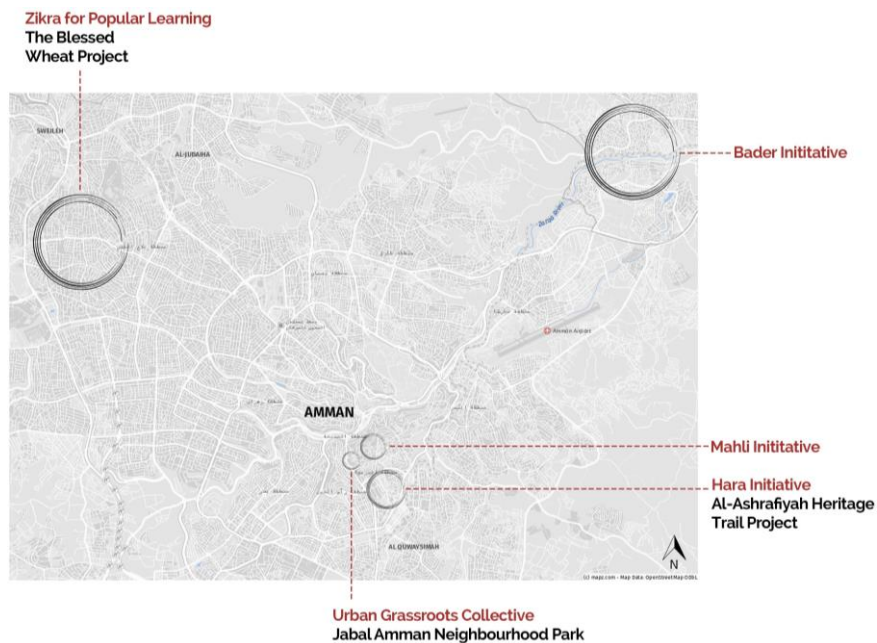


Figure 3.5: The site locations for ‘invented’ spaces of participation case studies. (Author)

Table 3.2: The ‘invited’ spaces of participation cases and selected projects

Spaces of Participation	Organisation	Projects	Sites	Activity	Stakeholders								
					INGO	GAM	Civic organisations	Private Practice	Local representatives	Community members	Social mobilisers	Refugees	
‘Invited’ Spaces of Participation	GIZ	ILCA	Staircase No. 7		Rehabilitating the staircase network, greening and proposing sustainable drainage solutions	2 Interviews	2 Interviews		3 Interviews		5 interviews	3 interviews	
			Left-over Land		Transforming the small left over land into a community garden	2 Interviews	2 Interviews		3 interviews		6 interviews	3 interviews	
			Mahmoud Al Qudah Park		Rehabilitate the existing amenities, increase the use of green canopies, and build a safer playground area	2 interviews	2 interviews		3 interviews	1 interview	4 interviews	3 interviews	
		UML	Al-Manara site		Implement a fast-growing urban forest in small infills	5 interviews	3 interviews	2 interviews	4 interviews	5 interviews	6 interviews	4 interviews	

	UN-Habitat	Block-by-Block	Fatima Al-Zahra' Park			Co-designing a public park in eastern Amman	2 interviews	1 interview	2 interviews			4 interviews		
		CityRAP Lite	Amman Downtown			Implementing short-term intervention measures to enhance the resilience of flood-prone areas	2 interviews	1 interview	3 interviews		4 interviews			

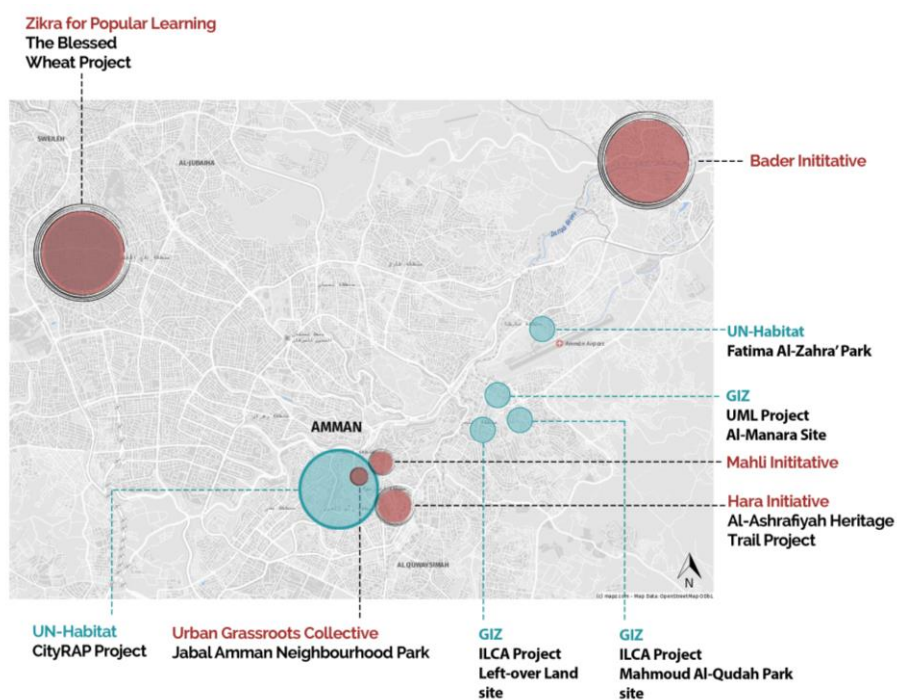


Figure 3.6: Map location of 'invited' and 'invented' or 'grassroots' spaces of participation. (Author)



Figure 3.7: Informal chats in different locations during the fieldwork. Author, 2021.

Table 3.4: The methods used in the different cases of the ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ spaces of participation.

Spaces of Participation	Organisation / Collective	Project	In-Depth Interviews	Semi-Structured Interviews	Informal chats	Urban Walks	Observation	Event Ethnography	Volunteering as a member in facilitating the project	Workshop	Documents	Digital Media
‘Invited’ Spaces of Participation	GIZ	ILCA										
		UML						Five events		One workshop		
	UN-Habitat	Bock-by-Block										
		CityRAP Lite										
‘Invented’ Spaces of Participation	Zikra for Popular Learning	Al-Barakeh Wheat						Three events				
	Hara Initiative	Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail						Ten events	Six months	Two workshops		
	Mahli Initiative	Anti-gentrification in Jabal Lweibdeh										
	Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park collective	The NYIT Park						Three events				
	Bader Initiative	Bader										

While investigating the ‘invited’ spaces of participation, my initial intent was to conduct more extensive ethnographic observations, potentially involving a form of residency within entities like the GIZ offices, the architectural office overseeing designs or the civic organisations facilitating participatory workshops. However, this proved unfeasible at this stage as these institutions declined my requests for various reasons, including COVID-19 measures, organisational policies and confidentiality concerns. Consequently, I adopted an event ethnography approach, focusing on capturing short but intensive periods to study key moments within or outside the institution. Examples of these moments include participatory workshops and community meetings. This method allowed me to observe the interactions and engagements of individuals, stakeholders and actors in a specific setting (Corson & MacDonald, 2012; Peter Brosius & Campbell, 2010).

In contrast, in the case of the ‘invented’ spaces of participation, I actively volunteered with the Hara Initiative on their Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail project. My involvement extended to conducting research, engaging with individuals, contributing to designing and facilitating two participatory workshops (see Figure 3.8), and collaborating on formal reports for the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the project’s funding entity (see Appendix E). Over 6 months, I volunteered 3 days per week at the Hara office in Al-Ashrafiyah, collaborating closely with four other organisation members. With other grassroots organisations and collectives, my participation primarily took the form of interviews, in-depth informal conversations, observations and event ethnography. Given the time constraints of the research and the lack of a regular formal space³⁵ for most grassroots entities to conduct activities, residing with them for continuous observation posed a logistical challenge. Nevertheless, I made a concerted effort to attend all group meetings and workshops.

Importantly, I maintained a reflexive fieldnote journal throughout all stages of this work (see Figures 3.9 and 3.10). This journal served as a daily reflective tool, capturing observations across various contexts, encounters and experiences during fieldwork. Comprising a blend of textual notes, sketches and photographs, these fieldnotes also contributed to the insights presented in this dissertation (see Appendix H and Appendix K).

³⁵ Except for the members of Zikra and Hara, organisation members had full time jobs outside their activism work.



Figure 3.8: Meetings with the members of Hara initiative to organise community workshops. Author, 2021

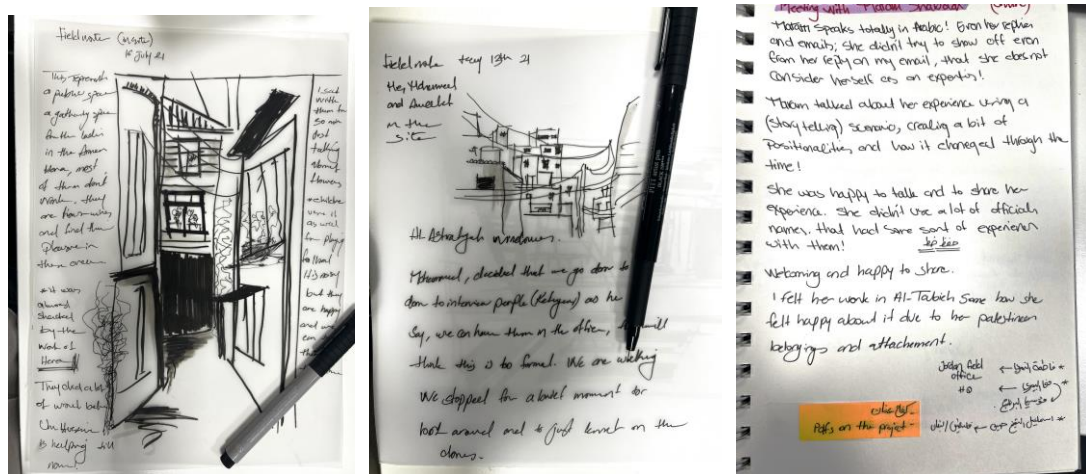


Figure 3.9: Fieldnotes during the urban walks and informal chats and after. (Author)

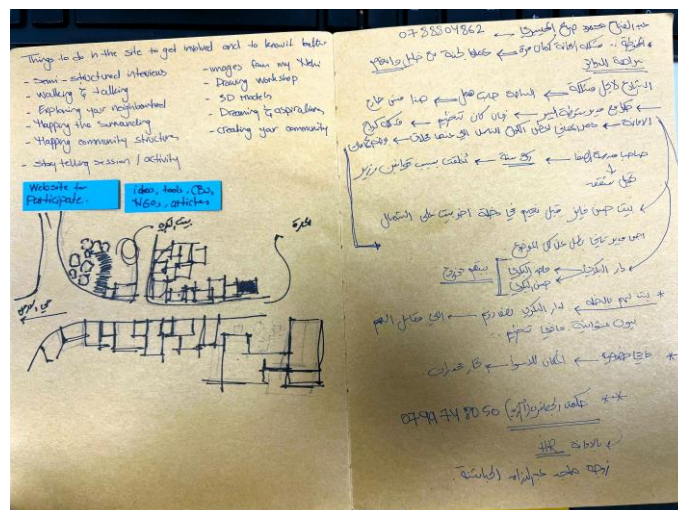


Figure 3.10: Fieldnotes during the urban walks and informal chats and after. (Author)

3.3.3 Phase 3: Taking Action, Taking Responsibility

As explained earlier in this chapter, my research aligns with the fundamental ethics of Southern theory inquiry and PAR, grounded in a commitment to social transformation through active engagement. This realisation took shape and evolved after conducting in-depth interviews in the first phase of the research and continued to develop throughout the second phase. During numerous interviews and informal conversations in the first two phases, it became apparent that there was a pressing need for a space – a practice – of action, a forum for dialogue and change where emerging grassroots organisations could connect, collaborate and foster greater solidarity and emotional bonds. As a researcher, I encountered significant challenges in locating these new participation practices in local organisations or understanding the nature of their work and the knowledge they generate and disseminate. This challenge resonated with many activists and leaders of local initiatives with whom I engaged during the initial and subsequent phases of the research. Our discussions consistently revolved around the imperative for a space of encounter, solidarity, empowerment and resistance.

In this context, in collaboration with four other activists, practitioners and researchers, I explored the prospect of establishing a horizontally aligned space to form a new alternative practice that engages with real-life issues. This initiative emerged from recognising the latent work and knowledge in grassroots collectives, driven by the desire to forge connections and integrate these diverse endeavours into a cohesive network. To envision this collaboratively, the four researchers and I organised informal gatherings in person and online, inviting individuals interested in a dialogue about just, inclusive and participatory approaches to cities that challenge neoliberal capitalist structures. Through several meetings, a more precise understanding and vision for our transformative space began crystallising.

In 2021, *makāna* was established as an interstitial movement based in Amman, emerging from a belief in the power of grassroots agency. *makāna* sits at the intersection of activism and research for just urban places and engages with issues of social and spatial justice, self-organisation, experiments and imagination in advocating for the production of urban spaces in Jordan. It intends to capture and sustain momentum in Jordan, embodied by the vast new grassroots practices that develop creative and flexible ways of reshaping their spaces. The creation of horizontal networks sits at the centre of our reflection on *makāna* today in a way that could transcend the individuals that formed it. Importantly, *makāna* is becoming a place of dialogue, developing new knowledge

and new social spaces as alternatives to top-down, formal heteronomous citymaking. It aspires to promote more transformative possibilities by co-creating knowledge that can result in *real* change. These spaces offer transformative dialogue, mutual learning and conflict. They remind us of what it means to be free yet interconnected, rejecting constraints that stifle expression, govern, discipline and blind us to one another and the natural world on which we depend. This theme is further explored in Chapter 9, where the significance of *makāna* in nurturing creative interactions and fostering critical reflection is discussed, positioning *makāna* as a collective movement, an urban space and an evolving practice. The chapter also delves into a more detailed examination of the activities undertaken by *makāna* over the past years (see Figures 3.11 and 3.12).



Figure 3.11: Meetings with grassroots organisations at *makāna*. Author, 2022



Figure 3.12: Workshops with grassroots organisations and local communities at *makāna*. Author, 2022

Figure 3.13 illustrates the three phases of the research, detailing the investigative methods employed at each stage and the corresponding outcomes. It elucidates how the initial phase, dedicated to establishing a foundational understanding of public participation, informed the selection of ethno-case studies in the second phase, facilitating the early establishment of

connections and networks. Similarly, the second phase of the research capitalised on available opportunities to extend event ethnography by engaging in a volunteering initiative at Hara Initiative for a period exceeding 6 months (discussed in Chapters 7 and 8). This resulted in my implementing engaged practices with the participants, such as interactive workshops and group meetings. Collectively, these steps led to the formation of the third phase, which represented a situated and activist practice of collaboratively enacting this research. Figure 3.14 further connects the research phases, methods and outcomes to the structure of the dissertation.

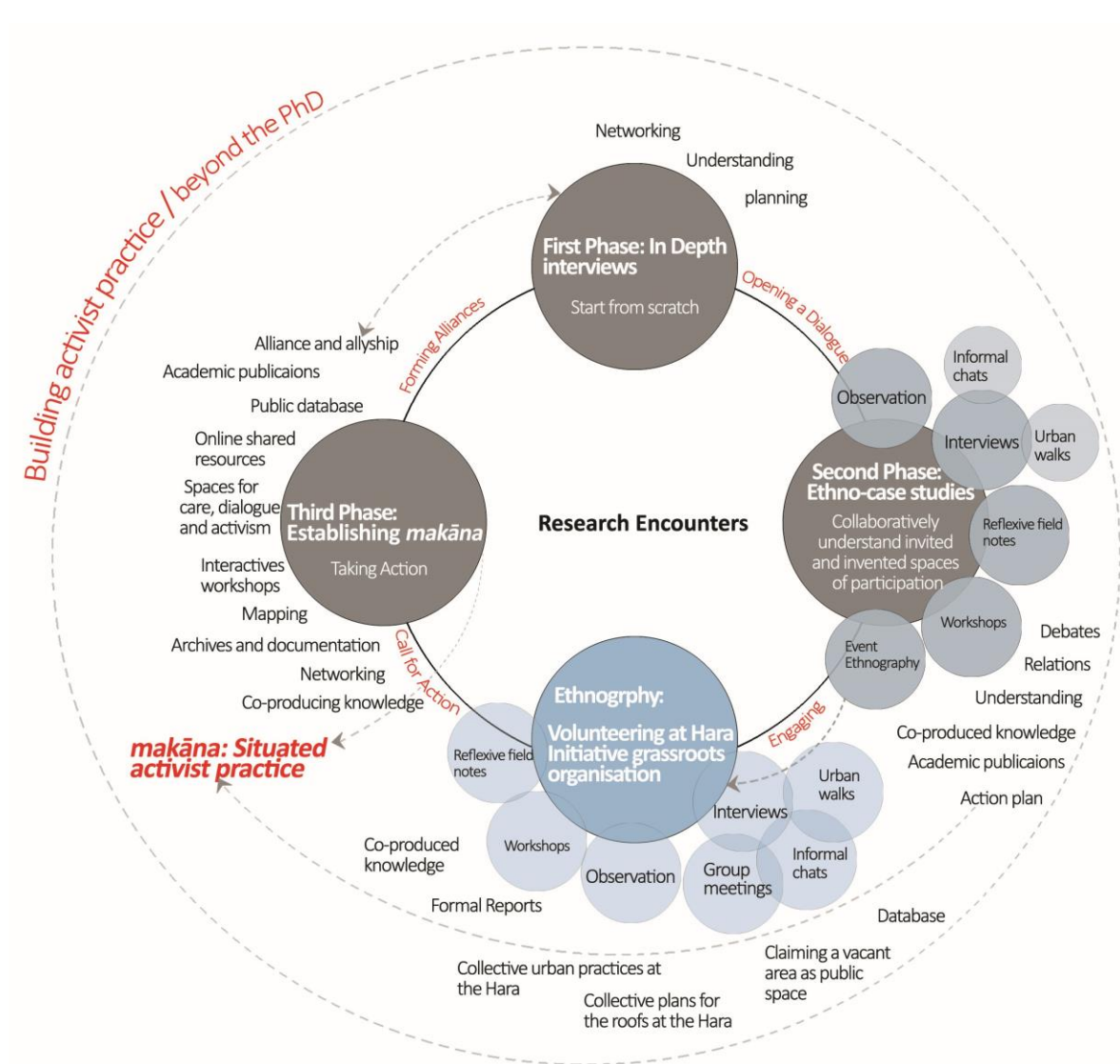


Figure 3.13: Overview of the research stages, methods, and outputs. (Author)

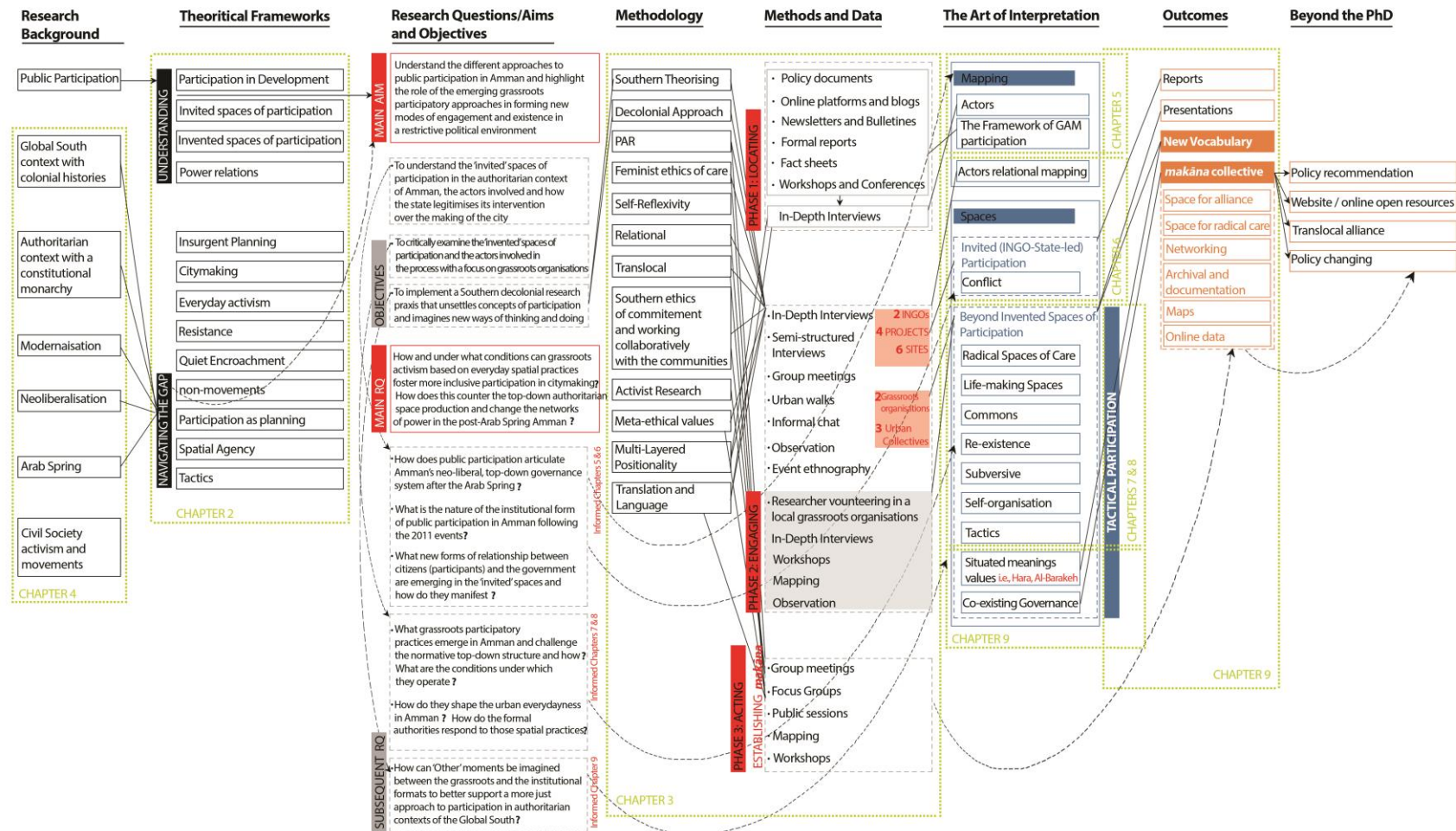


Figure 3.14: Full dissertation diagram. (Author)

3.4 Analytical Procedures

The data analysis for this project was an ongoing and iterative process, incorporating findings from each research phase, in line with the approach advocated by Bogdan and Biklen (2007). Beginning with the transcription of interviews and the review of the collected data, this process involved a continuous cycle of reading and re-reading, facilitating a profound immersion into the data and the identification of key themes. A comprehensive word-by-word transcription was not performed in the initial research phase due to time constraints; instead, I listened to the recordings multiple times while making notes to discern emerging themes. This approach was significant given the collaborative nature of the research, where knowledge generation is a collective endeavour. In the subsequent phases, mainly the second and third, I actively engaged with participants, discussing the evolving themes and insights derived from my fieldnotes and recordings. This collaborative dialogue with participants was vital in reshaping and refining insights and knowledge collaboratively.

In the later stages of the analysis, upon my return from the field, I constructed a thematic coding structure based on the broad categories identified during the initial data understanding phase conducted during the fieldwork. The analytical method employed inductive and deductive coding (see Figure 3.15), with some codes emerging directly from the data. In contrast, others were informed by the epistemological stance and research questions framing the study. I used NVivo as an analytical tool and an aid in organising and visualising the data. Its functionality facilitated a non-linear analysis process, allowing for the reorganisation and editing of codes without impacting the original data source. Its support was particularly beneficial in triangulating data from various research methods, a practice that enhances the rigour of research by utilising multiple methods, measures, researchers, theories and perspectives. For instance, NVivo played a crucial role in critically analysing interpretive data such as photographs, maps and sketches, as suggested by Saldaña (2015). This visual data could be coded using a similar approach to text-based analysis (see Figure 3.16).

The screenshot shows the NVivo software interface with a list of codes and their associated data. The table below represents the data shown in the 'Codes' list.

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
Actor's Relations and Commu	1	2	17/05/2022 22:30	JA	24/05/2022 11:16	JA
Agency	5	11	19/05/2022 12:02	JA	11/07/2022 15:00	JA
Bottom-up approaches	0	0	11/07/2022 14:07	JA	11/07/2022 14:07	JA
Capacity building	4	5	20/05/2022 13:07	JA	31/05/2022 23:28	JA
Channels of communication	1	2	30/05/2022 14:13	JA	30/05/2022 14:18	JA
Committee	9	21	19/05/2022 11:55	JA	11/07/2022 10:35	JA
Conflict between partners	4	10	19/05/2022 12:07	JA	31/05/2022 12:26	JA
Context Sensitivity	5	6	19/05/2022 12:10	JA	31/05/2022 23:00	JA
Creative Class	2	5	30/05/2022 14:59	JA	11/07/2022 14:56	JA
GLZ	0	0	11/07/2022 13:28	JA	11/07/2022 13:28	JA
Great code	1	2	12/07/2022 10:52	JA	12/07/2022 10:55	JA
Misinformation	5	7	18/05/2022 12:19	JA	31/05/2022 12:30	JA
Ownership	6	7	23/05/2022 14:36	JA	11/07/2022 10:48	JA
Participation	2	5	19/05/2022 22:46	JA	11/07/2022 10:57	JA
Participation at GAM	5	8	30/05/2022 13:44	JA	11/07/2022 14:37	JA
People's behaviour	12	44	19/05/2022 12:41	JA	11/07/2022 14:53	JA
People's Categories	2	2	19/05/2022 11:55	JA	19/05/2022 13:23	JA
Project's idea	3	6	19/05/2022 11:49	JA	20/05/2022 11:53	JA
Refugees Camps	0	0	12/07/2022 10:12	JA	12/07/2022 10:12	JA
Regulation's delays	4	5	17/05/2022 22:26	JA	07/07/2022 23:02	JA
JA	113 Items					

Figure 3.15: An example of one of the early trials of cycles of analysis. (Author)

The screenshot shows the NVivo software interface with a code list and a detailed view of a code segment. The table below represents the data shown in the 'Codes' list.

Name	Files	Refer
CSO Ethos	1	3
CSO's approach	4	17
GAM's attitude	14	33
Honesty	1	2
Informal relationship	3	3
INGO and Foreigners	7	32
Long Commitment	5	7
social mobilisers	2	2
Third-party relations	1	1
Agency	5	11
Bottom-up approaches	0	0
Hope and Power	1	1
Power interests	1	1
Capacity building	4	5
Language	1	1
People's ability and c	1	2
People's Knowledge	1	1
Channels of communicat	1	2

The detailed view of a code segment shows a photograph of a group of people sitting on the ground in a circle, with a text description of the scene. The text describes a meeting with community members after a fire incident, where participants arrived an hour and a half before the officials from GAM. The meeting started after waiting half an hour for the officials. In the setting itself, people preferred to sit next to the local GAM representative. Everyone was greeting the Mukhtar as well, and he was given an entral place. The kids were asked to move away from the meeting, this included the teenagers too. Many people were having small conversations next to the meeting location without showing any interest of

Figure 3.16: An image of critically reflecting on images to further develop codes. (Author)

The data analysis process in this research defied a linear structure and proved challenging to compartmentalise into distinct stages. Instead, it can be more accurately characterised as a cyclical progression involving transcribing, ‘reflexively’ coding, interpreting, reflecting and writing. This cyclical nature is intrinsic to the research’s collaborative interpretation of ongoing participatory practices and projects, as detailed in section 3.2.1. This approach required continually testing

various alternative interpretations against the data (Patton, 2002). It went beyond a mere description of data by actively ‘attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings’ (Patton, 2002, p. 480). Consequently, the analysis was a process of reflexive data interpretation, in which each step required questioning, reflecting and querying the assumptions I was making when interpreting and coding the data. This approach, known as reflexive thematic analysis, searches for and questions the meaning and meaning-making of the data through the researcher’s reflective and self-reflexive engagement with the data (Virginia Braun & Clarke, 2019) (see Figure 3.17). Thus, ‘constructing’ (Braun et al., 2018) the codes and themes in this research was a continual process of not only ‘bending back on oneself’ (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594) but also collaboratively questioning the themes and coding with the participants as part of the iterative process of the fieldwork (as explained in the next section).

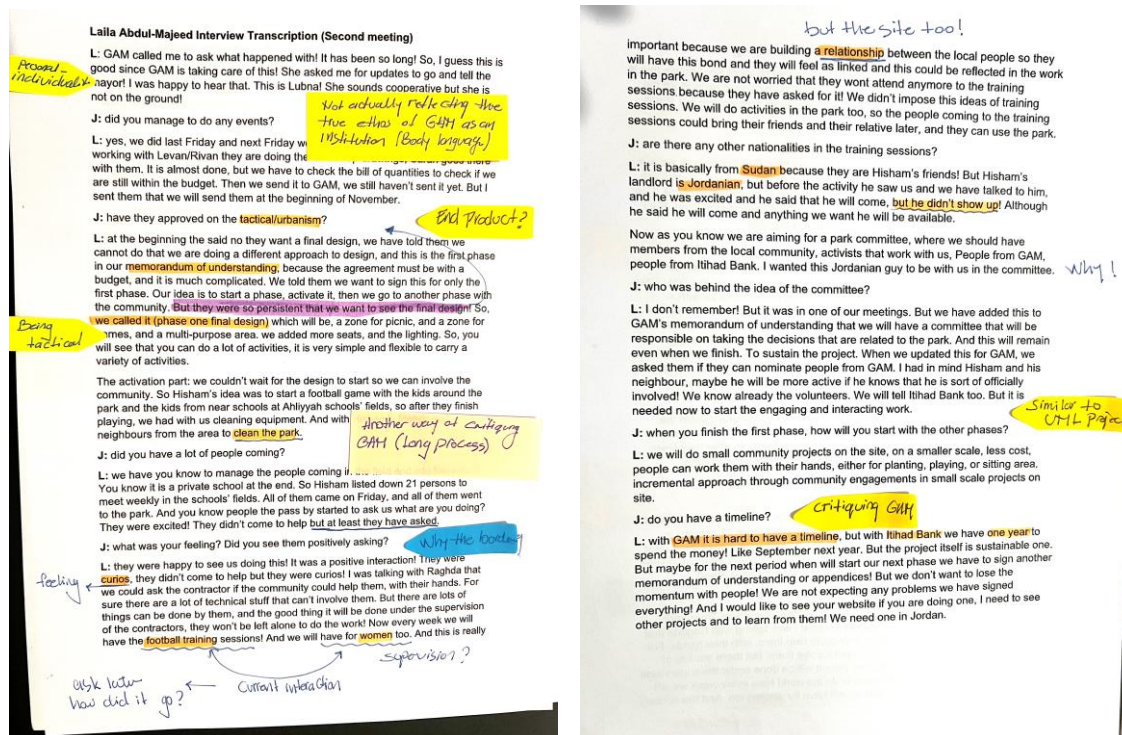


Figure 3.17: An example of reflexive analysis of a follow up interview. (Author)

During this procedure, I employed memo writing as a valuable strategy. I crafted memos both before and after coding, fostering the generation of additional codes and facilitating the transition from ‘data to idea’ (Saldaña, 2015). Memo writing emerged as a key analytic instrument,

particularly instrumental in interpreting and re-interpreting my data. Its efficacy lay in guiding me in identifying overarching themes and compelling me to engage in reflective scrutiny of my codes and consistently question their implications. After the individual analyses of the ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ participation spaces, I embarked on a cross-analysis of the cases to delve deeper into my comprehension of participation phenomena (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This cross-analysis aimed to discern patterns of similarities and differences between the cases, extracting new meanings from their interplay. The next section expounds on a vital aspect of this research, emphasising its ongoing nature as a work in progress.

3.5 Reconsidering ‘Fieldwork’ with Care: An Iterative Approach

In line with my methodological commitment to Southern decolonial research rooted in critical feminist theories, I conceptualise ‘fieldwork’ in this research not as a fixed inquiry confined to a specific time and place but as an ongoing iterative process (see Figure 3.18). Adopting a holistic, grounded approach, I sought to engage directly with experiences and cultivate an awareness of my situatedness. The transition back to Sheffield and the initiation of the analysis and writing phase did not mark the conclusion of my time in the ‘field’. Drawing inspiration from Le Guin’s (2019) reimagining of ‘fieldwork’ beyond its traditional academic sense, I view fieldwork metaphorically as an exploration and collection of diverse narratives, ideas and experiences, steering clear of imposing a singular narrative or viewpoint. In this context, I recognise my ‘fieldwork’ as a continual, expansive exploration embracing a spectrum of narratives, speculations and imaginations.

As previously discussed, this commitment to an ethos of care was not confined to my involvement with *makāna*. It extended to my sustained engagement and rapport with the participants I collaborated with and interviewed. The modality of this working process was informed by my application of ‘care’ as an active principle dictated by the specificities of the issues at hand rather than guided by foundational or universal principles. In this context, care is not solely synonymous with compassion; it involves practical engagement and is continuous, as articulated by Mol et al. (2010, p. 23). Therefore, ‘care’ denotes an ongoingness of relations and a dedication to challenging assumptions, interrogating origins and exploring alternative perspectives. Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, p. 171) emphasises the importance of ‘care time’, aligning with Ahmed’s (2004) preference for unhurried mediation processes over immediate responses. Puig de la Bellacasa

(2017) contends that care should not be a momentary reaction to an urgent crisis or a predetermined model crafted in response to a previous situation. She posits that ‘caring affection, as something we do, is always specific; a priori moral disposition cannot enact it, nor an epistemic stance, nor a set of applied techniques, nor elicited as abstract effect’ (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 91). She critically scrutinises immediate cultures of care, which she characterises as ‘productionist’ – that is, following a linear timeline that prioritises ‘technoscientific temporalities’ at the expense of other temporal dimensions in the field of work. Instead, she advocates for a ‘time of care’ (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 171), defining it as ‘making time’ to engage with various timelines that constitute the interconnected web of more-than-human agencies.

Even after completing the data collection phase, my contact with the participants went beyond a mere check-in, evolving into extensive conversations about their work, practices, initiatives and concerns. On numerous occasions, I shared practical materials related to unsettling planning with those interested, and I also divulged parts of the analysis and outcomes of this research (as shown in section 3.4 above), which co-generated and helped in interpreting parts of the data, coding and themes. Additionally, several participants became active contributors to *makāna*, continuing their involvement (for more details, refer to Chapter 9). This ongoing interaction facilitated the establishment of continuous links and relationships among various points of interest in a broader context, shedding light on the connection between meaningfulness and activities in urban spaces. It allowed me to delve into the concealed cultural structure of their everyday experiences. This was crucial for my follow-up visits in 2022 and the online work I was conducting with them in 2023. Maintaining these connections helped me better understand the dynamics of the process of connections and networks with the participants and the spaces of participation they produce, activate or participate in as well as facilitated the next workshop and meetings by enabling a more collaborative approach based on the participants’ understandings, needs and questions. Moreover, this iterative process informed my research in that I kept modifying, updating and thinking of the concepts, theories and frameworks in light of the participants’ perspectives and knowledge – a profound method for co-producing knowledge.

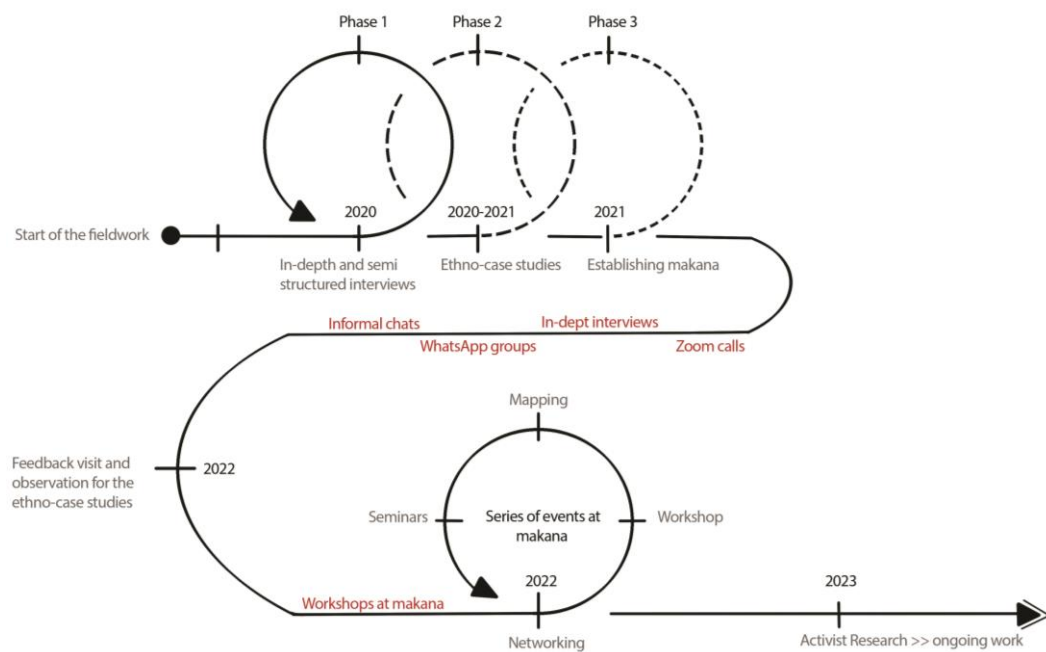


Figure 3.18: The iterative continuity of 'fieldwork' phases and process. (Author)

3.6 Research Challenges

This study faced diverse challenges and limitations that may have affected its implementation and outcomes. These are delineated in the next three sections.

3.6.1 The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges to the execution of my research. One notable impact was the constraint on face-to-face interviews as not all participants were comfortable with in-person meetings due to health concerns. This limitation altered the traditional interview approach, necessitating online adjustments to ensure the safety and comfort of the participants. Additionally, pandemic-related restrictions affected my ability to engage in prolonged ethnographic observations within certain organisations, such as GIZ. The limitations on movement and contact hindered the depth and duration of my immersion in these spaces, impacting the richness of my ethnographic insights. Furthermore, the stringent COVID-19 restrictions disrupted plans for conducting large workshops and meetings, a crucial component of my research methodology.

Importantly, beyond logistical challenges, the pandemic induced a significant shift in the nature of the data collected. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, institutions that purportedly prioritised inclusive participation had to curtail the number of workshop participants. This adjustment altered the intended scope of involvement, unveiling an unanticipated impact of the pandemic on institutional practices and their ability to fulfil participatory promises.

3.6.2 Challenges with Data Collection

In this research, I faced restrictions on access to GAM and its various documents. The process of obtaining data from the different GAM departments required negotiation skills. Many times, I had to return to acquaintances who connected me with officials at GAM. Because the participation process is new and not all officials at GAM recognise it as crucial to planning and design, several interviewees tried to change the subject to issues they deemed more important rather than answer my questions. Moreover, researching the concept of participation at GAM was a struggle in itself on many levels.

On the one hand, GAM does not have a clear institutional understanding of participation; thus, I had to interview many officials to understand the nature and process of participation. I had to navigate many departments and sectors to reach the right people (see Appendix G). On the other hand, officials at GAM denied my request to view or obtain several legal documents regarding participation projects, claiming their confidentiality³⁶. On another level, my positionality as a young female researcher affiliated with a Western university affected how the officials responded to my questions as they claimed to know what participation is and the benefits of integrating it into the institution and its planning process without reflecting on the reality on the ground or how GAM is leading or conducting participation.

³⁶ It is important to highlight that during the course of this research in 2021, Amman, along with 15 other cities, emerged victorious in the Global Mayors Challenge, a prestigious worldwide innovation competition, securing a prize of USD 1 million. Remarkably, GAM was recognised for its project titled ‘Amman is Listening’, an online participatory platform featuring interactive maps designed to facilitate the creative, approachable and participatory communication of residents’ needs to the municipality. Despite multiple attempts to seek additional details about the project, including a letter from the University of Sheffield and a signed document from my supervisor, my requests for discussions with the officials involved were declined. As of the writing of this dissertation, no further information has been provided about the project since 2021.

3.6.3 Time of the ‘Fieldwork’

As previously articulated in section 3.5, this research maintains an ongoing process of ‘fieldwork’ that persists even during the composition of the chapters. This continuous engagement is intrinsic to the research’s methodological commitment, which involves active collaboration with organisations and communities. This was important on many levels for this research. First, it reflects my activist PAR embedded in the everyday life, which does not end with the ‘fieldwork’ but continues as it addresses real-life problems that do not simply disappear at the end of the research or ‘fieldwork’. Second, this methodological approach is part of my commitment, as a Southern and feminist researcher, to not looking exclusively at the quality of generated information but at the process with the participants and the extent to which these contributions cover a spectrum from valuable discursive and/or theoretical expressions that communities can adopt or elaborate on to capacity building and the fulfilment of urgent tasks. Finally, this iterative process sees the continuous, ongoing experiences of the participants as an opportunity to enrich the research process, which leads to the construction of new meanings through reflections and actions.

However, this approach posed a challenge to the progression of my study, requiring constant analysis and integration of emerging data into the evolving analytical chapters. Furthermore, because the developing practices of grassroots participation within the urban landscape are relatively recent, extended time is needed to understand their multi-scaled and dimensional impacts deeply.

3.6.4 The Ethics of (a Southern) Research

As delineated in the preceding sections of this chapter (refer to section 3.2.3), this research is grounded in a feminist ethics of care conceptualised as a morally responsible process that facilitates meaningful engagement rather than serving as a constraining factor on individual pursuits. I posit that the Southern approach to theorising should be underpinned by specific ethics of care that catalyse collective action without seeking to supplant Western systems of thought with a Southern turn. Instead, it embraces the pluriverse (Yiftachel & Mammon, 2022). This ethical commitment to care represents a speculative avenue for envisioning improved futures (Haraway, 2016). Consequently, care emerges as ‘an ethically and politically charged practice’ that forges novel modes of critical political engagements (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, p. 41). In this context, care deepens the notions of ‘responsibility’, ‘connection’ and ‘friendship’ (Caretta

& Faria, 2020, p. 8), all of which evolved throughout this research with my participants, the individuals I collaborated with and the co-researchers. According to Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), care work is inherently activist in nature. She perceives care as a form of ‘trouble’ that demands our enduring engagement and commitment to the values inherent in caring relationships, acknowledging that care requires both time and patience (Haraway, 2016). The concept of ‘staying with’ the trouble emphasises that care work is collective work, fostering non-exploitative forms of togetherness (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 24).

Similarly, in line with Libby Porter’s (2022) perspective, the Southern turn is characterised as ‘an ethico-political commitment rather than a geography’ (p. 32). This ethico-political commitment necessitates a sense of responsibility that reshapes understandings and affiliations, encompassing both positionality and relational knowledge (Porter, 2022; Winkler, 2022). This process of (re)working, (de)constructing and (un)learning prompts us to not only question our ontologies and epistemologies but also engage in meta-ethical inquiries concerning the values associated with concepts and meanings (Winkler, 2022). Tanja Winkler (2022) suggests that this involves taking a step back before delving into the identification of planning interventions, introducing a philosophical reflection and evaluation.

In this research, I had to reflectively ask ‘difficult’ questions that assisted my understanding of ‘normative’ concepts. For example, in one of the fieldnotes, I wrote:

On my journey back from Al-Ashrafiyah, I engaged with the recordings of today’s interviews on my recorder. Opting for the fast-forward option, I intended to catch a fleeting glimpse of the day’s discussions. It was a long journey. As I live in the other half of the city, I found myself toggling between various conversations. It was in the background; I had to admit, I was not fully concentrating on what was happening. However, in this accelerated playback, a repetitive pattern emerged – I repeatedly uttered the words ‘participation’ and ‘participatory’ planning. Halting the recorder, a sense of irritation welled up within me. I had, it seemed, overused that particular term. But why did its frequency bother me? There was nothing inherently wrong with the word, so why the annoyance?

I remembered here a conversation I had with an activist who recounted an incident in a refugee camp during a participatory project funded by a foreign agency. The activist shared her endeavours to persuade residents about the advantages of greening the camp and imparting ‘modern’ and ‘creative’ methods of tending to plants and trees, as mandated

by the agency. Ironically, one of the refugee women invites the activist to her house just to tell her, I don't have a proper roof over my head, and you need me to take care of a plant! I asked myself, does the widely acknowledged concept of participation align with their reality in a non-democratic context? Why is participation presumed to be a universally understood and accepted practice? Why is participation assumed to be a known thing? (Fieldnote, 12/06/2021)

Engaging with these meta-ethical questions leads to different strands of thinking. This constitutes the Southern turn into a disruption of ontological and epistemological hierarchies, echoing Vanessa Watson (2022): 'recognising the situated nature of knowledge and values is more appropriate than moral theory based on universalist ideals' (p. 28). These ongoing encounters, dialogues, reflections and negotiations kept this research moving forward in developing a theoretical/methodological approach that fed into a Southern practice. In this perspective, I turned towards myself; not only did I think of my language and emotions, but I also acknowledged them as grounds for honest and situated research, which informed my methods and the ways I engaged with the participants. I became more attentive to the way I used 'terms' and concepts; for example, I stopped using 'translations' (see Chapter 9, section 9.5) of concepts of 'participation' and turned to the lived experiences of the participants and their felt emotions as an ever-evolving relation with their urban settings. In this way, methods such as informal chats, workshops and mapping exercises (in the later phases of *makāna*; see Chapter 9) became a means of representing their experiences and drawing connections to their emotions, perceptions and memories. Moreover, throughout this research, I also turned to the emotions and feelings that I felt when immersed in the different localities of the research. Acknowledging and allowing emotions to become part of my own experience made me question them more deeply and look for the reasons behind them. According to the feminist scholar Sara Ahmed (2004), some emotions are crucial to our own learning, in a way that makes us return to the places on our bodily surfaces where we have felt them. This leads us to critically 'wonder' (Ahmed, 2004) – wonder what is acceptable, what is normal and how these emotions are generated by my embeddedness in different social, cultural and political localities and through ongoing interactions with subjectivities. While I was carrying out my everyday activities (my volunteering work, interviews or simply observations) in the sites of participation, I became more aware of the powerful tool of emotions that I embody, which can be employed to reinforce certain norms and hierarchies by designating certain things or asking certain questions, enabling certain things to happen.

'The discomfort I felt today, after leaving Al-Manara site, was something shared, relational, experienced with others. I didn't have to ask the participants at the end of the meeting about how they feel regarding GAM's and the INGO's workers' comments on how to deal with immediate issues on-site. My feeling of discomfort was relational, shared, and transmitted. It was part of the broader social, political context.' (Fieldnote, 04/07/2021)

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter explained the methodological approach employed in this research, which is rooted in the theoretical framework and empirical considerations covered in earlier chapters. Anchored in a Southern decolonial approach and drawing from critical feminism, this methodology was presented based on how the perspectives were operationalised through a relational translocal approach to knowledge, emphasising positionality within an ethical framework of care. These critical perspectives guided the design of the research phases, methods and outcomes. In keeping with the research objective, a participatory action methodology was employed across three phases, constituting an 'ongoing fieldwork' process. In navigating these intricate terrains, a commitment to 'care' and 'action' through collaboration fostered extended alliances, advancing critical urban theories and practices by embodying a space for action and solidarity: '*makāna*'.

In addition to explaining the rationale behind the selection of multiple ethno-cases and outlining the criteria for their selection, this chapter presented the diverse methods used for data collection during the three phases of the research. It explained the reasons underpinning the choice of these methods and the nature of the collected data. The methods used in the first phase, namely, in-depth and semi-structured interviews, lay the groundwork for this research. Given the lack of prior investigations into public participation in citymaking in Jordan, it was imperative to gain insights into the actors creating spaces for participation and the nature of these spaces. The second phase entailed tailored methods, primarily employing ethno-case studies to comprehensively examine both 'invited' and 'invented' public participation arenas. Although the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic restricted the use of certain methodologies, such as ethnographic approaches, I devised alternative tailored methods such as event ethnography to address these limitations. The last phase of the research was the *practice* of this PhD. The founding of the *makāna* collective came like an urge, a pressing need arising not only from my own positionalities and encounters but also from the localities, actors, situations and communities I worked and

conducted research with. *makāna* turned out to be the prolonged, continual, situated practice of my research, in which a Southern theorising of urbanism in Amman is enacted. Finally, the chapter detailed the analytical reflexive thematic procedures applied in this research, accompanied by insights into the challenges inherent in undertaking such a study in the context of Amann and the ethical dilemmas it entails.

Chapter 4 Amman: The State, the Civil Society and the City Governance and Planning

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have explored theoretical and methodological conceptual framework, which underpins the empirical chapters of this dissertation. This chapter changes direction to focus more specifically on one context within the Global South, Amman, Jordan, to interpret these theoretical concepts in their context, and aim to offer a comprehensive understanding of the complexities that characterise the city's urban milieu. The aim of this chapter is to analyse and comprehend the evolving political economy of urbanism in Amman, specifically examining how the interactions among state power, capital, and civil society are influencing this transformation, in order to ensure its regime security. It is crucial to critically review Jordan's status as a stable entity amidst a politically turbulent region, particularly since escalating economic and urban disparities within the city after the Arab Spring, coupled with a relatively weak civil society and the absence of major disruptions in its moderate political climate.

This first section provides a brief history of Jordan. Following this, the systems of governance in Jordan will be outlined, particularly focusing on how they affected the evolution of a weak civil society. Then, the focus will be directed to the capital, Amman, and the attempts of the state to impose control over urban growth and development. This was succeeded by establishing Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), as a centralised state entity that worked to dismantle village councils and to reallocate regulating power away from tribes, over to the state (Abu-Hamdi, 2015), and through mechanisms of democratisation, neoliberalisation and recently the citizen-centred discourse. This is followed by a discussion on the moment of the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 that questioned the neoliberal hegemony of a top-down system of governance and offered

hope for radical change. The last section of this chapter will delve into the effect of the preceding discussions on today's civil society structure and roles.

4.2 Historical Background

The colonial division of the Middle East by France and England after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 resulted in the establishment of the Emirates of Transjordan in 1921 under British rule. Before gaining independence in 1946, the British administration sought to transform the traditional lifestyle of tribes and Bedouins by introducing laws promoting private land ownership over the communal land system (Kably, 2015) and prohibiting the practice of raids and the protection tax levied on sedentary populations³⁷. (Ababsa, 2014). In exchange, the state offered job opportunities in the army and civil services, along with essential services. This reciprocal arrangement hinged on unconditional support for the formation of a 'nation' centred around the Hashemite family, (the rulers) (Ababsa, 2014), as opposed to traditional tribal customs based on kinship and communal system³⁸ (Abu-Hamdi, 2015). Constructing the Bedouin as citizens, achieved through their incorporation into the military or transformation into agriculturalists formed the core element of Glubb's (the British commander of the Arab Legion, the military force of Jordan, from 1939 to 1956) endeavour in nation-building (Glubb, 1938). The effectiveness of his strategies was, to a considerable extent, a 'repressive and productive success' (Massad, 2001, p. 162).

The state extensively distributed rentier funds directly to tribal leaders, reinforcing their social power at home (Massad, 2001). By subsidising tribal elites, the state ensured their dependence on state resources, purchasing citizens' obedience through an improved standard of living (Brynen, 1992). However, the influx of refugees³⁹ in Jordan, particularly after 1948 and 1967, altered this dynamic. The rapidly changing demography had twofold implications, on the one hand, the state

³⁷ According to the in-depth study of Myriam Ababsa in (2014), the protection tax was the Bedouins main source of income.

³⁸ This did not mean that the distinction between the tribes were dismissed and completely replaced by an overarching system of nation. A notable number of individuals prioritized their loyalty to their respective tribes before embracing allegiance to the nation of Jordan.

³⁹ The first influx occurred immediately after Jordan's independence in 1948, when around 100,000 Palestinians sought refuge in the country, followed by another 340,000 Palestinians fleeing to Jordan in 1967 from the West Bank (UNRWA, 2011).

needed to stress the Bedouin allegiance to fight the Palestinian militants⁴⁰. Thus, threatening the sovereignty of the state as well as the monarchy⁴¹. On the other hand, the immigration of affluent Palestinians thriving for a commercial market started to change the simple capital city of Amman, which resulted in growing social divisions based on tribal affiliation, class, ethnic (Jordanian of the East Bank and the Palestinians⁴² of the West Bank), and political stands. In response, the state implemented various political systems to control refugees and tribal constructs, focusing on maintaining stability and regime legitimacy (Abu-Hamdi, 2015; Brynen, 1992).

Amman became the focal point of economic growth, experiencing significant population growth due to waves of migration and refugee influxes⁴³. However, this posed challenges to the city's infrastructure and social cohesion. The state faced additional waves of refugees, including those from the Gulf War in 1991 and Iraq in 2002-2003, contributing to demographic shifts and social complexities. However, this influx of refugees is different than the one associated with the Palestinians; the affluent Iraqi refugees were introduced as 'guests' to the country, according to their prestigious class and the capital that they brought, particularly to Amman. The Syrian crisis in 2012 further intensified the refugee crisis, with Jordan hosting approximately 1.3 million refugees today (UNCHR, 2022), exacerbating identity crises and social segregation. In this context, the state deployed different facets of a quest to ensure regime security. Amman was the potential site to embody the state's ideologies; in this respect, many plans were imagined embodying an urban setting that reflects each era's strategies and systems.

Despite its status as a monarchy with a parliament and constitution⁴⁴, Jordan is characterised as a 'hybrid regime'⁴⁵ (Diamond, 2002). The monarchy wields significant authority, and the elected parliament lacks substantial influence, where the government is not elected democratically, but

⁴⁰ Recruited from the Jordanian camps, they attempted to overthrow the King Hussein during the 'Black September' events in 1970 (Pavanello & Haysom, 2012).

⁴¹ This manifestation of Palestinian aggression towards the host nation served to exacerbate pre-existing tensions, deepening the divide between the East Bank Bedouins who enjoyed a special relationship with the monarchy and the Palestinian migrants.

⁴² Upon their arrival in the country, all Palestinian refugees from 1949 were granted Jordanian citizenship, 'through an amendment to the Passport Act, stipulating that every Palestinian Arab with Palestinian nationality may obtain a passport' (Ababsa, 2014, p. 238)

⁴³ From a population of 60,000 in May 1948, the city witnessed impressive annual growth rates of up to 14.4% in the 1970s, leading to a population of 330,000 in May 1967, and a further surge to 624,000 by 1979.

⁴⁴ In 2015, Jordan occupied the sixth position among 19 countries on the Arab Democracy Index. Nevertheless, the introduction of restrictive measures between 2020 and 2023 signals a substantial deterioration in the country's democratic standing.

⁴⁵ The term 'hybrid regimes' pertains to political systems found in the grey zone where one can observe both the practice of democratic elements, like elections, and the consolidation of centralised authority.

appointed by the monarch after legislative elections (Ryan, 2011). In the following section, I will review the effect of different strategies and considerations to safeguard stability, the regime's security, and the state's desire to perpetuate its power.

4.3 The Shifting Governance Structures of the State

As discussed in the previous section, the different fluxes of refugees had significant implications on the state's stability and identity. Furthermore, Jordan suffered from several fiscal crises that, on the one hand, disabled and hindered its plans for the capital, Amman. On the other hand, the state shifted through different governance structures, in what they called 'political reforms' to only secure its 'survival' (Brumberg, 1995). This section will begin by reviewing these strategies before delving into their impacts on the evolution of the civil society in Jordan.

4.3.1 Liberalisation and Democratisation: False Promises of Political Freedom

The Oil Crisis of 1979 had profound consequences on Jordan's economy, triggering a significant economic crisis. External assistance from neighbouring oil-rich states and the United States dwindled, imposing constraints on resource allocation to civil society, a crucial avenue for upholding the state's legitimacy. Thus, the political stability that depended on the provision of basic necessities rather than democratic principles became highly at risk in the 1980s, coupled with the soaring debt⁴⁶, the state was forced to 'reevaluate its socioeconomic policies' (Wiktorowicz, 2002, p. 82). Within this context, the government sought assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and implemented stringent austerity measures, reducing public employment, which comprised 50% of all employment in the Kingdom (Wiktorowicz, 2002).

Riots erupted in Ma'an⁴⁷ in 1989, due to the IMF agreement's stipulations, marking the end of the welfare state and signalling a transition toward a neoliberal economy. The state, represented by the King, promised the furious people a new system of governance of political placation and promise of representation, throughout democratisation (Brynen, 1992), and a focus on

⁴⁶ The state used to provide costly social services to the state employees by borrowing on local and international markets. (World Bank, 2000)

⁴⁷ The Southern context in Jordan (which Ma'an is part of) represented the backbone of the regime loyalists.

privatisation, exports, and deregulation, pronouncing a radical free-market reform (Jreisat, 2018). In other words, neoliberalism was introduced to Jordan by reducing government expenditures, downsizing the state, and eliminating subsidies (Peck & Tickell, 2002).

In doing so, in 1989, Jordan conducted elections, terminated the state of martial and ensured unrestricted press freedom, presenting an appearance of progressivism⁴⁸ (Brynen, 1992). However, this move was characterised as ‘defensive democratisation’ (Robinson, 1998), managed by the monarchy to reinforce regime control and survival proving its tendency towards autocratic rule (Lucas, 2003; Yom, 2009). However, the Hashemite Kingdom reinforced ‘pro-monarchy limitations’ (Abu-Hamdi, 2015, p. 66), to guarantee smoother parliament elections in 1993⁴⁹ that would support the monarchy and the government. The ‘one-person, one-vote system restricted voters to choose one person⁵⁰, and electoral boundaries were manipulated to secure optimal outcomes for the monarchy guaranteeing the selection of preferred candidates (pro-nationalists and affiliated with prominent tribal groups). The elections in 1993 and 1997 resulted in a ‘tribal parliament’ diminishing the influence of the opposition (Robinson, 1998), as a result of the new electoral law, the opposition lost nearly half its seats in the 1993 elections (Lucas, 2003). The monarchy’s proactive measures, such as prohibiting public demonstrations (Brand, 1999), solidified Jordan’s pro-western ally position but subsequently hindered the democratic trajectory. This was manifested in the diminished effectiveness and influence of parliamentary councils and eroded public trust in these institutions (Magid, 2016; Yom, 2009).

4.3.2 Economic Liberalisation Before the Arab Spring

The Hashemite regime, echoing strategies from the late 1989 period, intensified IMF structural adjustment measures in 1996, implementing tax hikes, reducing public sector salaries, and initiating privatisation. The government responded forcefully to the 1996 protests in Southern cities, suppressing them violently (Lucas, 2003). Changes to election and press laws, along with the peace treaty with Israel, led to opposition parties boycotting the 1997 elections, resulting in a weak political atmosphere until King Abdullah’s succession in 1999 (Bani Salameh, 2018). Under

⁴⁸ Particularly the succession of the opposition figures of the Muslim Brotherhood (non-formal) party, acting as a ‘watchdog of government policies’ (Robinson, 1998, p. 397).

⁴⁹ In 1993, the talks around the Arab-Israeli pact (A formal peace treaty signed later in 1994 between Jordan and Israel) started to cause unrest in Jordan; thus, the state needed the parliament by its side.

⁵⁰ Robinson (1988) argues that in 1989, the people placed their first vote for a tribe member (where they perform their allegiance), whereas their second vote, was for ideological candidates (Islamists and leftists).

King Abdullah's rule, security concerns persisted, hindering the opposition's pursuit of democratic objectives⁵¹. Meanwhile, economic liberalisation, particularly through privatisation, has maintained a steady trajectory, exerting significant societal influence, causing social unrest due to unemployment, underemployment, poverty, corruption complaints, and demanding the government to fulfil its long-standing commitments to political liberalisation and reform as outlined in the 1989 programme. Despite this, entrenched opponents of reform within the regime, notably within the intelligence services, have consistently cited security concerns as the primary rationale against expanding public engagement within the political system. (Ryan, 2011).

In 2005, the government introduced the National Agenda⁵², centred around nationalism, and Jordanian-ness (Abu-Hamdi, 2015), nevertheless, this endeavour faced resistance from opponents of reform. Simultaneously, Jordanian indifference to top-down initiatives and slogans increased (Ryan, 2011). The International Crisis Group (2003) claimed that the emphasis of governmental reform initiatives appeared to be primarily directed towards procedural democracy, specifically centred around the conduct of elections. However, these efforts lacked substantive mechanisms for fostering genuine participation, transparency, and accountability. The 2010 elections saw minimal achievements for leftist parties (no opposition), contributing to the momentum leading up to the eruption of the Arab Spring, as expounded upon in section 4.5.

This section showed that the regime has allowed measured levels of political reform not with the intention of system transformation but rather to ensure its continuity (Daniel Brumberg, 2002; Carothers, 2002). The government has oscillated between phases of relative openness and instances of constraint across time. 'As a kind of middle case that is neither fully authoritarian nor fully democratic' (Ryan, 2011. p. 368) (although it leans towards the former). Nevertheless, following a prolonged period characterised by political inertia, prevailing sentiments within the Kingdom continue to be dominated by social and political discontentment with the existing state of affairs. Before exploring the 2011 shift in the social contract between citizens and the government, the next section will closely examine Amman city and the manifestation of these strategies on its urban citizens.

⁵¹ For example, King Abdullah II in 1999 dissolved the parliament and the new elections were expected to take place in but were delayed again for two full years to 2003. Due to the fear of any domestic instability.

⁵² A comprehensive initiative outlining the country's enduring commitment to governmental reform both in the present and the future. In 2006, at the behest of King Abdullah II, an initiative known as 'Kuluna al Urdun' (We Are All Jordan) was launched.

4.4 Greater Amman Municipality (GAM): Modernising the Welfare State through Planning

Subsequent attempts of planning Amman city were constantly interrupted by external factors, namely the influxes of refugees (see Section 4.2). To mediate the rapid urban growth, the municipality, utilising financial resources procured from private and public channels, advocated a paradigm of westernisation and modernisation, integrating essential institutions into the city master plan (Hacker, 1960)⁵³. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s, a period characterised by greater state stability without the influx of refugees, that marked the most vigorous endeavour by the state to modernise Amman and assert state authority over urban growth and progression. In the late 1980s, the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) emerged as a centralised administrative entity. The vision behind GAM was aiming at deconstructing entrenched tribal systems, channelling loyalty towards the monarchy and state initiatives for modernisation and democratisation (Abu-Hamdi, 2015). This included promoting nationalism, bureaucratising the city, and institutionalising state offices⁵⁴. In this context, GAM effectively dismantled the pre-existing tribal village councils, thereby reassigning governance jurisdiction to the state and consequently constraining the sphere of influence held by tribes and their leadership. In this way, it minimises the control the tribes possess due to their land holdings. Thus, the establishment and continual sustenance of the GAM apparatus emerged as another fundamental element contributing to the preservation of regime security.

GAM proposed the 1988 Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan (GACDP) to govern growth. It introduced a satellite city, Abu Nuseir (Figure 4.1), as a modern prototype. In form and community composition, this modern project dismantled established kinship and tribalism systems to direct allegiance and political reach away from tribal communities towards the state. The plan's primary goal was 'to strengthen government control over all development.' (Beauregard & Marpillero-Colomina, 2011). The affordability factor played a crucial role in motivating residents to disengage from their former communities, lured by the prospect of becoming homeowners. 'This city was based on a science social norm or socioeconomic data, more concerned with the efficiency rather than the social implications of the district 'communities' the plan

⁵³ The 1955 plan by Max Lock and Gerald King and the 1968 plan were introduced following the 1948 and 1967 influx of Palestinians. However, both of them were not implemented. The only previous plan was a roadway in 1938 designed by a British military official, Andrew Park Mitchell, his involvement was commissioned by the mayor of Amman at that time who was under British appointment (Abu-Dayyeh, 2004; Malkawai, 1996).

⁵⁴ Before GAM, Amman was mainly organised by tribal village councils.

had designated' (Abu-Hamdi, 2015, p. 54). according to CIAM⁵⁵: 'modern architecture and planning are the means to create new forms of collective association, personal habit, and daily life.' As a result, GAM introduced a fresh societal standard in urban planning, diverging from the principles of communal living and kinship ties. Similarly, GAM combined different districts based on technical solutions, overlooking social aspects like kinship or tribal affiliation. The planning process was driven by technical experts, diminishing public participation and amplifying the authority of planners (Malkawai, 1996).

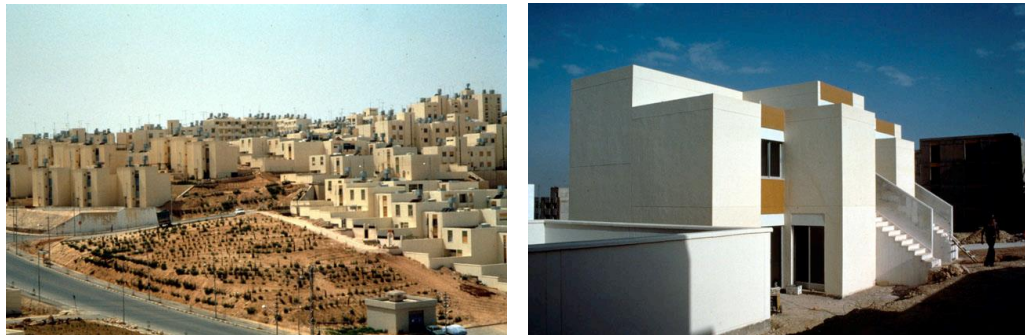


Figure 4.1: Views from Abu Nuseir Housing Development in Amman. Source: http://archnet.org/sites/980/media_contents/16339 (Accessed June, 2022)

Contrary to the presented social welfare guise, many plan projects aimed to enhance state control. From creating centralised GAM to introducing modern satellite housing, that emphasises modern citizenship as a subject to the state over tribal identity, which frequently acted as obstacles to the expansion of the state and its attainment of planning authority. In other words, as argued by Abu Hamdi (2015), the state's modernisation efforts were a physical manifestation of not only the desire to regulate growth but also society, which meant de-tribalising the society. However, the master plan's implementation was curtailed by the 1989 fiscal crisis. The city suffered from both unregulated planning and outdated plans that left the city in the early 2000s with an explosion of fragmented large-scale investments, immense shopping malls, gated communities and high-end business towers (Daher, 2008; Hourani, 2014a), representing a minute percentage of Jordanian society.

4.4.1 The Neoliberal Globalisation of Amman

After the influx of Iraqi refugees to Amman in 2003, the Jordanian state sought to capitalise on the presence of the wealthy Iraqi 'guests' by offering investments and opportunities, aligning with

⁵⁵ See (Holston, 1989, p.30)

the broader modernisation agenda led by the new King after 2000 (Abu-Hamdi, 2016). This has stressed showcasing Amman as an example of a modern government (Parker, 2009), attracting foreign investments from Iraqis and oil-rich Gulf States (Abu-Ghazalah, 2007; Beauregard & Marpillero-Colomina, 2011). Jordan's strategic agenda involved joining the World Trade Organisation, entering Free Trade Agreements with the USA and EU, and steering efforts toward neoliberal market-led development (Daher, 2013; Parker, 2009). However, the continued structural adjustments of the IMF and the World Bank have been transforming urban spaces into financial assets to be circulated in global markets (Hourani, 2014a). In this landscape, Amman witnessed the development of new urban islands, upscale apartment complexes, immense shopping malls, and high-end business towers catering to a lifestyle of excessive consumption (Daher, 2008, 2013).

Neoliberalism, as defined by David Harvey, advocates individual entrepreneurial freedoms within a framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2007. p. 2). However, many scholars, for example, (Ababsa & Daher, 2016; Abu-Hamdi, 2016; Daher, 2008, 2013; Hourani, 2014b, 2014a; Hourani & Kanna, 2014; Parker, 2009) argued that the neoliberal experience in Amman did not diminish the role of the state but strengthened the relationship between the state and the few elites supporting the monarchy. Therefore, the urban environment served as the mechanism and substance through which local and regional elites (mis)represented within free-market discourse as merely a segment of the 'private sector', strengthening their influence within a broader imperial structure (Hourani, 2014b). The core of the neoliberal endeavour in Amman focused on finance, real estate, and tourism rather than productive industries or agriculture. Public services like water and electricity were privatised, leading to social impacts like rising urban poverty (Verdeil, 2009).

Moreover, the state partnered with the private sector and multinational corporations to provide large-sale subsidies for the business elite (the new partners) to create urban mega projects. For example, in the Abdali Project⁵⁶ (the new business district in Amman after 2006, See Figure 4.2), the state offered the project's land –which belonged to the military forces– for a very low price to the investors, in which the state became a part. In the same fashion, the state lowered tariffs

⁵⁶ The Abdali Project, it is considered one of the most controversial projects in Amman.

and taxes for regional and investors, allowed for infrastructure provisions, and lifted restrictions on and eased property purchases by wealthy Iraqis⁵⁷ (Daher, 2013; Hourani, 2014b).



Figure 4.2: Al-Abdali Project aerial. Source: Intermarkets Media (Accessed May, 2021)

Contrary to Friedman's (1962) vision of neoliberalisation involving widespread decentralisation and the retreat of the state, the state's ideological shape transformed instead into various forms, including 'paternalistic, authoritarian, developmental, social democratic state reforms, and concomitant ascendancy of (appropriately elastic) notions of governmentality' (Peck, 2004, p. 395). Affluent elites, who enjoyed primary access to profitable schemes, benefitted the most from this neoliberal turn. As shown before, the Jordan regime depends on and thrives off of their networks of personal patronage. Those who welcome modernisation and market-driven logic will favour them and will never be impacted by austerity measures. (Hourani, 2014a). Around the time the investors enjoyed relaxed regulations, GAM found itself in 2006 dealing with more than 350 plans for high-rise buildings submitted for approvals (Parker, 2009), and furious people about the construction of Jordan's Gates Towers (see Figure 4.3). People began to question GAM's reliability as an institution involved both as a financial stakeholder and as a representative of people's concerns⁵⁸. At this time, GAM was widely recognised for its propensity toward

⁵⁷ This came when 14% of the Abdali Project sales had dropped in 2007, just 3 years after its operation (Hadfield, 2007)

⁵⁸ Critics noted that GAM had taken possession of the site of the towers that was intended to be a public park (Myriam Ababsa, 2007). Additionally, minimal attention was devoted to the substantial traffic congestion that would ensue, nor were the ramifications of the towers on the nearby water and sewage systems adequately evaluated. Finally, two Egyptian construction workers were killed, and 16 others injured when 3 stories of the Jordan Gate's north tower collapsed during construction. (Parker, 2009)

favouritism and the practice of *wasta* واسطة, a term denoting nepotism in Arabic culture. (Parker, 2009).



Figure 4.3: Amman Gate's Towers. Source: www.jordantimes.com (Accessed May, 2021)

Amidst rising street protests and criticism, the King responded by appointing a new mayor for Amman, aiming to quell tensions and introduce a fresh city master plan. Emphasising the city's role in pioneering development, stating that “It is crucial, that we all do our utmost to ensure that our beloved city will continue to be a magnet for pioneering development projects and a fertile ground in which innovative ideas can take root and blossom”⁵⁹ (King Abdullah bin al-Hussein, 2006). This necessity became even more pronounced with the onset of the economic downturn in 2008, leading to numerous vacant projects. (Hourani, 2014a). GAM claimed to experiment with a new strategy fostering collaboration between businesses and communities, presented as citizen-centred governance. However, as discussed in the following sections, this was another coercive measure, that again was intended to ensure the regime security – by ensuring continued oligarchic gains – while simultaneously manipulating the public with superficial political reforms.

⁵⁹ Amman receives distinct attention from the Jordanian government compared to other cities. This is notably evident in the pronounced neoliberal expansion within the real estate and urban environment, particularly evident in Amman since the early 2000s. Moreover, the implementation of various plans and visions for the city is more conspicuous in Amman, as opposed to other cities that are perceived as more affordable, less advanced in terms of infrastructure, and characterised by a greater emphasis on village or tribal orientations. In other words, what is imagined for Amman (in terms of strategic and participatory planning, as discussed in the following sections) is far from realisation in other Jordanian cities.

4.4.2 The New Strategy of Public Participation in Planning

The utilisation of the concept of public participation within the framework of GAM was not evident before 2006. However, a key turning point emerged in 2006 when the King directed the mayor to engage global experts with diverse backgrounds to contribute their insights in the formulation of urban plans for the city of Amman, drawing from their respective experiences (King Abdullah bin al-Hussein, 2006, as cited in GAM 2008, p. 10). As shown in the preceding section, the imperative to quell the protests and strikes prompted the monarch to replace Amman's mayor and instigate a new plan for the city to replace the Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan (GACDP) of 1987. Under this altered trajectory, the newly appointed mayor suspended permissions for constructing new high-rise buildings within the city. Collaboratively engaging with a Canadian team, the mayor developed the Amman Master Plan and a series of planning documents. Among these documents is the 2008 Amman Plan: Metropolitan Growth Report, which envisages a swift escalation in population figures from 2,200,000 individuals in 2006 to an estimated 6,500,000 by 2025⁶⁰ (Abu Al Haija & Potter, 2013).

In this context, the implementation of the plan was perceived as imperative not only for addressing the challenge of outdated planning of greater significance for effecting a comprehensive enhancement of the municipal governance framework, thereby fostering heightened transparency and accountability within the institution (Beauregard & Marpillero-Colomina, 2011). Bringing the process of planning and service delivery closer to the citizens was envisaged as a strategic mechanism to bridge existing divides between these stakeholders and preclude the emergence of further disruptions within the urban milieu. In the very few studies of public participation in the Amman Plan of 2008, Khirfan & Momani (2019) claim that the concept of public participation was introduced by the Canadian team working on the plan. However, I further argue that notwithstanding its novelty within the ambit of GAM, integrating the concept of public participation was construed as another strategy to mitigate prevailing unrest and offer assurances of forthcoming political reforms that would benefit all citizens. In this instance, the inclusion of citizens in the planning process was advanced as a modality to achieve these aims. While interviewing Gerry Post (the chief planner of Amman Plan), he claimed that officials at GAM perceived the public as not ready to participate in the planning activities or decision-making process.

⁶⁰ In the year 2019, the demographic count of Amman amounted to approximately 4.3 million individuals. Further details on this statistic can be found at the following source: <https://www.c40.org/cities/amman/>

This was obvious in the practice of public participation, where practice included only meetings with elite stakeholders that turned into Mayor's Roundtables (Beauregard & Marpillero-Colomina, 2011). Approximately 40 people attended each meeting, along with the planners and the mayor (Beauregard & Marpillero-Colomina, 2011). These selected personas did not include any community organisations, activists or local representatives; rather, they involved public officials, local architects and economists, and individuals from the public utilities, and in later stages, it expanded to include investors, property owners and those who patronised its businesses (Beauregard & Marpillero-Colomina, 2011; Khirfan & Momani, 2019). Figure 4.4 maps the actors, type of meetings and the targeted audience for the process of public participation. Furthermore, the process of public participation focused on large developments with the potential for immense investment, neglecting the disadvantaged residential areas that represent more than half of the city (Pavanello & Haysom, 2012).

Moreover, the mayor and Gerry Post established the Amman Institute (Ai), a not-for-profit 'think tank' and quasi-governmental entity led by the mayor. Ai, governed by a board of directors, took over the Amman Plan from the Canadian team, making them sub-contractors. Ai served as a private entity offering planning services to GAM and other municipalities, competing for contracts in the private sector (Beauregard & Marpillero-Colomina, 2011). Another aim for Ai was to introduce citizen-centred urban governance through projects and outreach programmes to the public and GAM along with other municipalities (Ai, 2011). The studies of participation in the recent Plan indicated most participants condemned it for the lack of transparency and favouritism (El-said & Harrigan, 2009; Khirfan & Momani, 2019). Moreover, Khirfan and Momani (2019) investigated the dissemination of information⁶¹, finding manipulative and misleading ways of providing information, with most participants lacking awareness of the rationale behind the policies instigated by the Plan. An equally salient problem was the uninformed planners who lacked the knowledge needed to work in a participatory design process or to build relations with vulnerable groups (Myriam Ababsa & Daher, 2011; Al-Nammari, 2013); while assuming that they know better than the citizens (Khirfan & Momani, 2019). In other words, the existing rigid, top-down governance structure remained in function in which a collaborative working culture failed to arise; local communities, notably the most marginalised, remained shut out of public policy. Khirfan and Momani (2019) argue that the level of participation before 2011 failed to exceed the level of informing. Participants were often misled about whether the process

⁶¹ Rami Daher (2013), notes that slogans on billboards were the only information provided for the public.

was truly participatory or merely consultation and informing, which, according to Arnstein (1969) represents a low level on the ladder of participation. The government's efforts were largely considered only as attempts to secure legitimacy with policies already adopted. Swyngedouw (2008) describes this approach to participation as an appendage of the existing planning system.

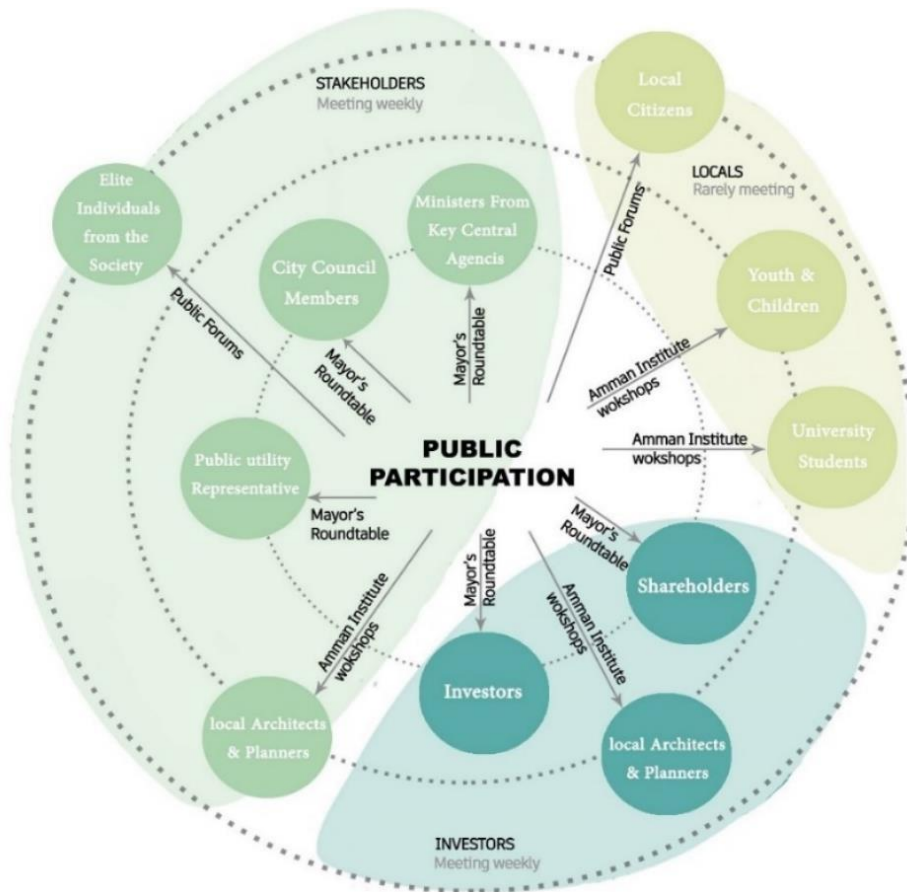


Figure 4.4: Map of the process of participation in the development of Amman Plan in 2008. (Author)

Years of rapid growth, accompanied by neoliberal and modernisation measures since the mid-1970s, have led to significant social division in the urban landscape, coinciding with the Arab Gulf oil boom. This division is evident in the contrast between affluent western peripheries and the socioeconomically deprived city centre and eastern districts. The following section will discuss the formation of two Amman(s) (Ham & Greenway, 2003).

4.4.3 Amman's Socio-economic Divide

Since the initial migration of Circassians to Amman in 1878 during the Ottoman Empire's rule, they favoured the valleys, particularly near water sources and the city's Roman antiquities, forming the old downtown district in the East (Samha, 1996) (see Figure 4.5). Amman's growth began from this centre after the British Mandate in 1921. Palestinian refugees also settled in the eastern and downtown areas, facilitated by UNRWA camps (see Figure 4.6). However, the shift towards neoliberalism and modernisation led to urban development moving westward, incorporating vacant agricultural expanses. These endeavours were oriented towards accommodating the foreign labour force and streamlining vehicular traffic movement, as elucidated by Schwedler (2012). This expansion was facilitated by the reclassification of agricultural lands into zones designated for upper-income housing through influential networks between tribal leaders, elites and landowners, speculators and government officials (Hourani, 2014b; O Kamal, 2020; Potter, Darmame, Barham, & Nortcliff, 2009).



Figure 4.5: Amman Downtown in the 1930s. Source: <https://alazaat.wordpress.com/> (Accessed June, 2021)

This orchestrated manoeuvring of legal frameworks and regulations precipitated a form of zoning characterised by exclusivity, culminating in a scenario by 1985 wherein a significant amount of land in Greater Amman was categorised as upper-income residential zones (Zone A&B⁶²),

⁶² Category A plots span at least 900 m², requiring a 5 m front setback, 7 m rear setback, and 5 m clearances on sides. The built-up area is capped at 39%. Category B parcels range from 750 to 900 m², with the house set over 4 m from front, 6 m from rear, and 4 m from sides. The allowed built-up area is 45%. Category C covers around 400 m² plots, accommodating up to 51% residential buildings. Structures must be 4 m from front/back and 3 m from sides. Category D includes smaller plots (≤ 200 m²) with max 55% built-up area, requiring 3 m, 2.5 m, and 2.5 m distances from front, back, and sides.

predominantly situated within the western vicinities, despite a persistent shortage of affordable housing. In stark contrast, Zones C (earmarked for middle-income demographics) and D (comprising the sole accessible housing option for the majority of the population) had significantly smaller zones (Potter et al., 2009), as seen in Figure 4.7. Moreover, this phenomenon prompted the migration of Egyptian, Filipino, and Somali labourers and Sudanese immigrants to establish residency within these comparatively more affordable localities. Consequently, this trend has contributed to escalating socioeconomic disparities between the eastern and western areas of the city.

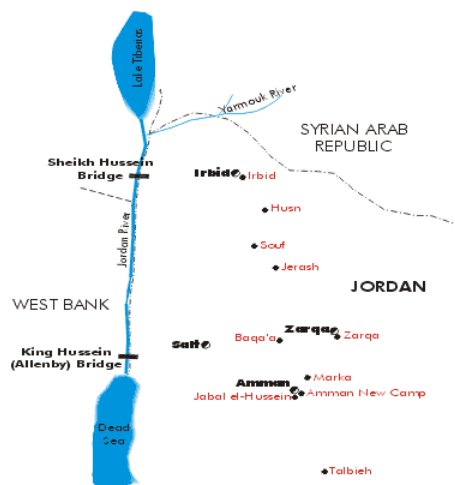


Figure 4.6: Map of the Palestinian refugee camps in Amman, showing the location of the four camps in eastern Amman (Marka, Jabal El-Hussein, Talbieh and Amman New Camp known as Wehdat) Source: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan> (Accessed May, 2021)

The state's designation of downtown Amman as a tourist and economic hub led to gentrification, displacing long-standing businesses present for over five decades. Simultaneously, the Abdali project (discussed in section 4.4.1) shifted to become the primary financial centre, replacing the historic downtown area. These developments contribute to Jordan's narrative as a cultural entity spanning historical origins to contemporary global modernisation. However, the 2008 economic downturn affected developers, leading to financial setbacks, loan struggles, and project suspensions (Taylor, 2011). Despite the property boom's profits, particularly in western Amman, ordinary Jordanians faced socioeconomic challenges and increased poverty rates. In 2008, amid global food and fuel price surges, the government, emphasising fiscal prudence, eliminated subsidies, causing a 15% overall price escalation (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2009, p. 1).

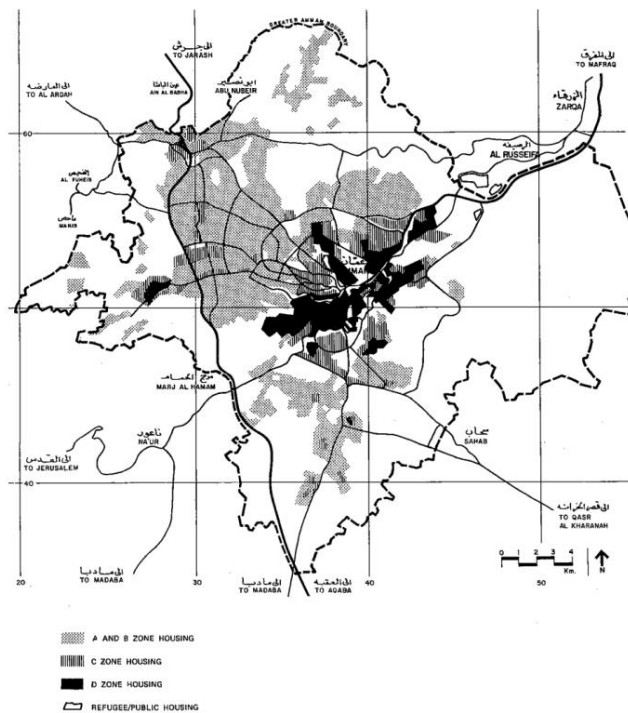


Figure 4.7: Housing zones in 1987 in Amman, showing larger zones A and B in the West in contrast to the smaller zones C and D in the East. Source: GAM and Dar Al-Handasah, 1987

The previous section elucidated that the networked oligarchy – central to the regime’s security – consolidated its power through controlling urban processes and property, specifically in western Amman. Their real-state interest shaped the city’s current social disparity. Elsheshtawy (2004) also points out that ‘the influence of globalisation consists mainly of processes that are activated from the inside by local actors.’ Within a postcolonial context, this presents a succession of authority represented by local elites and a constitutional monarchy, replacing the previous forms of colonialism that endeavour to sustain control and optimise the gains derived from the material and cultural accrual within the urban sphere via the facilitation of global exchanges and the adoption of policies of liberalisation. Nonetheless, while Amman continues to grapple with escalating patterns of segregation, its residents actively challenge the processes of neoliberalisation and land control, asserting their right to the city. A prominent exemplification of such assertions is evident in the Arab Uprisings of 2011, vividly articulating these discontentments, as elaborated in the following section.

4.5 The Arab Spring

'The world ... has long been dreaming of these uprisings. From the time the colonial world began lowering European flags, and as the postcolonial world was raising new ones ... the world has been dreaming of the emblematic slogan: 'Freedom, Social Justice, Dignity.'' (Dabashi, 2012, p. xix)

After years of inadequate dialogue between the people and their governing institutions precluding their agency and compelling changes, the uprisings suddenly opened new opportunities for democratic participation (Avina, 2013). The events of 2011 surprised locals and observers alike (Roy, 2012, p. 257), although, as argued by Bayat (2013, p. 587), the 'real surprise' was the break of conventional narratives of social struggles and political reform. The uprisings represented a new way to explore and define the world while embodying a post-ideological position in the long colonial and repression history of the SWANA region (Dabashi, 2012; Dalacoura, 2012, p. 79; Kiwan, 2014) driven by bottom-up forces of change (Sadiki, 2014, p. xxxiv). The present research is contextualised by the monumental juncture of the Arab Spring⁶³, the moment in Arab countries that revealed the power of allowing civic dialogue, a necessary step for effective change. This section aims to unfold the events of the Arab Spring in Jordan and understand how it later affected civil society's evolution. However, what interests this research is not so much the occurrences of the 2011 events but rather what preceded them.

4.5.1 The Making of Change

SWANA powerful regimes (similar to most Global South systems) have been known for adopting neoliberal economic policies and the global free market since the early 1980s (Al-Sayyid, 2014; Mir, 2019). Globalisation of the economy (as discussed earlier) widened the gap between a privileged few oligarchies and the majority of citizens, whilst authoritarian regimes such as the one in Jordan suffered from poor political governance that ignored demands for radical reform (Mir, 2019). This history of neoliberal globalisation in the Arab world informed the anti-imperial revolutionary cry of the Arab Spring. In essence, citizens of Arab cities, grappling with the adverse effects of neoliberalism such as unemployment, rising poverty rates, displacement,

⁶³ There is no fixed or single meaning given to the term 'Arab Spring'. Trying to impose one meaning may be to disaggregate the phenomenon into its constitutive manifestations, whether 'uprisings', 'protests' or revolutions.

authoritarian governance, and economic systems dominated by local, regional, and global financial entities, were galvanised to openly confront their regimes (Hourani & Kanna, 2014). According to Bayat (2013b), the ‘non-movements’ of the urban poor, women, youth and others, which refers to the ‘public nagging’ or ‘quiet encroachment’ in the everyday practices, succeeded in paving the road for massive demonstrations of the Arab Spring (p. 589).

As most of these nations suffered from similar autocratic power regimes embedded in the historical transformation of the global political economy (Hourani, 2014a) – with urban processes at its core– it rapidly spread throughout the Arabic region (Al-Sayyid, 2014, p. xxxiv). To paraphrase Hourani (2014a), the demand for the downfall of the regime targeted entrenched structures that are characterised by ‘corruption’. This corruption extended beyond exploiting official positions for personal gain, encompassing systems of authority that were inconsistent, imbalanced, and unfair, adversely affecting society at large. Such demonstrations demanded the ousting and disestablishment of the existing political powers, implicitly calling for erasing the mode of knowledge production about the ‘Middle East’ and other categorical remnants of the colonial imagination, *Orientalism* (Hana, 2012). Furthermore, they questioned traditional frameworks, as Dabashi (2012) illustrates:

‘We are witnessing more a restoration ... I mean recovering precisely the cosmopolitan worldliness in which alternative notions and practices of civil liberties and economic justice can and ought to be produced. Thus, the end of ‘Westernism’ as an exhausted and depleted mode of bipolar knowledge production’(p. 10).

Importantly, given that these revolutionary uprisings were no longer fighting according to terms dictated by their condition of colonality, such ‘open-ended’⁶⁴ revolutions were capable of dismantling the regime of knowledge to ultimately generate their own ideas, concepts, tropes, metaphors and values (Dabashi, 2012; Hana, 2012, p. 209). These uprisings called for a profound rethinking of normative conceptualisations and the application of western terms such as democracy, participation and liberty (Cavatorta, 2012; Kiwan, 2014). Observers suggest that the regime of knowledge inherited by the ‘Middle East’, which is not only from the colonial world but also from the postcolonial interlude, must be dismantled with a determination equal to that which ensured that the political regimes were overthrown (Dabashi, 2012, p. 37). Although most

⁶⁴ Dabshi uses this term in his book (Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism, 2012) as a means of the continuity of the revolution.

of the ‘springs’ were followed in subsequent years by ‘autumns’⁶⁵, for example, the counter-revolutions spreading in the region, mainly by oligarchic politico-economic networks at the regional scale that aimed to control the uprisings (Hourani, 2014a), or ‘[the lack of] the kind of civil society organisation and powerful leadership ... to wrest power from the old regimes or the free riders’ (Bayat, 2013b, p. 597). However, the aftermath of the Arab Spring continued unfolding, with conflicting trajectories in the nations involved (Whitehead, 2014).

The implications of the regime change on state-society relations remain largely uncertain, and more analysis is required (Jones, 2012); Dabshi asserts that change is inevitable. It notably paved the path for the rise of grassroots initiatives, as observed in the works of AlNasser (2016) and Halaseh (2012, p. 271) that aims at creating new spaces of participation, allowing for alternative political ideas to emerge in various cities, for example in Amman, Cairo and Beirut⁶⁶. To borrow from Randa Aboubakr’s (2021) work, those new spaces and initiatives understand change as a form of opposition to dominant cultural forces, be they authoritarian or religious, or more broadly, as a response to the expanding influence of globalised neoliberal policies, where they aim to restore the commons (Aboubakr et al., 2021b). Moreover, change, or the potential for change, can also be identified within acts of defiance aimed at countering particular local trends or addressing various forms of political and social marginalisation (Aboubakr et al., 2021b).

4.5.2 Jordan and the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring broke out in Jordan in response to a severe economic crisis, precisely related to its history of illiberal political economy (Beck & Hüser, 2015; Spindel, 2011; Yitzhak, 2018; Hourani, 2014a). The crowds decried corruption, high unemployment rates, income inequality and poverty (Beck & Hüser, 2015; Köprülü, 2014; Majbouri, 2017; Yitzhak, 2018) and demanded constitutional reform (Manhire, 2012). The Jordanians called for ‘an end to the more than 20 years of experimentation with World Bank and IMF mandated ‘market reform.’ They demanded an end to the corruption that, while widespread in the bureaucracy, has become evermore concentrated at the top of the political economy.’ (Hourani, 2014a, p. 651). While the impact of the movement in Jordan has been comparatively modest compared to neighbouring countries, it posed unprecedented challenges to the political and economic stability of the Hashemite Monarchy

⁶⁵ For more see (Bayat, 2013b)

⁶⁶ For example, the work of Tadamun grassroots organisation in Cairo and Beirut Madinati in Lebanon.

regime (Yeşilyurt, 2014). According to Hourani's (2014a) analysis of the Jordanian uprising, the events were more dangerous than ever as, for the first time in the history of Jordan's unrests, the crowds were primarily orchestrated by relatively small leftist political parties which had long been marginalised through government co-optation and had suddenly united. Moreover, the regime faced a significant concern with the involvement of tribal figures, traditionally forming the core support of the regime's survival. As in the past demonstrations, the government resorted to its conventional techniques, as outlined by Schwedler (2010), including deploying security and physical force, imprisoning both opposition figures and protesters, imposing severe restrictions on media, instigating investigations into corruption, and reshuffling governments while appointing new ones.

Despite these concerted efforts, the government was compelled to negotiate with influential groups and address numerous persistent grievances. This could be interpreted for several reasons. For example, the regime faced a challenging situation as the tribal population, its main support base, opposed it. Moreover, the whole region was going through many radical changes. Within this situation, the regime found itself relying on a soft-authoritarian policy. The state's new authoritarianism aligns with semi-authoritarian regimes that claim democratic legitimacy based on established conventions (Khirfan, 2018) or through processes of decentralisation (Al Rabady, Rababeh, & Abu-Khafajah, 2014) while avoiding any political risks of genuine democratic processes (Ottaway, 2003; Schedler, 2002). To address the escalating protests and overt government criticism, the state initiated an anti-corruption campaign that arrested several high-ranking government officials on corruption charges. Mayor Omar Maani⁶⁷, a prominent advocate for policy reform in Amman, was among those accused and detained. His administration and, notably, the Amman Plan developed by the Amman Institute (Ai), were cast under suspicion as contributors to state corruption.

In an effort to reclaim some semblance of legitimacy, the state proceeded to arrest Maani and subsequently abandoned the Amman Plan, along with its associated regulations and policies. Additionally, the Amman Institute was shuttered. Moreover, for the first time, citizens were allowed to elect their Prime Minister, as opposed to the traditional method of royal appointment⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ The mayor that was assigned by the King to create a plan for Amman.

⁶⁸ On ground this entailed engaging in discussions with the elected parliament members regarding the king's proposed nominee for prime minister, without explicitly scrutinising the candidate's credibility if qualification. For more see: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/11/elections-parliament-and-a-new-prime-minister-in-jordan/>

As discussed in his seven discussion papers, this was part of King Abdullah's slow and deliberate reform process⁶⁹, all claiming to address innovative paths to democracy and pave the way for a developed and mature civil society. However, the soft-authoritarian approach helped restore normal life in the Jordanian streets. Not only this, but the Jordanians also became more cautious following the violent collapse of neighbouring countries and the following counter-revolutionary movements. While street protests diminished, the Arab Spring heightened Jordanians' awareness of these issues more than ever.

Criticism of the government has become more common in private conversations, reflecting Jordanians' frustration with unfulfilled economic promises. The Uprisings underscored the need for organised social movements and civil society, akin to the transformative change seen in Tunisia (AlNasser, 2016). Additionally, Jordanians have understood that they cannot solely depend on the pledged reforms within the soft authoritarian approach. Jordanians now recognise the limitations of relying solely on promised reforms within the soft-authoritarian approach. While this softer stance initially seemed to offer more freedom, this dynamic shifted after 2017, with the government adopting a more restrictive and adversarial position⁷⁰. Despite awareness of restrictive civil society laws, activists and youths supporting the Arab uprisings had to 'workaround' and find new ways to assert their rights and challenge the state's authority; they had to 'navigate the middle ground between maintaining the status quo and pushing for regime change.' (AlNasser, 2016, p. 2). Those grassroots are searching for new avenues and openings to pursue reforms (Aboubakr et al., 2021b), but without choosing between passivity and instability (see Chapters 7 and 8). The following section will look into how the different events outlined in this chapter (embraced by the regime's survival) impacted the laws regulating civil society, shaping its development.

⁶⁹ For more see the King's official website: <https://kingabdullah.jo/en/vision/discussion-papers>

⁷⁰ On July 25, 2020, Jordanian authorities closed the Jordan Teachers Syndicate and arrested its 13 board members following protests and strikes. The Attorney General ordered a two-year closure, citing pending criminal complaints, raising concerns about the rule of law. A comprehensive gag order on reporting, including social media, was imposed. The closure and arrests are associated with disputes over teacher pay and social media posts, drawing criticism for suppressing freedom of expression and association

4.6 The Evolution of the Civil Society Sector in Jordan

As highlighted earlier, the civil society sector⁷¹ remained prohibited from functioning from 1967 until the advent of political liberalisation in 1989. Historically, the roots of civil society work extend back to the philanthropic traditions and practices of Bedouin tribes in the early days of Transjordan (Phenix, 2021). However, the riots of 1989 brought a new phase of openness in political and public life, allowing citizens to form and participate in civil society organisations (CSOs)⁷² (AlNasser, 2016). This led to the rise of CSOs advocating for human rights and democratic processes, accompanied by increased political party involvement. Previously, CSOs had been primarily perceived as entities engaged in charitable activities, particularly toward the welfare of disadvantaged individuals. However, by 1989, this perception expanded to encompass an acknowledgement of their substantive role in shaping policy development. Nevertheless, in the Jordanian context, this growth of the NGO and CSO community⁷³ did not mean simply transforming the political praxis. As discussed earlier, the openness in 1989 was only a regime survival technique. Throughout Jordan's history, the government has employed structural and institutional methods, including altering laws, to limit the influence of civil society. The following sub-sections delve into the main constraints on developing an organised civil society in Jordan.

4.6.1 Control from Inside: Royal Nongovernmental Organisations (RONGOs), Quasi-governmental NGOs (quaNGOs) and 'government'NGOs (GONGOs).

While for more than 22 years, the Jordanians lived under the martial act enacted after 1967, prohibiting them from arranging any public meeting, and inhibiting free criticism of officials, the monarchs enjoyed the ability to establish Royal NGOs (hereafter, RONGOs). RONGOs⁷⁴ are organisations established by royal family members or, as put by Brand (1998), organisations with royal patronage. These entities possess distinct advantages and have privileged access to resources

⁷¹ The civil society sector includes non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, charities, society associations, trade unions and syndicates.

⁷² Twenty years after the Jordanian independence there were almost 50 CSOs, focusing on sports, cultural and social clubs (Al-Urdun Al-Jadid Research Centre, 2011).

⁷³ In the subsequent five years from 1989 to 1994, there was a significant growth in the number of NGOs, with the number of NGOs increasing from 477 to 796 (Wiktorowicz, 2002).

⁷⁴ In Jordan, the two largest NGOs are initiated by the Hashemite Family; one is the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), formerly named the Queen Alia Social Welfare Fund, established by royal decree in 1977. JOHUD engages in a wide range of activities, such as development needs assessments, special education and support for the disabled, training initiatives, income-generating projects, and programmes to benefit women and children. The second-largest non-governmental organization is the Noor Al-Hussein Foundation (NHF), led by Queen Noor. NHF offers initiatives in areas such as local community development and microfinance, gender-focused development, education and cultural enrichment, and healthcare services.

that are not accessible to other NGOs within civil society. Moreover, their registration status allows them to collaborate with and receive funding from international donors as private associations with established ties to the state. In other words, they are not subject to the same scrutiny or restrictive laws as most NGOs and CSOs (AlNasser, 2016). In those organisations, the appointment of the Board of Trustees is mandated through a royal decree, in contrast to the prevailing practice in other Jordanian NGOs, which necessitates internal elections to select executive committees. Furthermore, their board of directors consists of influential government officials and businesspeople (AlNasser, 2016). Wiktorowicz (2002) describes the RONGOs as ‘an attempt to dominate civil society from within’ (p. 85). These entities are often established to secure control over international aid. This strategy aims to prevent NGOs and the voluntary sector from amassing significant resources, thereby hindering any potential threat to the regime’s authority and control. In such situations, the NGO community is overshadowed by prominent RONGOs that control the majority of international funding resources and gradually assert dominance throughout NGO initiatives (AlNasser, 2016). In this context, the state effectively achieves a dual advantage. It continues to access international aid via NGOs under its control while concurrently trimming down official state expenditures, aligning with neoliberal structural adjustments and privatisation demands. According to El Khatib (1996), the largest two RONGOs in Jordan constituted 21.65% of all NGO revenues in Jordan in 1996.

Importantly, those RONGOs try to control the sensitive issues in the Kingdom through their programmes and issues of interest. For example, women’s issues are being dominated by two RONGOs as their task is empowering women; however, these programmes are carefully designed to avoid radical feminist projects. This is also seen in other crucial issues (i.e. human rights, public participation, etc). Since these organisations are part of the regime, they hardly critique the state or the regime. On the contrary, they represent one of the regime’s arms of survival. According to AlNasser (2016), today’s activists perceive the well-established RONGOs as entities influenced by donors, operating in a top-down manner, adhering to western models, and aligning with the government and political elite. They view them as lacking accountability to their constituents and often conducting operations conflicting with their stated missions.

4.6.2 Local Laws and Restrictive Regulations

In another attempt to control civil society, the government has leaned towards increasing various stringent regulations and restrictive legislation. In practice, this meant issuing several laws that

contradict democratic principles. For instance, amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Law and the Press and Publications Law have imposed additional limitations on freedoms related to association, assembly, and expression. As in Jordan, associations and NGOs are governed by the Society Law, specifically, Law No. 51 issued in 1936 and ratified as the Law on Societies and Social Bodies (Law 33 of 1966) in 1966. However, Martial Law interrupted its enforcement, and it was rectified in 2008. Forming an NGO or society association in Jordan requires government authorisation from the Registrar⁷⁵ in the Ministry of Social Development, which has discretionary powers to approve or reject registration without providing a rationale. While the Society Law outlines four prerequisites for forming a civil association- Jordanian nationality⁷⁶, minimum age of 18, legal capacity, and a clean criminal record government can reject applications without explicit reasoning. In the case of trade unions, the Labour Law empowers a tripartite committee to approve registrations, but no new trade unions have been approved since 1976.

Furthermore, the regulations governing the operations of CSOs, and NGOs are quite stringent. For instance, these organisations must provide advance notice to the Registrar of Societies at least two weeks before a general assembly, overseen by Ministry of Social Development representatives. Decisions made during the assembly must be reported within 15 days. Amendments to by-laws require approval from the Registrar. It is important to note that the Law on Societies outlines potential penalties for violations, including the imposition of fines or dissolution. Furthermore, the Law grants the Minister the authority to appoint an interim board of directors for a CSO, for an initial 60-day period, extendable for another 60 days with Ministry authorisation. Although the rules for peaceful assemblies⁷⁷ were relaxed in 2012 after the Arab Spring, requiring only a 48-hour notice from the civil organisations, practical setbacks persist. For instance, the Public Assemblies Law contains vague language that provides the authorities with wide discretion to disperse public gatherings and punish participants. Many gatherings have been halted, and activists arrested for no apparent reasons. Thus, while the letter of the law changed, the implementation spirit remained unchanged.

⁷⁵ The Registrar comprises representatives from various government ministries and agencies, led by the Ministry of Social Development. Committee members include the Secretary General, Deputy Chairman, and representatives from the Ministries of Interior, Culture, Tourism and Archaeology, Environment, and Political Development. Additionally, four members nominated by the Minister of Social Development and appointed by the Prime Minister serve for a two-year term, with the possibility of renewal, and must possess expertise in charitable and voluntary work (Law on Societies, No. 51 of 2008, Article 4). Notably, there are no civil society representatives in the registrar.

⁷⁶ Non-Jordanians need approvals from the Prime Minister office.

⁷⁷ In the past, under Public Assemblies Law (No.7 of 2004), an organisation needed written authorisation from a governorate to conduct a peaceful public assembly.

Another notable constraint affecting the operational capacity of CSOs in Jordan is funding. The primary source of governmental association funding is the Ministry of Social Development's Society Fund. However, challenges arise from the dynamic and frequently changing procedures governing this fund, lacking the stability, predictability, and transparency necessary for effective planning and resource allocation. Even for registered charitable entities seeking funds, a meticulous process requiring prior permission and demonstration of philanthropic use is mandated. Associations are restricted to conducting a maximum of two fundraising campaigns annually for the same endeavour. The complexity intensifies when securing foreign funding, involving prior approval from the Council of Ministers. This process includes submitting project details, financing sources, expected funding amounts, and expenditure plans, with a 30-day response period. Nonetheless, practical challenges emerge as associations frequently encounter delays initiated by the Registrar of Societies. Consequently, this often results in delayed approvals or, in some cases, outright rejections. Compounding these issues is the fact that the official 30-day response period does not commence until the request is officially logged as received by the Prime Minister's office, which further extends the approval timeline.

Unlike other CSOs and NGOs, non-profit companies⁷⁸ enjoy a smoother path to registration as they do not require prior authorities' approvals. As one interviewee mentions: '*This could be done within few hours*'⁷⁹. However, they face limitations, operating exclusively in education, health, micro-finance and training and are subject to other restrictive rules. These include the mandatory appointment of an auditor and a legal advisor, regardless of the organisation's size, and a minimum deposit of JOD 1000 (approximately £1,125) in a dedicated bank account. After registration, a financial report must be submitted annually to the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Non-profit companies need approval for project implementation. Initially granted unrestricted authorisation for foreign contributions, a revised procedure introduced in 2015 mandated all CSOs, NGOs, and non-profit companies to obtain prior approval from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation before accepting foreign donations. According to interviewees, these changes delayed project execution, causing organisations to miss funding opportunities due to the lengthy state review process.

Adding another layer of restriction is the establishment of the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS), registered at the Ministry of Social Development, overseeing voluntary

⁷⁸ Non-profit companies are registered in accordance with Regulation No. 73 of 2010 under the Not-for-Profit Companies Act.

⁷⁹ Online interview, March 2022.

organisations in the country, as per Law 33 of 1956. Serving as an umbrella organisation for governate unions and charitable NGOs, the GUVS requires NGOs to register with it, involving decisions on registration and activities from both the GUVS and the Ministry of Social Development. The GUVS centralises NGO funds through various means, such as international donor support, allowing it to allocate funds according to its priorities. NGOs also have to pay annual dues to the GUVS, reinforcing state oversight by monitoring member NGOs through data collection and analysis. These regulations are further complicated by the prohibition on both CSOs and non-profit organisations engaging in political activities or pursuing goals aligned with the work of political parties. The challenge lies in defining political activity, left to government officials' discretion, allowing for broad and inconsistent interpretation. However, certain CSOs and NGOs can register as political associations, focusing on aspects like democracy promotion, human rights, and political participation, as long as they have no affiliation with political parties and their objectives. Figure 4.8, illustrates the different structures of organisation, registration and operation between the NGOs, social associations and non-profit structures in Jordan. While notable disparities exist in the registration protocols between non-profits and NGOs, their operational guidelines exhibit substantial similarities. The illustration encapsulates the latest approach governing these civil society entities. Notably, before 2015, non-profit organisations benefited from more lenient regulations not only concerning registration, a trend that persists to date but also in terms of streamlined funding procedures.

4.6.3 Freedom of Speech and Information Accessibility

Another dilemma confronting civil society pertains to the absence of comprehensive database systems that would ensure the availability of organised information. This situation is exacerbated by the government's stringent control over data and information. The Right to Access Information Law (Law 47 of 2007) necessitates individuals to justify legitimate interest when seeking access to information. Notably, this law does not provide a specific definition for the term 'legitimate interest' and imposes no constraints on this principle of legitimacy. However, individuals who share information categorised as confidential face severe penalties, including the possibility of life imprisonment with forced labour or even the death penalty.

In parallel, individuals seeking to share and express their opinions encounter many laws that impose heightened limitations⁸⁰. Under such circumstances, any CSO may be classified as illegitimate if it is perceived to pose a threat to the country's stability or public order, even if this threat is presented solely through verbal or written means. Additionally, the amendments introduced to the Press and Publications Law⁸¹ in 2012 have ushered in a range of new constraints concerning news dissemination and the establishment of news websites. This legislation mandates obtaining prior authorisation for the publication of electronic content, with non-compliance resulting in the potential closure of the publication's website. Furthermore, the Anti-Terrorism Law provides various legal provisions that can be utilised to curtail media freedom. Adding to the restrictive framework, the 2012 General Statistics Law mandates that research centres and CSOs must seek government approval before conducting surveys and publicising their findings.

This section examined the restrictive laws governing civil society, where it becomes evident that the government's control over civil society activities conveys a clear expectation that civil society should cultivate positive relations with the government and refrain from opposition or criticism. Moreover, the government tried to restrain the work and scope of civil society, which resulted in limiting them to service providers or, as argued by AlNasser (2016, p. 9), as 'gap-fillers to public programmes left by the state's withdrawal from its traditional role in service provision'. She argues that the government delegates main national projects like the National Poverty Pockets Empowerment Programme to recognised RONGOs funded by foreign donors and international cooperation. These RONGOs, in turn, subcontract local CSOs to execute these endeavours, adhering to government regulations and donor stipulations. Consequently, this transforms local organisations into employees instead of advocates for social transformation.

⁸⁰ Despite the fact that the Jordanian Constitution of 1952, which was amended in 2011, includes provisions in Article 15 that ensure freedom of expression, opinion, and media freedom.

⁸¹ It is crucial to note that as of the time of writing this dissertation, specifically in August 2023, the Jordanian government has put forth a series of amendments to the Cybercrime Law, which have subsequently been ratified by the parliament. These amendments have garnered significant criticism, with Human Rights Watch and 14 other organisations characterising them as the most stringent and draconian regulations imposed in Jordan since the period of Martial Law. The proposed legislation includes provisions that could lead to imprisonment and financial penalties for certain online content. Despite objections raised by several activists, the amendments were ultimately approved.

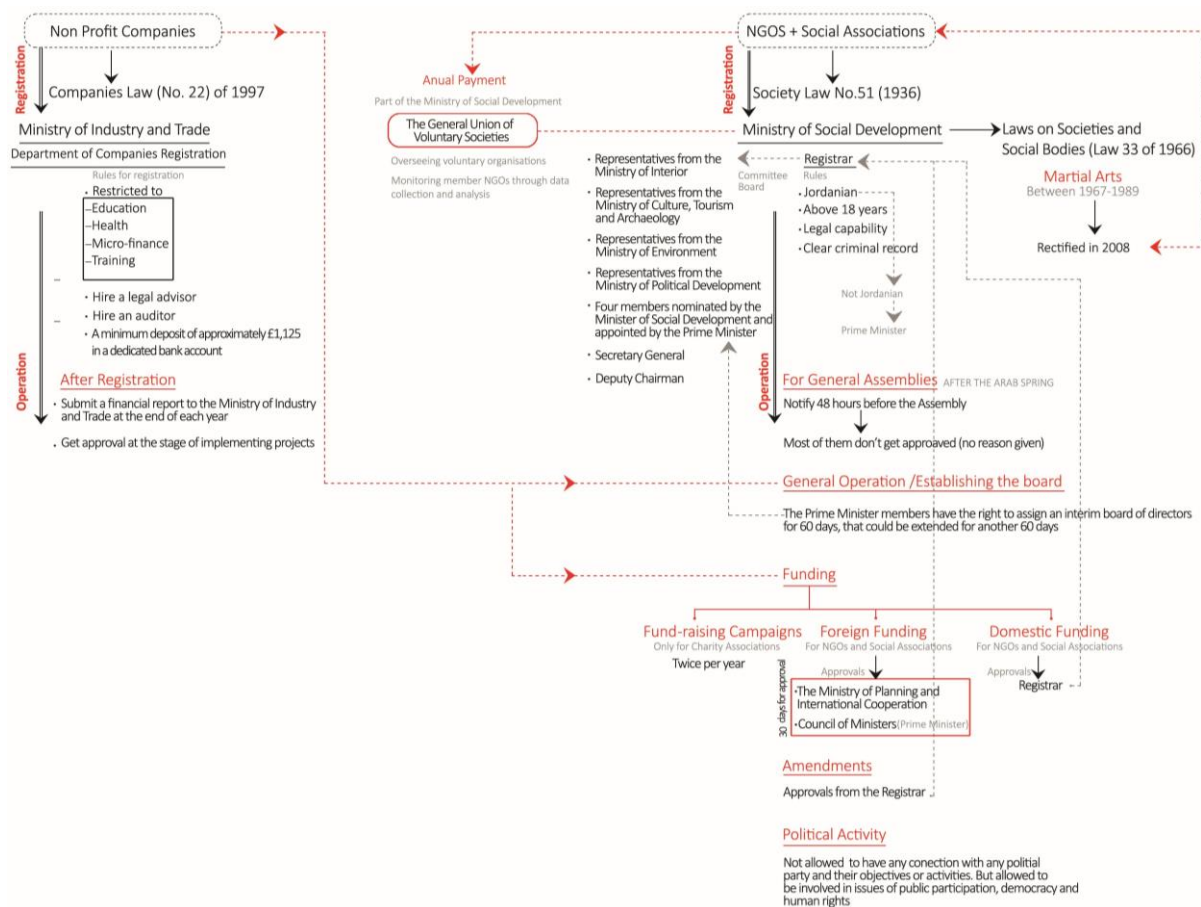


Figure 4.8: Civil Society organisations' frameworks of registration and operation. (Author)

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has been dedicated to elucidating the context in which the intersection between the state and civil society occurs, specifically within public participation. By delving into the intricate dynamics involving the state, civil society, and the impetus generated by the Arab Spring, this chapter has shed light on the interwoven political and economic forces that have contributed to the stagnation of civil society.

The origin of this complex network can be traced to British colonial state formation, replacing tribal and communal ownership with individual holdings dominating the country. However, the monarchy's success relied on the 'King's men' granted lands and high-ranking positions since King Abdullah I's reign. The new legal framework, contrary to neoliberal promises, created a dominant political-economic entity working through and alongside the state. In exchange for

substantial political and financial support, these entities extended their support to the state, enabling them to consolidate and reproduce their power through the city's production. To appease those affected by austerity, the state adopted survival strategies, promising democracy and economic liberalisation while empowering a select group of oligarchs aligned with the monarchy. Nonetheless, these processes of 'defensive democratisation' had a debilitating effect on the stability of civil society. Although the activities of civil society have always been closely intertwined with the prevailing political landscape, as discussed earlier, civil society has consistently sought to capitalise on any potential political openings within the system. Most of this engagement was through protests and social unrest in the Jordanian streets.

The events of the Arab Spring profoundly impacted Jordanians, albeit the country is considered one of the less tumultuous cases in the Arab region. Nevertheless, it allowed the public to gain insights and engage in actions to instil change. Jordanians realised how the fragmentation of the civil society, constrained by stringent regulations, undermined their efforts to advocate for change. This situation was far from novel to Jordanians, as the laws governing civil society had exerted control for over five decades, placing strict limits on the activities of civil society organisations and curtailing freedom of expression. Consequently, such restrictions impeded potential collaboration among CSOs in the nation, resulting in a weak civil society. Nonetheless, Jordanians have grown increasingly aware of the government's mechanisms for ensuring the regime's continuity through survival strategies. The curtailment of civil society freedom intensified further after the Arab Spring. The cessation of street protests did not translate to passivity; rather, people actively engaged with their circumstances in new creative ways. The subsequent chapter delves into the grassroots organisation central to this research, where activists have reasserted themselves as proactive agents instigating change. It emphasises the capacity to construct public spheres through discourse, negotiations, and acts of appropriation.

Chapter 5 Actors of Participation in Citymaking

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, public participation in citymaking is about building new relationships between citizens and state institutions and their representatives, utilised through the engagement of a variety of different actors. Yet the exact meaning of participation varies enormously among the actors involved (Cornwall, 2008), which could affect the whole process and its outcome. In order to understand the ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ spaces of participation in Amman, this chapter will look at the different categories of actors who are involved in the respective process. What can participation possibly mean to those actors involved in the process of creating these spaces of participation? What are their motivations behind creating those spaces? Following Cohen & Uphoff’s (1980) call for ‘clarity through specificity’, this chapter endeavours to understand the vagueness of the perception of participation to the different actors. It does that by first identifying the actors and their roles and who participate in their created settings before delving into their motivations and how they understand participation.

This first section analyses the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), representing the state as an actor delivering and claiming to open spaces of participation through its different departments. Thereafter, the section describes and analyses the meaning of participation and whom it enables to participate in their ‘invited’ spaces. The following section focuses on the civil society actors of participation, varying from the local NGOs, the CBOs, the international NGOs and the new grassroots organisations and collectives who mainly became active in the context after the Arab Spring. Although some of them used to promote participation prior to the Arab Spring events, they gained importance and recognition concurrently with the Arab Spring events and the state’s attempts to move forward with development initiatives funded by International agencies (Khirfan & Momani, 2019). Next, this chapter looks at other actors and their different roles and positions

in the participatory process in Amman, followed by a discussion on the circulation of elites (different actors) across various institutions, while playing different roles to understand their relational role in the participation process. Finally, this chapter concludes with some insights regarding the meaning of public participation to the different actors involved in the process in Amman, which provides the backdrop for the case studies in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

5.2 The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM)

Understanding GAM

The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), created in 1963 and revised in 1985 (Ababsa, 2011), is the first autonomous⁸² planning institution responsible for developing plans for the city and managing land use that overrides any actions proposed by any district authorities (Tewfik & Amr, 2014). It is linked directly to the prime minister and guided by the legal framework of the Municipalities Act No.41 of 2015, while all the other cities are guided by Planning Cities, Towns, Villages and Buildings Act No.79 of 1966 under the Ministry of Municipality Affairs (MoMA) (Zeadat, 2018). With more than 23,000 staff⁸³, GAM is considered one of the largest local governments in Jordan, where the mayor is appointed by the Council of Ministries and decreed by the King, along with a third of the City Council members (the highest governing entity at GAM, where the mayor is part of it, too). The remaining two-thirds are elected by people every four years, as the whole City Council dissolves. GAM operates through six primary sectors, each with dedicated units: the Public Works, Health and Agriculture, Environment, Social Development, Economic and Financial, and Administration Department, as shown in Figure 5.1. Along with the six sectors, GAM relies on five other directorates to manage the institution internally and its relationship with the stakeholders, manifested in the Human Resources, Institutional Performance Development, Legal Affairs, Communication and Information and Information Technology directorates.

Even though GAM relies on other government institutions to manage the urban affairs in Amman (e.g. different ministries, land registry, universities and others) they tend to work in a silo fashion (Zeadat, 2018). Interestingly, this is also the case between the departments within GAM (Saad &

⁸² All the municipalities in Jordan are under the authority of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MoMA) except of GAM and Aqaba Special Economic Zone (ASEZ) are under the prime minister office.

⁸³ GAM Website: <https://www.ammancity.gov> Accessed June 2023.

Amr, 2015). Zeadat (2018) and Kamal (2020), in their in-depth studies, discuss the long history of non-collaborative work between the different departments and sectors at GAM. Furthermore, they took the initiative to address the individuality of the directors, especially the mayor, in making the decisions. Thus, they conclude that the planning at GAM is being fragmented, inflexible and, more problematically put, non-institutionalised, where ‘urban planning laws and principles and regulations [are] often not taken seriously or flatly ignored’ (Hanania, 2014, p. 468). This is something not to be hidden in Amman’s arena, in the Amman Metropolitan growth report produced by GAM (GAM, 2008) described the planning and development control system as being designed around the bureaucratic requirements without considering the citizens’ or other stakeholders’ needs.

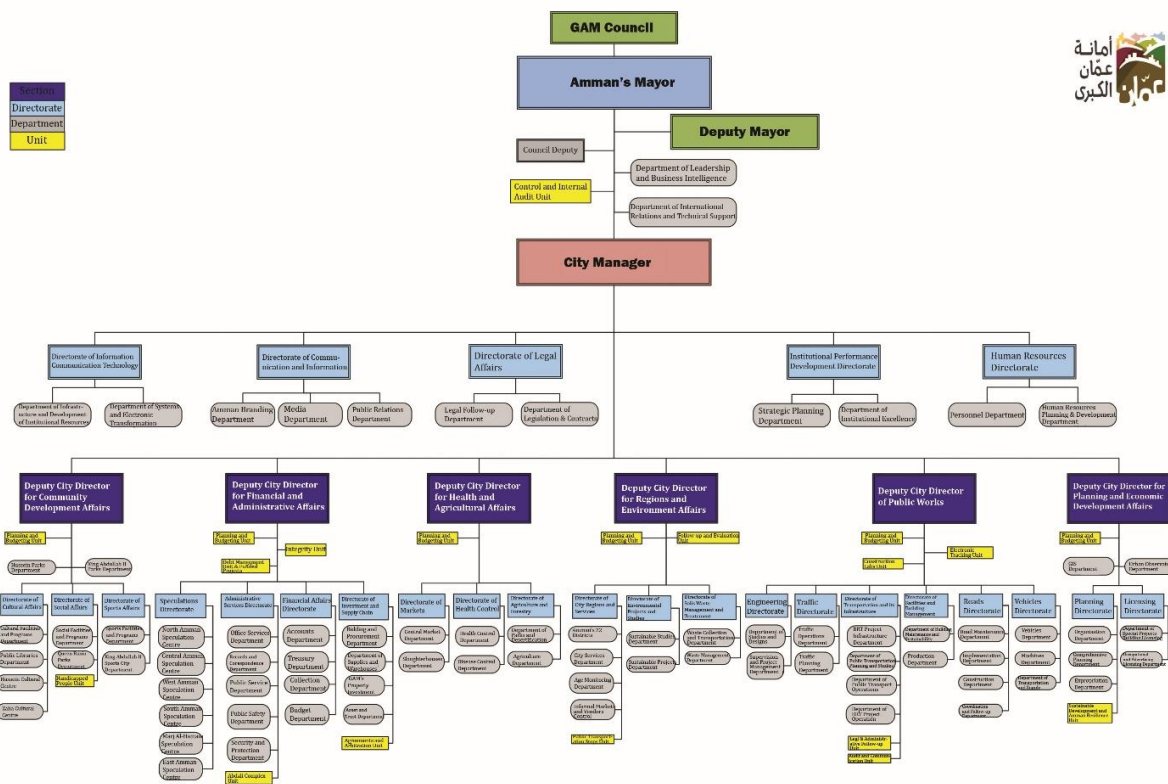


Figure 5.1: The GAM structure of departments and sectors. Source: GAM, Translated by the Author

Moreover, the Greater Amman Municipality acknowledges in the previous report that they lack a managerial department that can undertake long-range planning, which presents a significant challenge to effective urban development and sustainable growth. This resulted in a trend of shortsighted decision-making that affected envisioning future needs and aspirations of the citizens, as described in the next section. The historical weakness of local authorities and

municipalities is reinforced by the high primacy index of tribal affiliations, which have a dominant presence in the political landscape of Amman, where it is seen as crucial to maintaining the regime's security (Abu-Hamdi, 2015). Along with the pressure to respond to tribal demands, the weakness is strengthened by the well-known culture of '*wasta*' واسطة (in English, nepotism) and favouritism inhabiting the local authorities in Jordan (Abu-Hamdi, 2015; Aljafari, 2014; Jreisat, 2018; Linn, 2020; OECD, 2017). In recent times, this situation has been further compounded by the escalating prevalence of solicitation for illicit payments. Transparency International (2016) shows a rise in the corruption perception index between 2015 and 2016 in Jordan, with a rise of 12% in the latter year. This was clearly witnessed throughout the fieldwork; many interviewees referred to the way GAM's employees use bribes to get the public's work done. Another aspect that leaves GAM insufficient for delivering services and improving its governance is the excessive debt (World Bank, 2017). As mentioned above, GAM is financially independent from the central government. Instead, it primarily relies on tax collection (Zeadat, 2018) as well as loans and donor support from various international agencies or the local government.

With all the problems described above, GAM tried through different masterplans⁸⁴, with the help of foreign experts, including British, North American and Japanese (Potter et al., 2009), to modernise the city (Abu-Hamdi, 2015). However, the continual influx of refugees (Abu-Hamdi, 2015) and the conventional way of drafting the plans (Zeadat, 2018) led to a failure in the realisation of those plans (Kamal, 2020). As discussed in Chapter 4 this failure also applies to the latest 2008 metropolitan growth plan that came as a response to the rapid population growth (Aljafari, 2014) and the boom in commercial real estate investments (Beauregard & Marpillero-Colomina, 2011) while excluding civil society from planning activities (Khirfan, 2018).

The next sub-section will discuss the status of the public participation approach at GAM after the different unproductive attempts to deliver the metropolitan growth plan in 2008 and the events of the Arab Spring in 2011.

5.2.1 Public Participation in Planning at GAM

As shown in Chapter 4, the government has adopted various forms of democratisation, liberation and citizen-centred governance to naturalise the neoliberal discourse and protect the imperatives of technocratic governance in general and the market requirements in particular (Parker, 2009).

⁸⁴ New master plans were published in 1955, 1968, 1978 and 1988.

However, it is essential to mention that most interviewees stated that GAM is conducting a participatory approach in every single step related to the built environment in Amman through the elected members of the GAM's council (as described in section 5.2). As stated by the head of the Engineering unit⁸⁷: *'Since 2006, the local elected members are representing the citizens and communities, each in their specific region. Thus, the whole structure of GAM is based on a participatory approach.'* (Amman, April 2021). Moreover, the interviewees were very cautious at the beginning of the interview to explain that they prefer not to use the terms (eastern) and (western) Amman and that they believe this segregation is starting to diminish with their efforts in trying to bridge the gap between both parts. However, it is undeniable that throughout the discussion (when they got more comfortable during our conversations) they agreed on the existence of this segregation, as shown in the different quotes throughout the chapter.

The sub-sections below will discuss the different meanings of participation as perceived and practised by GAM officials and different departments and sectors.

5.2.1.1 Social Participation

'During my first interviews at GAM and when mentioning the word participation, I was asked to interview the Social sector at GAM, as they are seen to be in charge of participation in the institution.' (Fieldnote, 30/03/2021).

Since 2004, GAM has introduced the Sector of Social Development to strengthen the relationships between the citizens and the municipality. The sector has three supporting units to deliver its vision: Sports, Social, and Culture unit (see Figure 5.3). Each unit has different sub-sectors working on various programmes and initiatives through GAM's eleven centres scattered mostly in eastern Amman. The sector interviewees stressed the availability of many initiatives and programmes to all the other age groups and backgrounds, suitable for both men and women to participate. From cooking lessons, soap making, mobile maintenance workshops, and sewing classes to English and dance lessons, these activities are supposed to create active citizens in Amman who appreciate the work of GAM and share a responsibility to their own neighbourhoods. As explained by the head of the Social Development Sector at GAM: *'The people feel that GAM or the state is challenging them; thus, through our sector and the services that we provide, we aim to show them that we are close to them and that we want them to be part of our city.'* She

⁸⁷ The Engineering unit is under the Public Works Sector, as shown in Figure 6.1.

continues by focusing on involving the eastern Ammani residents: ‘As you may see, people from eastern Amman when they visit a shopping mall in West Amman they will try to behave like the people from there, because if they behaved as they’re used to, they wouldn’t be accepted in that area, and no one wishes that! That’s why we bring them high-level programmes; they will try to reach that level’ (Amman, April 2021).

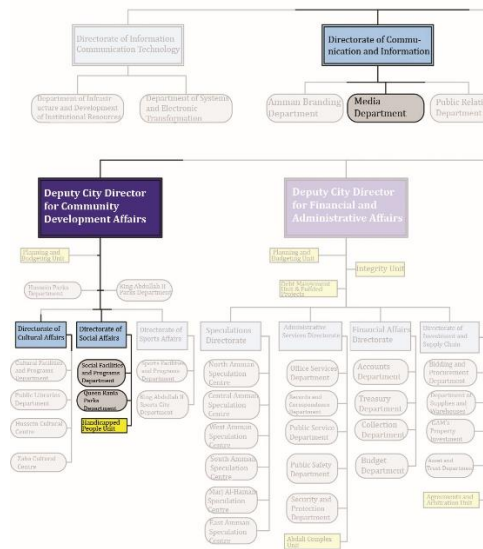


Figure 5.3: The Directorate and departments responsible for social participation at GAM. (Author)

The Sector of Social Development at GAM claims to deliver public participation through three different approaches in each of the eleven Amman centres; the first is the Children's Council⁸⁸, then the Neighbourhood Committees and finally through targeted Social Programmes. The Children's Council started in 2004, in only four centres with 22 kids involved. The goal behind this council is to include children in managing local affairs in their local districts and to empower them through different trainings to practice democracy and voice their rights. This happens through direct elections in public and private schools every three years. According to the Social Development Sector chairperson, in 2021, more than 500 schools participated in the elections (see Figure 5.4). The nominated children from each school were chosen by recommendations from their teachers and headteachers or through elections. Zeadat (2018) in his study elaborates on the lack of effective participation of the youth, and those involved in the Children's Council, in affecting decisions in planning. It is worth mentioning that UNICEF funds the Children's Council, and according to the chairperson of the Social Development Sector: *'To keep Amman on the*

⁸⁸ Children's Council is considered a remnant of (Ai) vision as discussed in [Chapter 4](#).

international map of funds and to make sure we are not excluded, we have to follow international policies and programmes.' (Amman, April 2021). This shows the implicit intentions of the officials at GAM and how they perceive the activities of participation as an added layer to guarantee funds from international agencies.



Figure 5.4: A student participating in the Children's Council elections in one of the public schools in Amman.
Source: GAM, 2021

The second approach adopted by the sector of Social Development in introducing social participation is through the Neighbourhood Committees (NC). The NC was first introduced in 2004 but was not utilised until 2021. Different officials at GAM comment on its absence; for example, one official stated that *'The political situation between 2005 and 2020 was not ready for such a step; it had a lot of uncertainties.'*⁸⁹ Others referred to the *'... conflicted and intersected roles of the NC with the elected members that represent already the Local GAM, which could cause bigger problems because it will sideline the elected member. As people might turn to the NC instead of the elected member.'*⁹⁰

In this context, the head of the Social Unit in the Social Development Sector refers to the essential roles of the mayors in steering the strategies at GAM and setting its visions and goals for the city. According to her, between 2006 and 2010, the mayor was enthusiastic about opening and branding the city to foreign investments (Beauregard & Marpillero-Colomina, 2011). In the later years following the Arab Spring, the soft authoritarian rule did not allow the municipality to suggest new regulations and programmes; they preferred to keep things as they were and lead

⁸⁹ Interview with the Director of the City. Online, October 2021

⁹⁰ Interview with the head of the Engineering Unit at GAM. Online, September 2021

carefully, fearing another unrest. However, in recent years, she comments: *‘The world is changing, the international funds are oriented towards participation, and we have to keep up, that’s why we had to utilise other approaches like the NC.’* (Online, September 2021).

Thus, the NC resumed their work formally in 2021 (see Figure 5.5). The official responsible of the NC from the Social Department suggested only starting in four centres in Amman (representing only four districts in the city). As he says: *‘It is too expensive to involve all the districts in Amman. Thus, we have asked the directors of each of the four centres (that I personally selected) to choose seven citizens from the area who are well known for their good behaviour and attitude. We are choosing صفوة المجتمع (In English, the elites)⁹¹ we don’t want to end with a committee full of راسبين توجيبي (In English, people who have failed high school).⁹²’* (Online, October 2021).



Figure 5.5: Left: participants from NC receiving certificates for completing a course on how to work in the committee. Right: the first meeting of one of the committees in Ras Al-Ain district. Source: GAM, 2022

In this process, most of the selected people worked either in the health sector or as educators in schools or universities, besides the mukhtar⁹³ and the imams (religious men),. The members were trained for two days and were told: *‘You are not here to complain about your streets or the services GAM provides. You are here to tell us about the problems in your community from a*

⁹¹ This word reflects here, the well-educated people with their known extraordinary attitude in their community.

⁹² In the Jordanian context, the completion of the 12th grade, which precedes university enrolment, holds significant weight as a societal yardstick for categorising individuals. Despite the fact that failure in the 12th grade does not necessarily preclude one from achieving financial success or attaining social recognition, the act of failing this academic milestone remains stigmatised within the cultural framework, regarded as a source of shame.

⁹³ Mukhtar meaning ‘chosen’ in Arabic: المختار, is the head of a village or *hara* (neighbourhood) in many Arab countries. In the past every *hara*, village or neighbourhood had their own chosen mukhtar – usually older wise man- who volunteered to assist in ruling and organising the arising issues among the residents, as well as collecting taxes on behalf of the state from citizens, and distributing any aid received to the neighbourhood. Nowadays, mukhtar is a symbolic concept that is more popular in Amman’s eastern regions.

social perspective only! Like, health problems, teenagers smoking, sexual harassment or skipping school. We will then figure out how to solve them.’ (Interview with the GAM official responsible for NC. Online, October 2021).

The last approach employed by the sector of Social Development is targeted Social Programmes and activities in each centre. International bodies like the GIZ and USAID usually fund these programmes (see Figure 5.6). To gain insight into the nature of these programmes and the individuals taking part, the Queen Rania Park Centre, located in the impoverished Al-Qweismeh area of East Amman, was selected to investigate⁹⁴. Since 2009, the centre has implemented diverse programmes and initiatives specifically designed to benefit women residing in East Amman. According to official statements from the centre, these programmes are geared towards enhancing women’s social and financial empowerment. The centre aims to equip women with valuable skills that can be utilised to actively participate in the labour market, thereby enabling them to contribute economically to their communities.



Figure 5.6: Different rooms equipped for specific activities and programmes. Source: Author, 2021

The officials in the centre claim that they employ a highly participatory and inclusive approach when they reach out to participants. This is achieved by utilising various social media platforms and leveraging influential community figures such as the mukhtar to disseminate information within the neighbourhoods. The officials admit that the process needs to be internally sustained by the government or GAM and not fully depend on international agencies’ episodic funds.

⁹⁴ The selection of this site was recommended by many GAM’s officials, as they claimed to represent one of the recent and best practices of community engagement in the making their city.

Nevertheless, they also acknowledge that GAM is doing its best to involve citizens in the city and transform them into active citizens, and some of them: ‘... *don’t deserve it!* [as] *they have a cultural thing that needs many years to change them to good, loyal citizens.*’ (Interview with the GAM official at Queen Rania Park Centre. Amman, August 2021).

The previous section described one lens to understand participation at GAM, being seen as involving citizens in social matters without directly changing or discussing spatial issues in the city. Throughout the Social Development Sector and under its Social Unit, GAM utilises three different approaches to activate the role of the citizens in social matters. This included the Children’s Council, the Neighbourhood Committees (NC) which was recently resumed in four different districts in Amman and finally the Targeted Social Programmes carried in different community centres in eastern Amman.

5.2.1.2 Social Media and Online Participation

The Directorate of Communication and Information claims to be one of the key pillars of the participatory process at GAM (see Figure 5.7). Throughout their website, telephone line (call centre) and social media platforms (e.g. Facebook page) they are claiming to be creating a participatory approach to reach out to GAM. The chairperson of the directorate comments: ‘*In the past, our institution operated under a more closed framework. However, we have undergone a significant transformation and now prioritise transparency in our operations. A notable manifestation of this commitment is establishing an interactive website, enabling individuals to voice their complaints easily.*’ (Amman, April 2021).

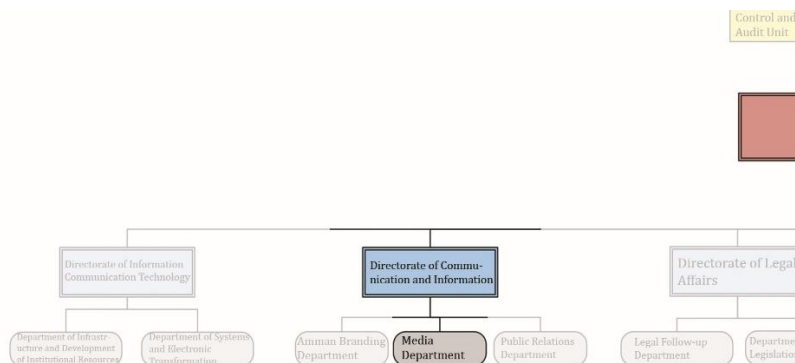


Figure 5.7: The directorate and department responsible for social media and online participation at GAM. (Author)

Interestingly, this is not how the public generally thinks of GAM's website. Through several interviews conducted throughout this research and from analysing the comments and posts on different social media platforms, many people who have used the website commented, on the one hand, the website's limitations, as it does not reflect a participatory tool as claimed (see Figure 5.8). For example, a lot of personal information is needed to submit a complaint (i.e. the ID number (thus limiting its use to Jordanian citizens only), full name, address of residency, etc). Moreover, there is a specific list to submit a complaint about, and it is not open for other suggestions, feedback or review. On the other hand, the GAM's continuous neglect of the submitted forms only exacerbates the mistrust between the public and the institution.

Figure 5.8: Left: the list of information that should be entered to submit a complaint. Right: The drop list of complaints or feedback. Source: GAM mobile application and website (Accessed August, 2021)

5.2.1.3 Land Use Zoning Announcement

The traditional method of involving the citizens in the urban affairs in Amman, which has been seen, according to the director of the Planning and Economic Development sector at GAM, as a participatory approach towards planning, is the 60-day newspaper announcement when a request of a change in the land use for a specific plot is submitted. For example, if a property owner or the GAM committee decides to change the land use of a regulated and planned plot, they must post a formal announcement in the formal newspaper. However, only the landowners of other properties have the right to refuse or complain about the new changes. The residents and tenants of the area have no right to object. This law has been used since the 1960s and has not changed. Many officials at GAM see it as an effective way to ‘inform’ the public about the undergoing changes while giving them enough time to study it and submit feedback (see Figure 5.9)

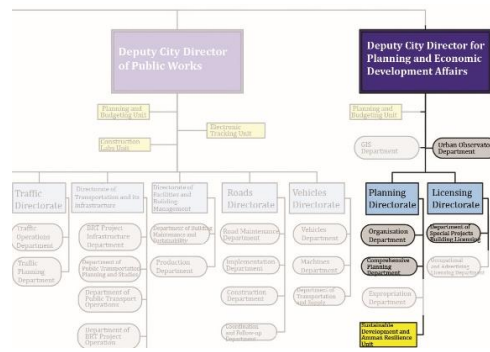


Figure 5.9: The department and directorate responsible for the formal changes’ announcement. (Author)

Nevertheless, the director of Planning at GAM is aware of the law’s exclusivity as she comments: ‘We are working on changing the GAM law, and we have already submitted the new version to the prime minister. Public Participation is one of the main aspects the new law is introducing. If we do not institutionalise it, no one will voluntarily apply it at GAM. We need to make it mandatory to be applied.’⁹⁵ However, the new law was released in 2022 without any mention of public participation.

5.2.1.4 Public Participation through international NGOs

The other way to involve citizens in the urban affairs in the city at GAM is through a partnership with international agencies that aim to fund the development of urban projects and foster sustainable development through enhancing public participation (This will be discussed thoroughly through case studies in Chapter 6). According to the officials at GAM, this represents the most effective way for participation by bringing a wealth of experience and access to resources to involve the public in urban matters. Since the uprising of the Arab Spring in 2011, political reforms have established opportunities for public participation through partnering with international NGOs that claim to follow a participatory methodology in producing urban spaces (See Chapter 6). As described by the Director of Special Projects at GAM: ‘All the funded projects are around public participation; if we want to receive more funds from international NGOs, we need to accept their participatory element.’ (Amman, May 2021).

⁹⁵ Amman, May 2021.

Today, GAM is partnering with international agencies to deliver capacity-building programmes that promote the concept of public participation for GAM employees. The officials at GAM perceive it as a way of capturing the ‘best practice’ and reflecting it in the Jordanian context. GAM has a long history of working with international NGOs; besides this history of funded participatory projects, today, GAM is working with international NGOs to promote Cash for Work (CfW) projects through a participatory methodology, targeting both the Syrian refugees and the Jordanians known as the ‘host community’. CfW aims to support social cohesion, create more equitable gender roles and develop the local economy for refugees and low-income communities in contested contexts. According to the GIZ – the leader of CfW projects in Jordan – the projects aim to build horizontal and vertical trust between the public, specifically focusing on the refugees and the state institutions (GIZ, 2020). Moreover, they aim to create social integration between the refugees and the host communities by collaboratively working together to develop the context in which they live. However, Chapter 6 will extensively examine this particular form of participation through different case studies. According to the interviews conducted with officials from GAM, those cases represent the most effective public participation methodology in Jordan.

The section above looked at the nature of public participation at GAM, ranging from socially depoliticised activities, website complaints, and formal newspaper announcements to collaborating with international NGOs to deliver participatory projects; the officials perceive these actions to be rendering GAM as a ‘citizen-centred’ governance (Khirfan & Momani, 2019). Figure 5.10 illustrates the top-down process of the production of space by GAM. Moreover, it elucidates the various procedural mechanisms ostensibly facilitating public participation, as implemented by GAM (see Appendix I). The figure below indicates that the process of public participation as understood and carried by GAM happens at the very end of the decision-making procedures, which results in ‘informing’ the public rather than actively engaging them in the whole process of decision-making in planning/making their city.

Arguably, all the officials interviewed in this research acknowledged that participation is not institutionalised and is based on the personal perception and attitudes of the officials, starting from the mayor himself. However, each of the officials presented themselves as supporters of institutionalising participation, demonstrating a collective inclination toward the notion of integrating participation as a prerequisite for project initiation. Still, more interestingly, they perceive themselves as very knowledgeable of how to carry participation and willing to do so. However, the bureaucratic structure of GAM and other high-level officials might in contrast fight

the idea. The following section will introduce other key actors of public participation, such as non-governmental actors, non-profit entities, and others elucidating their roles in fostering – or not– public participation processes in the Jordanian context.

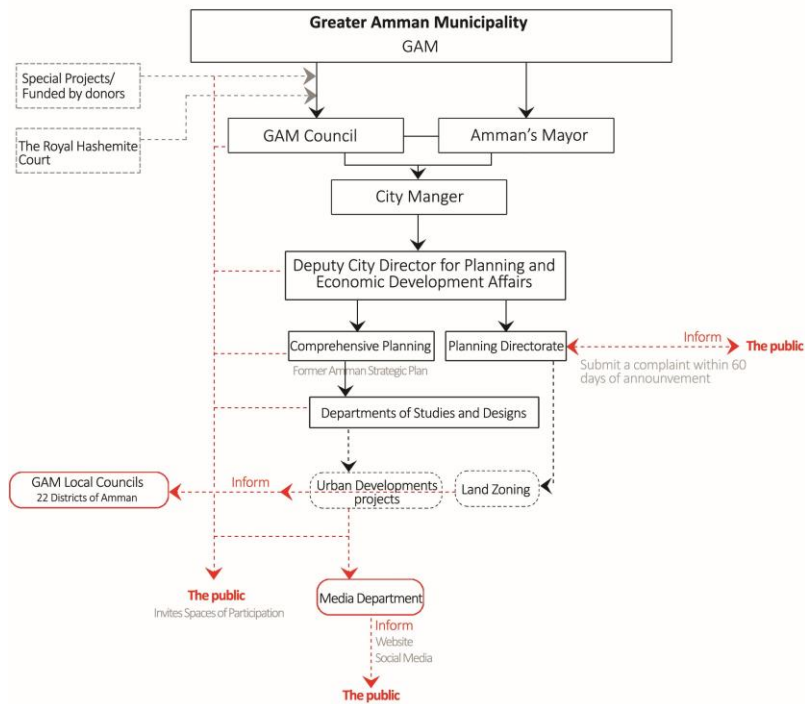


Figure 5.10: The top-down ‘institutional’ production of spaces and participation at GAM. (Author)

5.3 Civil Society Actors

The term civil society refers to Sandercock's (1998) understanding of the collective sphere of non-governmental organisations, community groups, non-profits and voluntary work that actively engage in social, political, economic and cultural issues associated with the advancement of common interests and beyond the realm of the state. This section provides the different narratives of the civil society actor's work and practices that promote public participation in producing urban spaces in Amman or advocating for them. Even though there is a growing number of institutions in Jordan known as the third party or the civil society that are distinct from the market and the state, for example, trade unions, charity associations, NGOs, member-based organisations, non-profits and others (see Chapter 4), this chapter focuses only on the civil society actors that promote or work with participatory approaches in the urban affairs matters in Amman.

In this context, this section is organised into three sub-sections, each exploring a specific type of organisation and structure that aims to promote public participation.

5.3.1 International NGOs

As previously explored in Chapter 4, international NGOs have been actively operating in Jordan since the aftermath of the first Palestinian Nakba in 1948. This engagement extends to participatory development, particularly evident in their efforts to facilitate consensus-building between local authorities and residents of Palestinian camps in Amman during the late 1980s. Nonetheless, the international NGO sector today assumes a crucial function in implementing participatory projects in Jordan through collaboration with local authorities such as GAM. These INGOs comprise a blend of Jordanian and foreign professionals, with the higher-ranking positions predominantly occupied by foreign professionals (Burlin, 2020). While these organisations receive funding from external donors, necessitating adherence to their rules and requirements, they must also comply with local regulations. Interestingly, according to interviewed officials affiliated with GIZ, INGOs enjoy favourable rapport with the state, affording them relatively relaxed working environments⁹⁶ compared to the local NGOs.

As the number of international NGOs working in Jordan has grown rapidly after the flux of Syrian refugees, they seek to work with local NGOs due to their familiarity with the context (Adem et al., 2018). However, they have been criticised for ‘usurping responsibilities from local actors’ (Farah, 2020, p. 133), as these international NGOs look at hiring local NGOs in participatory projects as social mobilisers based on a fixed contract. Thus, risking limiting their capacity and work to merely a short time of the projects’ life (Burlin, 2020). In this light, the local NGOs or society associations are not seen as associated or implementing partners but instead as hired (contract-based) staff (see Figure 5.11). In a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between INGOs and local actors conducted by the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD), an enlightening report stated that the INGOs assume that the local actors lack the necessary competencies and expertise to contribute to the realm of international development actively. Consequently, this creates a funding-competitive environment where stronger and more capable organisations could win funding bids repeatedly. Moreover, other scholars argue the preference of international NGOs to work based on their ‘western assumptions’ rather than sharing decision-making with local actors (Bruschini-Chaumet et al., 2019).

⁹⁶ Interview, online, October 2021



Figure 5.11: A participatory project sign in Amman, excluding the local NGOs as collaborators in the project and only recognising the state, the donor agency, the design office and the contractors. Author, 2021

Furthermore, it is argued for the tendency of international NGOs to often retain accountability ‘upwards’ to donors rather than ‘downwards’ to the local communities, thus, limiting the ability to strengthen civil society and targeting their efforts towards non-politicised short-term projects (Burlin, 2020; Jalali, 2013; Lang, 2013; Mohan, 2002). As Alexandre Burlin (2020) argues, the donors’ prioritisation of a ‘high number of beneficiaries’ impacts scale and an ability to quantify the results (p. 127). In Jordan, it is noticed that the international NGOs participatory development in the production of urban spaces started to grow after the high number of urban Syrian refugees settling in the cities instead of camps⁹⁷. Significantly, it is noteworthy that urban refugees frequently settle in vulnerable and poor neighbourhoods (Verme, 2016 et al.,). As a result, this imposes additional strain on already burdened infrastructure, escalating tensions with the host community (Alshoubaki & Harris, 2018). This often leads host communities suffering from financial hardships to resent the refugees who receive assistance.

In the case of Amman, the local tensions with the host community bear substantial implications for refugees residing in the city (Achilli, 2015). This strained relationship is frequently characterised by racism, verbal and physical assaults, hostility, and disrespectful treatment (Johnston et al., 2019). The different social norms and cultural disparities brought by the refugees further intensify this hostility, along with economic competition for employment and social competition for jobs, housing, and public services (Mercy Corps, 2012; Haynes, 2016). In this

⁹⁷ According to the NRC (2022) report, there are more than 140,920 Syrian refugees living in Amman in 2022; approximately 28% of non-camp refugees in Jordan.

regard, multiple studies, for example, (Haysom, 2013; Johnston et al., 2019) and international organisation reports such as (UNCHR, 2014), stressed the need for holistic social integration policies between the refugees and the local Jordanian host communities. Participatory development is one of international NGOs' strategies to highlight multi-layers of socio-cultural integration. In this context, it is noticed that the entry of participatory development through INGOs in Jordan is similar to all of those approaches of refugee relief programmes and development in countries of the Global South. While the participatory development model is gaining a lot of popularity in the Jordanian context, there are no studies to tackle the effect of the participatory programmes on the targeted communities or stakeholders involved.

5.3.2 Local NGOs

As described in Chapter 4, after the law amendment in 2008, the NGOs in Jordan followed a new rule that follows the Human Rights Watch recommendations in avoiding treating the NGOs as only charitable organisations. However, there is still very little awareness of the mandate of civic activism, both the state officials and the public. In this light, and since the scope of the NGO's work is larger than the other formats of civic organisations⁹⁸, they tend to get their work secured by depending on international donor funds, which leaves them open to the donor's configuration of conditions, such as short funding projects, the priority of outcomes over the process and excessive accountability requirements (Elbers & Arts, 2011). While this rendered the NGOs in the Jordanian context as service providers, the interviewees in this research argue the strong relationship between the local NGOs and donor agencies including the state.

According to the interviewees⁹⁹, the local NGOs are working on contract-based conditions with the government or INGOs in the country. They are usually recruited by the government, RONGOs or the INGOs to deliver certain projects. This is very popular in projects involving citizens in participatory urban projects conducted by the state or the INGOs. As shown in Chapter 6, when an INGO proposes engaging the citizens in the decision-making and planning or designing for an urban area, they work with local NGOs to conduct the process. In this case, the local NGO has to follow the INGO rules and regulations, as their employer. Some NGO workers interviewed in this research comment on the restrictive and excessive rule of INGOs and their patrons' personnel and

⁹⁸ For example, CBOs, that include the social associations and non-profit organisation.

⁹⁹ Those who are engaged with activism work, NGOs current and past workers or activists working in different civic organisations forms (i.e. society associations).

how it affects the project's process. They claim that some patrons would find ways to come around some rules or use personal connections to overcome some state rules. However, this does not always mean it would work for the citizens' good; sometimes, they would only benefit the organisations and their workers, not the undertaken projects or the beneficiaries.

In another case elucidated during this research, a Jordanian NGO is observed advocating for the reclamation of public spaces to facilitate public discourse. As part of their mission, they aim to build a network of educated, critical, proactive young Arab leaders who possess the ability to contribute creatively to their local communities by reimagining and revitalising public spaces. However, when the organisation started gaining wide recognition in the Jordanian context, the state and other RONGOs approached them to develop projects and partner in educational programmes. Today, the organisation has redirected most of their work in partnership with either the state, RONGOs or INGOs, in which, after 16 years of working in development, it is seen as a pro-government institution. For example, in the past, they used to hold public debates in public spaces and would invite the public to actively participate. They used different innovative ways to reimagine a public space for all. However, since their partnership with the state, they have halted these activities and focused more on educational programmes, voluntary work, and collaborating with the private sector to solve societal problems and reinforce concepts of citizenship.

In this sense, the work of local NGOs in Jordan is rendered as depoliticised, far and away from engaging in real activism action. Those involved in engaging the citizens in the production of spaces are merely checking the boxes to satisfy the institutions they collaborate with.

5.3.3 CBOs: Non-profits and Society Associations

As shown in Chapter 4, a fundamental distinction between NGOs and non-profit/society associations lies in their operational scope, work scale, and membership type. When it comes to producing equitable urban spaces through public involvement, the latter category typically operates on a smaller scale than NGOs, often employing a democratic governance framework. This means the work is done collaboratively with all the members' involvement and consent. In contrast to NGOs, which commonly have a paid staff component, individuals involved in non-profits and society associations usually serve as volunteers without regular remuneration. Additionally, there may be instances where a membership fee is required. Likewise, the NGOs and these non-profits sometimes work in contract-based with the government or INGOs. As one association leader said: *'We take these contracts with the state and INGOs to financially support*

the volunteers.¹⁰⁰ Another argued that they only act as social mobilisers in large state or INGO projects; their job is to mobilise people, which according to the interviewee, is not easy, as many projects do not align with people's demands and needs¹⁰¹. Thus, risking their grassroots ties and building trust with the people (Banks & Hulme, 2012).

Nevertheless, certain civic organisations venture into activism beyond the confines of their formal agreements. As stated by a leader of a society association, they feel a sense of responsibility towards their context and community. Consequently, many associations and non-profit entities operate within a specific domain of interest, such as environmental issues, public spaces, or accessibility¹⁰². In this context, when a pressing matter emerges that aligns with their area of focus, numerous non-profits actively engage to provide support and advocacy for such cases. Nonetheless, all participants in this research, who hold positions within society associations and non-profit organisations, express a strong willingness to maintain collaborative partnerships with formal institutions. As one interviewee remarked, *'It is also a chance for us to work on larger projects with well-recognised formal bodies.'* (Interview, online, September 2021).

As discussed in Chapter 4, non-profit organisations and associations are restricted from getting involved in political work. Such limitations considerably curtail their capacity to enact substantial transformative change. In the past decade, many associations have encountered requests to cease their projects due to suspensions of political entanglements (Phenix, 2021). In this vein, the non-profit sector approaches the right to participate in the production just urban spaces in Jordan from a depoliticised stand. Informally, they have many long conversations with the people where they try to build their capacity in political work and encourage political participation. However, since this is not a shared goal with the institutions they collaborate with, their work and alignment to the dialogue and collaborations is counterproductive (Clark, 1995).

¹⁰⁰ Interview, online, September 2021

¹⁰¹ Interview, online, September 2021

¹⁰² Under these circumstances, the organisations are required to register not only with the Ministry of Social Development but also with other relevant ministries pertaining to the specific issues they address. For instance, if their work primarily revolves around environmental concerns, registration with the Ministry of Environment would be prudent. Thus, they have to report to both ministries and follow their requirements.

5.3.4 The New Grassroots Organisations and Urban Collectives

The term ‘new’ in the above title does not primarily denote the emergence of novel organisational forms but signifies a fresh approach. These entities are individual networks operating independently from institutional and corporate structures. Through their non-hierarchical, anti-normative, anti-hegemonic structure, they aim to create new possibilities in the city by focusing on small-scale social enterprise rather than totally relying on significant international funds. The emergent strategies for these organisations evolved after the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 (Halaseh, 2012, AlNasser, 2016; Khirfan, 2018; Phenix, 2021). Undoubtedly, the uprisings helped in promoting solidarity and social cohesion among citizens. Moreover, it created an informed generation that no longer accepts established institutions, to instead, generate their own ideas, concepts and values ultimately. In this light, the new grassroots organisations call for a profound rethinking of normative conceptualisations and the application of western terms such as democracy, participation and liberty (Cavatorta, 2012; Kiwan, 2014).

Accompanied by a strict political order in the last 10 years, these forms of activism no longer use the streets for popular demonstrations and direct confrontation with the state; they have ‘*changed the language of communication with the state.*’¹⁰³ They are better understood as an urge and a response to the political climate in experimenting with new ways of doing outside the capitalist production paradigm. These organisations are willing to take action but are also aware of the fraught landscape rendering the scene in Jordan after the Arab Spring. Thus, they creatively create many new possibilities ‘that have the potential for inventiveness within the ordinary and are thereby genuinely ‘of its moment’ (Berke, 1997, p. 223).

They function in various capacities, either as non-profit organisations under the provisions of the 2010 law (as elaborated in Chapter 4), society associations, unregistered collective groups, or even for-profit enterprises. Notably, many non-profit organisations have recently transformed into for-profit companies. This transition can be attributed to the newly imposed restrictions associated with the non-profit law. As discussed in Chapter 4, while the initial intent of the new law for non-profit organisations was to facilitate active engagement of civil society in education, health, capacity building, and microfinance, since 2016, the law has imposed stringent limitations akin to those outlined in the Law of Societies (Law 51 of 2008) that govern NGOs and social

¹⁰³ Interview with one activist in Jordan. Amman, May 2021

associations in Jordan. Some of these groups prefer to remain unregistered and work freely without any legal ties with the ministries; others, for tactical reasons (as discussed in Chapter 8), register as non-profits or society associations. However, most of these groups prefer to work as for-profit companies, registered only with the Chamber of Commerce, which does not require the same strict rules and regulations as the former laws regulating NGOs and non-profits. These collectives do not need rigid membership registration or fees and operate voluntarily. Most members have full-time jobs and operate in their free hours. These grassroots organisations have different ways of funding their projects, such as selling products and services, crowdfunding, and charities. Sometimes, they might seek international or local funding (as described in Chapters 7 and 8).

While organisers employ a variety of practices, they articulate a set of shared principles that underpin their work. These principles revolve around derailing capitalist restructuring and focusing on local culture. They aim to build and defend shared commons by fostering collaborative initiatives promoting community engagement and participatory decision-making within a flexible, non-hierarchical structure. According to the organisers, this is made possible by the open, participatory character that distinguishes it from other forms and organisations' structures of civic organisations in Jordan. The people involved in these grassroots organisations claim that through their micro-gestures, they hold the potential to address larger political issues, in which they envisage themselves as agents for change. In addition, they offer a space of dialogue and imagination for people, where they set priorities for themselves rather than focusing on donors' predefined objectives. This multitude of descriptions certainly signalled that new practice sites had emerged far away from the structured formal institutions. These independent practices are reactions working in complex systems that endeavour to find ways to move challenge and create a new political reality. Chapters 7 and 8 will further elaborate on the practices, approaches and ways of working of these new grassroots organisations and urban collectives.

This section has explored different civil society actors that play a crucial role in shaping the discourse and practices of public participation in planning. While most of these actors engage in participatory projects through contractual arrangements, particularly those operating within the realm of INGOs, novel practices and self-organised collectives emerge in Jordan. These emerging actors strive to engage in collaborative urban initiatives that diverge from formal or externally imposed work paradigms. These actors do not view their involvement as merely a job; to borrow

the words famously quoted by Benjamin Disraeli in Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978), they do not consider 'The East as a career' (1847 II, xiv).

5.4 Other Actors

In Jordan, as in other contexts in the global South, the discussion on public participation is still very immature and restricted due to long colonial histories (See Chapter 4). Thus, the utilisation of public participation in citymaking has been relatively unexplored and unrecognised within the architecture and planning arena – for example, architects and planners, educators and researchers. This section will discuss the role of other actors fully involved in the planning process, in one way or another, in utilising (or not) public participation. It will start with the educators and researchers who supposedly form the understanding of public participation for architecture and planning students before moving to architects and planners in their professional practices.

The organisational framework of Jordanian higher education departments amalgamates landscape architecture, urban design, and city planning under the umbrella of the Department of Architecture, as represented by the joint bachelor's degree. However, as in many other post-colonial countries, western academia deeply influences and creates the architectural academic community without addressing the context's particularities (Salama, 2018). The mainstream architecture education in Jordan is explored from the angles of modernity and master planning and zoning, with little room for integrating socio-cultural matters and different modes of knowledge production. Thus, it is perceived as a purely scientific approach¹⁰⁴. Theories of participation, co-production and pluriversality are totally ignored, and students are prepared to be the sole voice in producing concepts, plans, designs and others. As one new tutor who recently graduated from a university in the USA comments: '*The architectural and planning education here only focuses on the outcome, not the process; we are trying to change this, but it is not easy in a middle-aged male-dominated environment like the one we work in.*' (Interview, Online, November 2021).

¹⁰⁴Twenty-one universities in Jordan teach architecture. Only six of them have separate schools of architecture and not part of the engineering and technology department. Moreover, there is only one university that offers city planning studies as a separate speciality.

However, in recent years, there has been a notable emergence of educators in the Global South, including Jordan, who have graduated from western countries but hold different mindsets. These educators have been influenced by the decolonial and Southern turn movements that have gained traction within certain western universities. Inspired by these alternative perspectives, they seek to challenge and transform the existing education system in their origin countries. However, in Jordan, these scholars' endeavours encounter numerous challenges. The challenges can stem from resistance within established academic institutions that adhere to traditional western-centric pedagogies. In addition, since the arguments are raised within engineering schools, they tend to resent qualitative approaches in design and research. Another challenge facing those interested in academics is the continuous gap between academia, policy and practices (Shami, 2021). The educators, researchers, practitioners and policymakers work separately in a top-down environment driven by each person's individuality. Given this situation, the graduated architects and planners working in the private or public sectors work similarly as taught. They do not tend to incorporate a participatory layer in their design or planning projects or even involve researchers to discuss critical matters. No architectural practice will approach the public or other stakeholders for collaboration unless they are asked or paid to do so.

However, many other actors could play key roles in the process of planning public participation, for example, the media. However, in both its forms, the legacy media (the traditional format of media (e.g. newspapers, radio shows, and television news programmes) and the new media (which includes websites, digital apps, social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) exhibit limited role in the public participation dialogue. As discussed in Chapter 4, the aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings has engendered heightened restrictions on press freedom. Consequently, the media landscape in Jordan remains fiercely contested, with powerholders imposing a combination of legal and practical constraints that impede the comprehensive exercise of fundamental rights. The media portrays participatory projects as notable accomplishments of GAM in facilitating citizen engagement within the decision-making process.

To sum up, the previous sections have examined the various actors involved in either creating spaces of public participation or advocating for their promotion. Despite the diversity in their methodologies, the roles of these actors may converge and interconnect across various mediums for diverse purposes. Such intersections could foster distinct approaches to public participation, as discussed in the subsequent section.

5.5 Elite Circulation

Another crucial aspect to consider when looking at the actors of participation in Jordan is the nature of elite¹⁰⁵ circulation¹⁰⁶ within this framework. The concept of elite circulation pertains to the movement of individuals across various institutions, transitioning from voluntary organisations or research institutions to political positions and public bureaucracy and vice versa. Many individuals working in the local NGOs or society associations shift to working with INGOs, RONGOs or even for the state (i.e. GAM). This phenomenon results in individuals occupying multiple roles within the system, though not simultaneously (Tvedt, 2006). Drawing on the work of Terje Tvedt (2006, 2007), this elite circulation exerts power, as it enables individuals to capitalise on the array of influential positions available within a fixed institutional network, advocating for distinct institutional interests at each stage of this cyclical process.

This is very clear in the Jordanian context when local NGO individuals move from leading their organisation voluntarily to working with a paid job in well-known RONGOs. Nevertheless, their names are still affiliated with the local NGOs as board members or honorary members. This phenomenon has significantly influenced public perceptions of these actors, with many viewing them as aligned with the state or other dominant structures, ostensibly lacking genuine concern for grassroots interests. However, this case is very popular within the INGOs, as when these international organisations started adopting participatory projects, they recruited their teams as (participatory consultants) from local activists or those who already lead local associations advocating for people's rights. Where the job description is usually very attractive to those thirsty for fostering change and advocating for the poor and marginalised. This is folded in two ways in Jordan; on the one hand, those individuals moving between the international aid and the local NGOs and associations work, and, in some cases, they are recruited to work with the state in different ministries and with municipalities like GAM. On the other hand, some of those individuals feel sceptical about the systems of INGOs and their way of working in developmental projects, and return to activism work (see Chapter 6). One interviewee comments on their work in an international NGO after working for several years in a society association: *'I wanted to make changes within the INGO; I thought I could, but it is bigger than I thought.'* (Amman, May 2021).

¹⁰⁵ Elites here refers to the possessions of specific forms of capital, including economic, cultural and social capital.

¹⁰⁶ The concept of elite circulation in this research refers to (Tvedt, 2007) that describes 'the existence of a fairly small elite which circulates among an extremely limited number of central institutions in society, and thus tends rather to limit the exchange between a system-conservative and an innovative elite' (p.633)

Nevertheless, numerous actors engaged in this iterative process perceive it as a chance to collaborate with governmental or international frameworks to effectuate incremental changes, albeit for a limited duration (see Chapter 6).

However, in many instances, those ‘professionals’, ‘elites’ or ‘consultants’ are being found on many sides of the table of the public participation process, where they can play different roles. When many commute between high politics and bureaucracy in this way, it is valid to question the traditional ethos of those people and whom they represent to better grasp how these systems of public participation are functioning, and the policies formulated (this is followed in Chapter 9). More importantly, it raises questions about the state’s involvement (or the International NGO) in controlling and representing these civic institutions. It endangers what Niklas Luhmann and Pierre Bourdieu¹⁰⁷ referred to as the establishment of new systems into a unified national project that represents the creation of an alternative framework within the broader international development aid system.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter aims to understand the actors who claim to be part of enabling a participatory approach to the production of urban spaces in Amman. Through exploring different actors, this chapter has shown how these actors understand the concept of public participation in citymaking. Yet, the following chapters will discuss through case studies how these actors apply their understanding of public participation in creating spaces and practices of participation. This Chapter started by exploring the different understandings of public participation within GAM institutions. Four primary approaches were identified: the implementation of social projects unrelated to spatial concerns but focused on social issues such as health, education, and women’s economic empowerment; dissemination of information to the public via digital platforms; formal announcements regarding changes in land use for any plot within the city with a period of 60 days to raise complaints; and collaboration with aid agencies endeavouring to execute participatory projects within the urban landscape.

¹⁰⁷ For example, the work of (Bourdieu, 1990; Luhmann, 2012)

However, this chapter has shown a strong relationship between the state, represented by GAM, the INGOs, and the local NGOs and other civic institutions in collaborating to create 'invited' spaces of participation. The process is considered new to GAM since it is not institutionalised. It happens through individualistic preferences and international agencies' guidance and requirements, with the help of local actors, in short periods. However, in this process, many individuals circulated repeatedly between the formal, aid organisations and local civic institutions, allowing some practices to continue unquestioned; as for the public, they represented the protagonists.

This chapter also highlighted the emergence of 'new' grassroots organisations and urban collectives' approach, which aims to find new methods to create socially just cities in politically restricted environments. The work of these entities will be thoroughly explored in Chapters 7 and 8. Other actors like academics, professional architects and the media played either a passive role or falsely praised the work of formal institutions. There is, however, hope from the newly graduated academics and scholars who hold different approaches to acting in the city and its urban development by questioning the way of doing things, this includes the political realm where these actions are situated.

Chapter 6 ‘Invited’ Spaces of Participation: The Promising Agency

6.1 Introduction

‘What [are] the consequences of NGOs focusing people’s energies on cards, diagrams and GANTT charts, rather than on popular mobilisation?’

(Robins et al., 2008)

This chapter examines the ‘invited’ spaces of participation and aims to investigate what ‘invited’ participation means in practice in Amman and how they actually work through extensive analysis of controversial case studies adopted and funded by international NGOs (the GIZ and UN-Habitat) in partnership with the local government. The timeframe of the cases is pertinent because fieldwork was undertaken during an ongoing and active participatory process, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the context and the performance of actors engaged in the participatory activities (see Chapter 3).

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, there has been a notable increase in the involvement of residents and local communities in urban development programmes framing the work of international NGOs in poorer pockets in Jordan. Those spaces are meant to be models for democracy, citizenship and participation where the western donors expect the poorer, ‘disadvantaged’¹⁰⁸ communities to automatically participate to reduce the socioeconomic inequalities, increase their awareness of government policies and plans and strengthen the government’s accountability

¹⁰⁸ This term was used by the INGO working on ILCA project.

(Mosse, 2004; Tembo, 2003). However, there appears to be little attention paid to the politics of everyday life in their new contexts of participation (Robins et al., 2008; Lemanski, 2016), for example, the SWANA region, and how this could affect the whole arena of participation. Given that these spaces are relatively nascent in Jordan, there is an emergent need to examine the question of their interaction with political society and the role that these can play in strengthening active citizenship, where the latter is implicit in the discussion of ‘invited’ participation. ‘Invited’ spaces of participation in Amman are created by powerful actors such as GAM officials, international aid agencies and architects in headquarters while imagining a smooth process of partnership between citizens and government that is expected to result in shared responsibilities (Coelho, 2007). These spaces are lent to people and their representatives for a short period to exercise their ‘rights’ to participation. As attractive as they might sound to the public for the mere fact that the state is involved in creating them, participation has been characterised by several caveats, problems and challenges (Mohanty, 2007).

Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s concept of spatial production and Cornwall’s spatial participation, this chapter attempts to understand the complex configurations of authority and traces of existing power that can influence participation in these new political spaces (See Chapter 3). Thus, this chapter will not only ask how ordinary people are engaging directly in the governance of public affairs in Amman but, more critically, what the dynamics, outcomes and limitations are when they do. This chapter is primarily concerned with the first three research questions: *how does public participation articulate with a neoliberal top-down governance system in Amman after the Arab Spring and what is the nature of the institutional form of public participation in Amman? And whether these spaces are throwing up new forms of relationship between citizens (participants) and the government?* To answer these questions, this chapter examines the implementation story of different projects within two international organisations that create spaces of participation while collaborating with the state, by analysing the structure of actors, the participatory approach and its tools. This contributes to the overall research in critically examining the ‘invited’ spaces of participation in Amman depending on the politics of everyday life in its place and the relational effects of power and agency on the complexity of ‘invited’ public participation.

The chapter is divided into five sections; the two sections after the introduction analyse the process of participation within two different international organisations implementing participation in Jordan: GIZ and UN-Habitat, I will analyse two projects initiated by the GIZ and

two projects initiated by the UN-Habitat. The next section analyses the complex relationships and networks of the involved actors. This chapter concludes with reflections on how ‘invited’ participation functions in Amman by considering the multi-directional relationships in providing the spaces for participation.

6.2 Case 1: (GIZ) Participatory Approach

This section discusses two urban development projects based on a participatory approach, ILCA and UML, implemented by the German Society of International Cooperation (GIZ)¹⁰⁹ in partnership with GAM, whose central aim is to address social issues and green infrastructure in poverty-stricken areas in Amman. According to the in-depth interviews conducted before selecting the cases (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.1), both projects represent the ‘best practice’ of participation in Amman. It is important to note that the UML project is part of the ILCA project; however, it was decided at a later stage when the GIZ team decided to develop a new project (later referred to as UML) to enhance their goal of creating a network of green infrastructure in eastern Amman through public participation (see Figure 6.1). This section will start with introducing the three sites of the ILCA project besides the UML project site to provide the context of the projects. This is followed by three sub-sections that discuss the process of participation in the spaces created by the GIZ in all the project phases. In the last sub-section, I argue, as a result of my analysis, that the ‘invited’ spaces of participation failed in creating the goal behind making them, which was creating ownership and a sense of responsibility to the communities living near the sites.

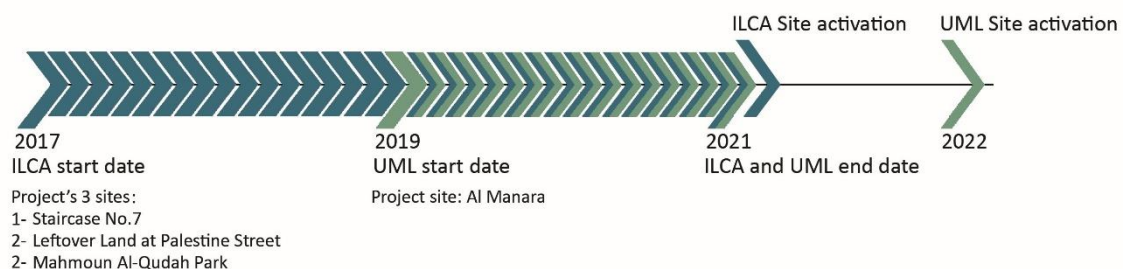


Figure 6.1: Timeline for ILCA and UML projects. (Author)

¹⁰⁹ GIZ, is a German company (state-owned) that implements the majority of BMZ's (The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) technical development cooperation.

6.2.1 The Aim and Objectives of the Projects

Improving Living Conditions in disadvantaged Areas of Amman via the implementation of Green Infrastructure (ILCA) project

Improving Living Conditions in disadvantaged Areas in Amman (ILCA) is an urban regeneration project that works in partnership with the Jordanian Ministry of the Environment and GAM (see Table 6.1). The project sets up to pilot the improvement of existing green infrastructure and add elements that support improving residents' quality of life by developing the connection to public transport, increasing walkability to public spaces, and preserving biodiversity. In East Amman, six sites were selected to implement integrated participatory development in public open spaces by involving residents in the planning and designing processes. The project intends to create a sense of ownership, with attention to women's specific needs to contribute to social cohesion and integration. Furthermore, it seeks to raise awareness among local actors about green infrastructure's social, environmental, and economic benefits to mitigate climate change and Amman's urban resilience (GIZ, 2019).

Table 6.1: General information about the ILCA project. Source GIZ, 2020

Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Implementing Agency	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Political Partner	Ministry of Environment
Implementation Partner	Greater Amman Municipality (GAM)
Duration	July 2017 to July 2021
Volume	5 000 000 EUR

This study focuses on the first three sites of ILCA's project: Staircase NO.7, Left-over land on Palestine Street and Mahmoud Al Qudah Park. The other three sites were not developed through a participatory approach as planned (discussed in more detail throughout the chapter). The following sections describe each site of ILCA and UML projects in terms of their locations, their original physical conditions, and the GIZ's proposed intervention. Then the sites are analysed together in terms of who is participating in these spaces, their motives for participation, and how the public perceives and engages with all the actors involved in the process.

Site 1: Staircase No. 7, Al Quds Street

Staircase No.7 within Al Quds Street in Ras Al-Ein stretches over approximately 100m in length and rises 30m with a width that varies between 3.6m-4m (see Figure 6.2). With limited connectivity to adjacent pedestrian networks due to informal growth and land ownership issues, the stairs mainly serve the residents living along its direct periphery, creating an intimate public space for its residents. The staircase was in extremely poor condition; it suffered from regular winter floods due to inadequate drainage and hazardous waste. In addition, the physical condition of the stairs was insufficient for walking due to the narrow sidewalks and footpaths. Thus, it was hard to be accessed by the elderly, physically disabled people or even children. The proposed intervention by the GIZ aimed to rehabilitate the stair network, greening and proposing sustainable drainage solutions, also connecting the stairs with the public transport in the area.



Figure 6.2: Staircase NO.7 condition before the renovation by the GIZ. Source: GIZ, 2019

Site 2: Leftover Land on Palestine Street

A vacant lot is located in a residential neighbourhood on Palestine Street in the Al-Nasr district, with a relatively small area of only 400m². The site was neglected initially and used as a garbage dump and parking for diesel trucks, there are no close parking lots in the area¹¹⁰, which imposed hygiene and pollution threats (see Figure 6.3). GIZ looked into transforming the area into a small community garden that will serve the residents around it; also, part of the rehabilitation project to improve the walkability and access to the newly enhanced Mahamoud Al Qudah Park, part of the ILCA project too.

¹¹⁰ Interview with one of the truck owners, Amman, 2021



Figure 6.3: Leftover land on *Palestine* Streetview before GIZ's intervention. Source: GIZ, 2019

Site 3: Mahmoud Al Qudah Park

The park sits at the intersection between Abu-Taleb St. and Adan St. in the Al-Nasr district, with an area of approximately 15,000m². Due to its large area, the park serves the residents of its immediate surroundings and attracts visitors from around Al-Nasr (see Figure 6.4). Thus, functioning at a district scale. However, the park had few seating areas with insufficient shading areas; it also suffered from a poor drainage system, resulting in water accumulating every winter season in the playground area in the park's lowest part. The park also had a small football field that lacked maintenance; this also applied to the playground area. The proposed intervention by the GIZ was to rehabilitate the existing amenities, increase the use of green canopies, and build a safer playground area. Moreover, they sought to establish a walkable connection between Mahmoud Al-Qudah Park and the surrounding network regarding safe and approachable paved areas and roads. Also, there was a detailed proposal for introducing networks in and around the park that cater to elderly and disabled needs as part of the GIZ's inclusive programmes.



Figure 6.4: Mahmoud Al Qudah Park before GIZ's intervention. Source: GIZ, 2019

Urban Micro Lungs (UML) project: Fast-growing Forests for Climate-resilient, Clean and Quiet Neighbourhoods in East Amman

The project aims to improve the quality of life in dense, disadvantaged urban areas by creating urban green spaces. The intervention looks into micro-greening strategies in urban in-fills, such as roundabouts or small leftover spaces. The measure adapts the Miyawaki¹¹¹ method for restoring and reconstructing natural ecosystems to create ultra-dense, highly biodiverse, and multi-layered urban forests (see Figure 6.5).



Figure 6.5: Tayyun Research Studio's first urban forest in Amman. Source: Tayyun Studio, 2020

6.2.2 Initiating Platforms for Public Participation

ILCA Project

The project started with the Staircase NO.7 site spearheaded by a team from the GIZ of three architects, including the project manager¹¹². As claimed by the team members, the small team *'gave us the flexibility to push the project to wherever we want.'*¹¹³ In addition to the funding support, GIZ's responsibilities included choosing the design offices, contractors, and social mobilisers and conducting capacity-building programmes for GAM on both central and local levels. The GIZ divided the participatory process into three steps, starting with the baseline research, which includes socio-spatial studies and site activation activities with the local

¹¹¹ The Miyawaki method starts with soil engineering, building soil life, fungal networks, and biomass. Then, based on careful selection of native and drought-resilient primary and secondary species, it accelerates the natural growth processes of self-sustaining, maintenance-free native forests. Tayyun Research Studio introduced the method to Jordan, implemented the design, supervised the planting, and monitored the growth and survival rate of the plants over two years. After the period of two years, the forest will be self-sustaining and self-maintaining on its own.

¹¹² The Project manager for ILCA and UML was of German origin and relocated specifically to Jordan to oversee the implementation of these two projects.

¹¹³ Interview, Amman, May 2021

communities. Moving to the co-design workshops with the locals and displaying the final designs to the community for final feedback. Finally, conducting activities after the openings to help the public understand and use the sites. However, a fourth stage was developed later –at the UML project –known as the exit strategy.

Although developing green infrastructure in cities like Amman is imperative, given the myriad complex environmental challenges stemming from rapid urbanisation and the concentration of population and economic activities within the city. Unfortunately, the public was not introduced to these concepts and challenges in the process of site selection and project idea introduction (see Figure 6.6). As noted by one of the residents: *‘They didn’t ask us if we have other needs or if we would like to see something else in the leftover land.’*¹¹⁴ However, this was also realised by one of the local (Jordanian) GIZ team as she commented: *‘In any participatory project, in the very first stages, you must sit with the people and listen to their priorities and problems and based on this, we can figure out what to do! Nevertheless, unfortunately, this is not the process for an aid agency in the developing countries. They have decided that we have an environmental problem, and the staircase in the area is a potential site for resolving the problem... The project was more like what you want to see in this park, not what you need in this abandoned lot.’* (Amman, May 2021).



Figure 6.6: Left: One of the methods used by the GIZ to collect people’s opinions. It shows that most people voted for the need for play areas for the children, besides suitable loading areas for cars and parking spaces. Right: Women participating in one of the workshops at Stair No.7 site. Source: GIZ, 2019

¹¹⁴ Interview, Amman, June 2021.

Other local (Jordanian) GIZ team members who were assigned to introduce the projects to the residents noticed how problematic these projects can be in those areas of the city, according to one of the project's coordinators: *'The first project I remember going to is the staircase with my colleague, so basically, these people don't have what to eat! How I want to convince them to fix the stairs! This is the first layer of the problem; how to convince them that this is the biggest problem you suffer, and we want to fix it for you!'* (Amman, May 2021)

Interestingly, this was not a concern shared by the officials from GAM. Instead, they perceived it as a *favour* they were doing to the community, as described by the ILCA project coordinator at GAM: *'Some people are not interested in these projects, or it is not their priorities, but with time they must get used to it; they will learn to like it because we are doing this for them.'* (Amman, June 2021).

In 2019, the GIZ assigned a leading local firm to conduct the first stage of this project, the baseline research and socio-spatial studies for all three sites to help them understand and familiarise themselves with the contexts. The study was divided into interviews with the residents and morphological observations, in addition to a workshop called (Draw Your Own Hara¹¹⁵) with the residents in the areas of site selection (see Figure 6.7). After the baseline studies (see Figure 6.8), the GIZ was able to map potential sites for development; however, in this process, GAM was ultimately responsible for selecting the final sites and primarily depending on land ownership. GAM took a very cautious approach in not causing a private land violation, as they clearly stated that they could not afford to purchase any land for public space. According to a GIZ team member involved in the baseline study: *'The residents around the staircase site hoped that GAM would take the land adjacent to the end of the staircase to develop a park – which is much needed in the area. This was their only concern.'* (Amman, May 2021)

¹¹⁵The concept of *hara* is a popular one in Islamic cities, the word itself is translated to (quarter), and however it represents a group of neighbouring houses, where it is most commonly smaller than a neighbourhood. While it does not have any formal representation at the municipalities, the people themselves living in a certain *hara* have a way to identify the boundaries of it. In most cases they have a lot in common to share, for example religion, backgrounds, family relations, tribes, or others.



Figure 6.7: Left: Participatory workshop with the community held at GAM during the baseline study phase. Right: Officials at GAM showing interest in the participatory workshop. Both photos were used on GAM's official web page Source: GAM, 2019

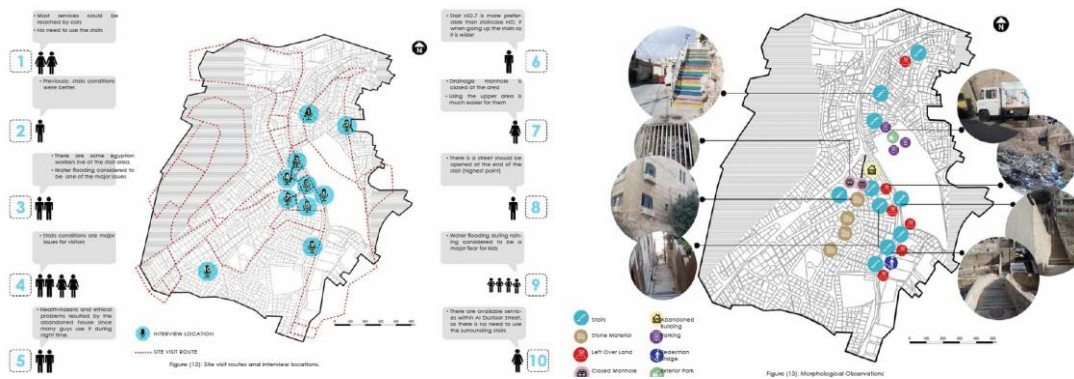


Figure 6.8: Maps from the baseline study showing the interview locations on the left and morphological observations on the right. Source: GIZ, 2019

To promote participation and negotiate with the people, the GIZ tried to bring many professionals on board with social urban ethnography and anthropology experiences. However, as one of the team members puts it, *'Most of our work at the beginning was experimental; that's why we brought everyone on board to help us create participation.'*¹¹⁶ However, according to the GIZ's project manager, it was more important to build strong connections with the mayor directly to escape the bureaucratic structure of GAM than to find support from external professionals¹¹⁷. In the project's initial phase, GIZ was committed to carrying out capacity-building training for GAM staff from different departments involved in the project (see Figure 6.9). Specifically, three workshops focused on the social aspects of city design, participatory experiences in design, co-design, and site maintenance and management. These workshops were led either by social

¹¹⁶ Amman, June 2021

¹¹⁷ Interview with the manager of the ILCA projects, Amman, June 2021

mobilisers who were designated by GIZ or by GIZ staff themselves. During interviews with GAM officials, they expressed confidence in their overall capacity and proficiency to execute participatory projects in Amman. However, the social mobilisers involved in the capacity-building programmes did not reciprocate this claim. One of them commented, ‘*GAM staff claim to know everything! Not only them but also employees from the ministries, municipalities, and others. They still adhere to the traditional mentality of doing things.*’ (Amman, July 2021).



Figure 6.9: Images from the *building* capacity sessions for GAM staff. Source: GAM, 2019

Before proceeding with the design workshops, GIZ decided to replace the leading firm responsible for the project – the one who conducted the baseline research– citing dissatisfaction with the participation process during the initial phase. The GIZ’ (local) project coordinator said: ‘*In the tender, we requested both a Spatial Senior and a Social Senior, emphasising the importance of social sustainability knowledge and experience. However, the project was assigned to the environmental department, which planned to conduct solely quantitative surveys. Actually, our request for a social analysis came as a surprise to them (as an INGO’s requirement for more qualitative in-depth research was unexpected).*’ (Amman, June 2021).

Table 6.2 illustrates the milestones achieved within the ILCA project. The table delineates the significant alterations observed across all teams engaged in the project, spanning from the GIZ team to the practitioners comprising architects and designers, and the social mobilisers, who underwent three changes throughout the project duration. Specifically focusing on the GIZ team, it commenced with a compact assembly consisting of a single manager and three local Jordanian participatory consultants and architects. Subsequently, it evolved into a larger team comprising over 15 individuals, incorporating several German members serving as participatory consultants.

However, the local participatory consultants were recruited from different local NGOs, CBOs, or known for their background in advocating for spatial justice issues. As elaborated in Chapter 5, the previous process constitutes a facet of elite circulation, a phenomenon of significance within the Jordanian context. Notably, the majority of these ‘participatory consultants’ were already actively engaged with local communities, thereby possessing an enhanced understanding of the contextual dynamics and everyday political intricacies. Consequently, they sought to negotiate with GIZ on various issues. However, as subsequent sections elucidate, this negotiation process did not unfold relatively smoothly. On the contrary, many members of the local team at GIZ had to resign due to the restrictive policies.

Table 6.2: Milestones in the participation process at the ILCA project

ILCA Project for the first three sites							
	DATE	CONTENT	PARTICIPANTS				OUTCOMES
			Social mobilisers	GIZ	Design Office	Public	
<u>Phase 1</u>	Sep 2017-2018	Research and Baseline study	-	Team 1	Company 1	Random residents, local influencers and mukhtar, children, and women	- Thick report explaining the potentials and challenges in each site - A study investigating the process of producing public spaces within GAM - Maps and illustrations from the communities
	Jan- 2019	Building capacity for GAM	-				
	Mar-2019	3 Community workshops	NGO 1				
<u>Phase 2</u>	Apr-2019	Building capacity for GAM	-	Team 2	Company 2	Random people living around the three sites were invited	- Guidelines for the projects - Maps and draft concept design - Plans - Sketches - Extra requirements for the area
	Jun-2019	A consultation session with the community	NGO 2				
	Sep-2019	3 Co-design sessions					
↓ COVID-19 ↓							
<u>Phase 3</u>	July-2020	Informing the residents through 3D renderings and 2D plans	NGO 2	Team 2	Company 2	Specific residents, such as local influencers and leaders	- Different opinions from the people for the design office to rethink some of the designs - Extra requirements for the area
	Aug-2020	Online surveys				Posted online on GAM’s Facebook Page	
<u>Phase 4</u>	Sep-2020 to July-2021	Construction	NGO 3	Team 3	Company 2	People interested in the on-ground results	The residents refused some parts of the construction. They raised their objections to GIZ, and they even tried to stop the construction
Opening Ceremony Aug 2021– All residents are invited, besides officials from GAM, the media, the design office, the GIZ team, social mobilisers, and local leaders							
<u>Phase 5</u>	Oct-2021	Site activation events to show the participants how to use the site, such as cultural shows and lunch gatherings.	-	Team 3	Company 2	Selected community members from children, women and local influencers	The residents accepted the projects as they were.

UML project

In this project, the GIZ goal was to introduce and investigate innovative new methods for producing green infrastructure¹¹⁸. As such, they started by looking at the design and research studios involved in this approach. The team of the selected office (Tayyun Research Studio, which implements the Miyawaki method) stressed *‘The importance of the social factor in the project’s success. Those plants need a lot of care; therefore, the people involved have the passion, time and capability to take care of them over a long period.’*¹¹⁹ For Tayyun, it was easier to select an enclosed, guarded, and safe site that would guarantee that there was a guard who would take care of the plants. Contrary to the GIZ, which focused on selecting an open leftover land in the middle of densely populated urban areas (see Figure 6.10), they openly claim: *‘An urban leftover is one of the main requirements of the projects; we cannot simply choose any area.’* (Amman, May 2021). Consequently, two different sites were chosen to implement the project: Omar Al-Faisal Park in Marka and Al-Manara in Al-Naser¹²⁰. In the first months, the community communicated directly with the Tayyun team and GIZ members; however, this has changed since GIZ assigned a local society association to mobilise the community.

*‘We went there with GAM and GIZ, but we also used to go alone, just to talk with the community. I used to show them pictures of our first project in Amman and how it looked after two years of good care. They were not very enthusiastic ... maybe because we used to come and take pictures and talk to them for a long time without seeing anything on the ground. GAM took a lot of time to check the site.’*¹²¹ (Interview with the team leader at Tayyun. Amman, June 2021).



Figure 6.10: UML site during GIZ’s intervention. Source: GIZ, 2020

¹¹⁸ Interview, Amman, May 2021

¹¹⁹ Amman, August 2021

¹²⁰ This research focuses on Al-Manara’s leftover land, where I conducted ethnographic research for four months. At the first site –considered only a pilot project– participatory activities were limited to one workshop with the community to describe the method and introduce the tools in place.

¹²¹ Several inspections are required before the method can be implemented.

In both projects (ILCA and UML), the GIZ assigned social mobilisers to carry out the participatory activities as advised by the GIZ. According to GIZ, social mobilisers are ‘on-site officers who aim to mobilise the community to address their needs, seek ways to instigate change and improvements to their status quo, communicate to responsible authorities and coordinate, create awareness about intended projects, and motivate participation. Any stakeholder can assign these field officers. In all of this, their role is key for communicating the local community’s needs and sometimes extending to resolve conflict of interests when they arise.’ (GIZ, 2022). It is important to note that the residents of all the sites proactively sought assistance from the social mobilisers, expressing additional needs unrelated to the ongoing projects. For instance, at the UML site, they specifically requested amenities such as a shaded seating area and general maintenance for the premises.

Nevertheless, the approach employed by the social mobilisers in engaging with the residents diverged significantly due to the difference in their type of organisation. At the ILCA project, the social mobilisers were affiliated with a local NGO. In contrast, the UML project represented a more conventional form of civil society organisation, encompassing grassroots associations, social movements, cooperatives, and charities, commonly referred to as membership-based organisations (Chen, Jhabvala, Kanbur, & Richards, 2007). At the ILCA project sites, the social mobilisers utilised various approaches to reach individuals, primarily employing social media platforms such as Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups. Additionally, they engaged in private SMS messages, telephone calls, door-to-door visits and questionnaires to mobilise people (see Appendix L). However, according to the in-depth interviews conducted with the residents, a significant number of those living near the sites were unaware of the project’s existence. The social mobilisers at the ILCA project adhered to a rigid and structured approach guided by the procedures mandated by GIZ for community mobilisation. Unfortunately, this led to their disconnection from their civic roots, as their focus was solely on achieving short-term participation objectives. During the interviews, they tended to rely on checklists to measure the success of the participatory workshops, using the number of participants as evidence of their effectiveness.

On the other hand, the spirit of the social mobilisers at UML – as a local society association that advocates for the marginalised – stretched their roles into asking GAM to obtain people’s needs apart from the project. The social mobilisers at UML believed in creating a social bond with the community and the power of *informal relationships* in motivating people to participate and be

part of the project. Moreover, they were working on building long committed relationships with the community, meaning that they tended to stay in contact with the community after the project finished. They used to talk and invite everyone to their sessions and tried to build the community's capacity to articulate its interests. During the participatory workshops, they intended to tell the public empowering stories of resistance, especially how to face the official planning authorities¹²². As noted in one of the sessions: *'We may have finished the contract, but whenever you need me, you can call me to come! So, even if my role with GIZ has finished, I know my role as Dibeena¹²³ won't finish for now.'* She also commented: *'In the TOR from the GIZ, we were paid to do only four activities, two of them site activations and the other two planting activities with the community. But to gain the community's trust, where they can learn to be open with us, we had to do a lot of work with them and not limit our work to four workshops.'* (Amman, August 2021).

The qualitative evidence of this research shows their efforts to use the little room they had to create strong relationships with the community. Moreover, they were aware of the subsequent depoliticisation of civil society organisations, which encouraged them to adopt transformative positions. Ahmad, a resident at Al-Manara (the UML site), commented on this: *'They promised to give us trees and extra paint to fix the wall in the Hara, and they did; they kept their promises.'* (Amman, August 2021). Table 6.3 provides a comprehensive overview of the significant milestones achieved during the UML project, delineating the various project phases and the respective stakeholders involved, alongside the outcomes realised at each phase. A comparative analysis with Table 6.2, which delineated the milestones of the ILCA project, reveals noteworthy distinctions. Notably, it is observed that the composition of social mobilisers remained consistent throughout the entirety of the UML project, in contrast to the fluctuations witnessed in the ILCA project. Moreover, the team from GIZ experienced relatively fewer alterations. Nonetheless, akin to the ILCA project, the general public's engagement was notably absent during the initial phases encompassing site selection and project initiation.

The following section draws on empirical evidence from ILCA and UML projects to understand who inhabits those 'invited' spaces of participation, created by the GIZ and mobilised by different local NGO and society associations. Moreover, it aims to elaborate on the motives of participation before looking at the effectiveness of 'invited' spaces in including the residents in decision-making.

¹²² These stories were told when the GIZ and GAM staff were not present.

¹²³ The CBO name.

Table 6.3: Milestones in the participation process at the UML project

UML Project at AL-Manara Site							
	DATE	CONTENT	PARTICIPANTS				OUTCOMES
			Social mobilisers	GIZ	Design Office	Public	
<u>Phase 1</u>	Jun-2019	Searching for sites with the Design Office	-	Team 2	Design office 1	-	Two potential sites
↓ COVID-19							
<u>Phase 2</u>	Aug-2020	Building capacity for GAM	-	Team 3	Design office 1	-	- Guidelines for the projects - Extra requirements for the selected sites, such as seats, shaded areas, more green spaces, etc.
	Sep-2020	A consultation session with the community	-			Random people living around the site	
	Oct-2020	3 mobilisation workshops with the community	CBO 1			Random people from around the sites, most of them were interested in taking part	
<u>Phase 3</u>	Nov-2020	Planting	CBO 1	Team 3	Design office 1	Specific residents such as local influencers, children, participants from the workshops and others	Planting the site and some of the residents' requirements, like the seating area and painting the walls
First small fire March -2021 (2 plants destroyed and part of the hay)							
Second small fire March -2021 (5 plants destroyed and a big part of the hay)							
Third big fire April -2021 (90% of plants destroyed and all the hay)							
<u>Phase 4</u>	Jun-2021	4 workshops with the community	CBO 1	Team 3	-	Selected people, such as the local leaders and influencers, the mukhtar and District Manager	Local committee
Re-planting the site Nov-2021							
<u>Phase 5</u>	May-2022	Site activation events to show the participants how to use the site, such as cultural shows and lunch gatherings.	CBO 1	Team 3	Design office 1	The entire community around the site were invited	The residents accepted the projects as they were.

6.2.3 Participation, Inclusion and Power at ILCA and UML Projects

Who Participates? Issues of Inclusion and Representation

Apart from women not opening the door, to illegal Syrian refugees and Egyptian workers, few residents chose not to be involved in the projects. According to the social mobilisers, they tried to reach out to all residents living near the sites, and most people expressed an interest in participating in the workshops. However, at ILCA sites, it was evident that the selection of the participants in the workshops was not transparent. The participatory design workshops were biased towards professional classes and local leaders, such as head teachers, imams, mukhtar and well-known local influencers¹²⁴, and male participants, usually members of local civic associations.

Although at the beginning of the projects (ILCA and UML), the social mobilisers claimed to create an inclusive and democratic process, the final spaces of ‘invited’ participation looked more enclosed and exclusive. For social mobilisers, choosing local leaders and influencers can highly influence their communities, and people are likely to follow them in social matters. This access was critical in both projects, as more mukhtar(s) felt entitled to have a significant weight in the process and even leadership positions in later committees. However, this effectively silenced others, particularly those who disagreed with the mukhtar way of doing things. As one of the residents said: *‘I have known Abu Salah (the mukhtar) since I was a little kid, and I have a lot of respect towards him. I cannot simply wrong him, even if he was, because he is the eldest in the group, and, as I said, I knew him long ago.’*¹²⁵ Although some people found the presence of mukhtar(s) formalising the process and could even attract more participants, their presence discouraged many people from participating due to the social ties connected with mukhtar. Hence undermining the quality of participation. In other words, people’s participation was relatively greater in meetings without the mukhtar.

‘When Hala asked who wanted to be on the committee, the mukhtar and before anyone else had elected himself beside five others, the people looked like they were obliged to accept his decision... I have noticed that with mukhtar’s presence, many women preferred to remain silent, except for the local association’s female leaders.’ (Fieldnote, 23/06/2021).

¹²⁴ Social activists well-known in their neighbourhood for volunteering work and are often registered at local community organisations and associations.

¹²⁵ Amman, August 2021

Although the social mobilisers at the UML project preferred to include different community members, the same influencers showed up in the meetings, which constrained others' voices, especially women. In less men-dominated small group discussions, women were more vocal and active. On the other hand, most of them felt shy in bigger groups because they did not know properly about some issues discussed. Contrary to ILCA's project, the social mobiliser at UML project was working on building interest for the public so they could be actively involved in the process¹²⁶. They claimed that the people are acting negatively because they are unfamiliar with the participatory arenas in the spatial context in Jordan. In fact, all interviewed participants from the public made it explicitly clear that they were *informed* (Arnstein, 1969) about the projects, and their views were not taken seriously. At the UML project, another actor played a vital role in the participation process; the local district representative at GAM was a resident in the same area where the project was located. The residents found her presence crucial, as they claimed she knew better about the needs of the area and its residents. While these outcomes can be explained by elite-capture (for example, Lemanski, 2016; Sinwell, 2010), I argue that the process, here, surrounding the participatory process controlled by the GIZ and GAM creates further a feeling of disempowerment and disillusionment amongst the residents, not only because of the voice exclusion of many residents but also because it side-lines the powerful figures in their communities when their needs are disregarded or neglected by those who supposed to be the link between GAM and the public.

Moreover, the GIZ played a crucial role in controlling who should be involved in the project, despite this responsibility falling under the purview of the social mobilisers. An instance of this is evident in the UML project, where the social mobilisers conducted interactive activities with the children to instil awareness and a sense of responsibility towards the site (see Figure 6.11). Nevertheless, the GIZ did not prioritise such initiatives, limiting the children's involvement to only a few participatory activities. Subsequently, this led to confusion among many children who utilised the site for diverse activities. As the Tayyun team leader noted, *'We were surprised at our first planting activity when children brought their football to play in the same site we aim to plant. They were confused as they used the space to play football after school.'* (Amman, August 2021).

In this light, social mobilisers were not able to tailor methods and programmes based on local needs, as they had specific requirements decided by the GIZ and the donor agency. Many scholars discuss further the burden on the NGOs and civic organisations to align their interests and

¹²⁶ This was on a very small scale, due to COVID restrictions.

priorities to their donors, or they would be cut off in this competitive environment, for example, (Ebrahim, 2003; Elbers & Arts, 2011; Epstein & Gang, 2006; Mohan, 2002; Tvedt, 2006). This rendered the social mobilisers as ‘contract-based’ members rather than activists or social workers. As noted by Bebbington (1997, p. 1759), this turns the civic organisations into ‘a subcontracted development consultancy’. Furthermore, the focus of the donor agency on measurable outcomes prioritised producing professional work at the expense of their civil society functions (Lewis, 2013; Mitlin et al., 2007). Nevertheless, GAM, GIZ and the architects informed the social mobilisers on different occasions that the public is ‘hostile, not supportive and incapable of providing solid opinions’¹²⁷. Consequently, they believed it was advantageous to restrict the number of participants to a select few. The project coordinator from GAM articulated this viewpoint, stating, ‘*The more participants, the more problems you will face*’ (Amman, August 2021).



Figure 6.11: Participatory activities with children at UML project. Source: The social mobilisers, 2020

While examples of elite capture in participatory processes are not uncommon, the concern with this case extends beyond the widening distrust between the public and the state. More crucially, it pertains to local civic organisations- in this instance, the social mobilisers -who had previously anticipated being able to rely on them to address their needs.

Why participate?

The people’s initial motivation for participation in both projects was primarily not to discuss the ongoing project but, moreover, to seize an opportunity to meet with the officials, as noted by one GIZ member: ‘*Every now and then, when a participatory project takes place in Jordan, a surge of people voicing their concerns becomes evident due to the absence of established common*

¹²⁷ Different interviews with professionals from GIZ and GAM. Amman

spaces for participation. Given the lack of such platforms, people seize opportunities like our project to raise their grievances or clash with GAM, seeking to address their needs. However, it is essential to recognise that our task is transient, whereas GAM remains a permanent entity. (Amman, April 2021).

Throughout my involvement in the community meetings (see Figure 6.12), I have noticed how easily the conversation can be directed toward the residents' other priorities. Yet, this does not imply that the officials will listen to or take their concerns seriously. On the contrary, they were often asked to write a complaint and submit it to their local municipalities or call GAM's hotline to voice their concerns. However, when asking a project coordinator at GIZ about the people's willingness to participate, she mockingly answered بكيفوا (in English, they will be *thrilled*). As an insider within the context and when considering the conflict between the residents and the GIZ (discussed in more detail below), the use of language here does not simply mean happiness. Yet, for the GIZ, their desire to participate is because they feel central, and the GIZ members are obliged to hear them even if they are wrong. Therefore, GIZ and GAM staff perceived people's advantageous behaviour as negative and unaccepted. However, people insisted on demanding their needs at the UML project. They asked the social mobilisers to voice their requirements to GAM, as one of the residents said: *'All of the actors are trying to stop us when we talk about our other needs, but this time we told the mobilisers we will not accept to plant a forest for us unless you fix the whole area around the park.'* (Amman, July 2021).

Usually, the men were the ones who spoke to the GIZ staff or social mobilisers. They also carefully drew GAM's attention to the whole area and used words like 'responsibility' and 'fidelity' when referring to GAM.

'When the mukhtar requested the GAM project coordinator to fix slippery and hazardous stairs in front of a local mosque, particularly concerning for the elderly. The coordinator responded that funding was needed for the repairs. This response prompted small laughs among the gathered individuals, with one questioning why such a large institution like GAM would require funds for only 30 stairs. This made me feel ashamed. I was scared to look into people's eyes; I was not sure how they saw me. Am I part of GAM and the professional teams?' (Fieldnote, 17/06/2021)

On the other hand, to *'keep the project going'*¹²⁸, officials from GAM at the ILCA project promised the residents to help them with their requirements. Unfortunately, this was crucially problematic, as most remained promises on paper, as described below.



Figure 6.12: Community meetings at UML project. Author, 2021

6.2.4 The Process and Outcomes of On-site Participation

Although the GIZ, along with the social mobilisers, described participation as a tool to empower people and communities to become more self-confident and develop skills in decision-making, thus increasing trust and respect between the state and the public, the operation of participation was frustrating to most participants, where the institutions reproduced stereotyped assumptions and expectations for participants. For instance, during the initiation of the ILCA project, specifically at the staircase site, the residents also requested the GIZ members to maintain the ageing and deteriorating walls. However, since this maintenance task was not explicitly specified in the contract, the team refused to comply with the residents' wishes. Even when they sought financial assistance from GAM for the project, their request was declined. Subsequently, just two days before the official opening, the design office and GIZ handed over the site to GAM, who proceeded to unilaterally paint the entire staircase walls in yellow colour without consulting the residents, the design office, or any member of the GIZ team.

It is worth noting, as depicted in Figures 6.13 and 6.14 below, that GAM only painted half of the walls, blatantly disregarding the rear sections of the staircase. This unilateral action frustrated the residents, who believed it was done solely for the televised opening day and social media

¹²⁸ Interview with the GAM project coordinator. Amman, July 2021

coverage, as one resident commented: *'It was obvious why they painted the walls only two days before the opening. They want magazine pictures!'* (Amman, August 2021).



Figure 6.13: Staircase No.7 after GIZ's intervention. Left: The walls at the staircase entrance seem freshly painted and in good condition. Right: This picture was taken at the top of the staircase, where the walls are not fixed or painted. Source: GIZ, 2020

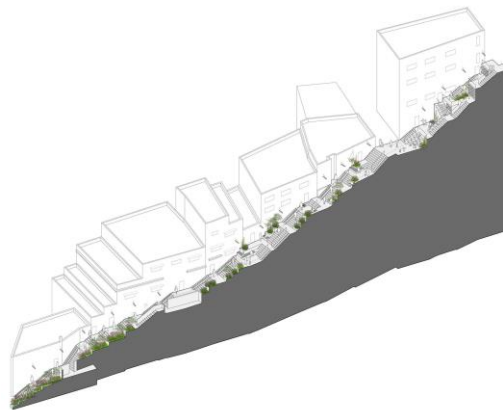


Figure 6.14: Sectional view for Staircase NO.7. Source: GIZ, 2020

In the same context, the residents living near the staircase site made a request to GAM regarding the repair of an adjacent parallel staircase, which has been the site of several unfortunate incidents involving the falling of children and elderly individuals (see Figure 6.15). Given the potential hazards posed by this staircase, it became a priority concern for the residents (Refer to the opening section in Chapter 1). Despite their persistent efforts to engage with GAM through various means, they have not received any significant response or attention to address this pressing issue. One of the residents further elaborated on this: *'It was promised that GAM would fix the stairs, and they may be able to use funding from the GIZ to do so. However, we have heard it was a big fund for only three sites.'* (Amman, August 2021).

Regarding the on-site workshops primarily conducted by GIZ and the design teams, participants perceived the process as more akin to being ‘informed’ about the designs rather than actively involving them. However, the majority of participants did not feel the necessity to critically evaluate the participatory workshop itself, as they were initially disinterested in the specific projects being discussed. Consequently, for them, these engagement opportunities with officials or donors were regarded as encounters with those in positions of authority. Observations from the workshops and meetings revealed that while participants engaged with the structured questions, activities, and engagement tools provided, these did not necessarily align with their primary interests.



Figure 6.15: The parallel dangerous staircase next to staircase NO.7 site. Author ,2021

Besides being frustrated by unkept promises, residents frequently complained about the length of the process. As they wouldn’t hear from the design office and social mobilisers for months, this is problematic, given the long history of distrust between GAM and the residents. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 contributed to some of the delays. This was also frustrating to the GIZ teams, as they commented: *‘Everything is taking time, like the contracting, amendments, and others. We want to continue the second phase (the three left sites) in a participatory way, but we don’t think we have the time; the first part of the project took four years!’* (Amman, July 2021).

However, the continuous change of actors compounded the issue; the GIZ and the design office teams, besides the social mobilisers, have changed many times during the project design and implementation (See Table 6.2). A resident who has been asked to participate in Staircase NO.7 by different social mobilisers and GIZ teams comments by expressing: *‘We have repeated the*

*same information to many people, we feel exhausted, and we see no progress beyond interviewing us*¹²⁹. However, the architects and designers saw that *'The project was new to us since we do not have any other successful participatory projects in Amman. Therefore, we had to take time to understand the project.'* (Amman, June 2021).

Moreover, the project already had many actors with different roles, which further complicated the process due to a lack of understanding of who was responsible for what. This was problematic when exercising participation on site. For instance, At the UML project, the architects did not view the social mobilisers as capable of mobilising people because they lacked the technical knowledge about the project. This disconnecting communication led to a fertile ground for conflict, causing mutual suspicion and insider-outsider resentment between both actors, as they tried to overstep their work and interfere in how they mobilise and engage with people. Another dilemma faced by the participants was the actual time for participation. Although, as revealed in a previous quote by a member from GIZ the first phase of the project took them more than four years to complete, while it was designed to take only two years, the actual time spent to carry out participatory workshops and meetings with people was very minimal (see Figure 6.16). The architects and designers involved saw that they *'know better what is good for people [and] there is no need to spend a lot of time and effort on many workshops and meetings'* (Amman, June 2021).



Figure 6.16: Snapshots from GIZ and the architects' meetings with the residents at the start of the project. Source: GAM, 2020

During the fieldwork, it became evident that the residents engaged in the participatory workshops and meetings preferred direct communication with the social mobilisers. These interactions often extended beyond the scheduled meeting hours, indicating a strong desire for active engagement. However, the social mobilisers faced considerable challenges in acting as agents of social change,

¹²⁹ Interview, Amman, June 2021

as envisioned by the residents. The state perceived the project primarily as a service-delivery project, which hindered the social mobilisers' ability to empower communities actively. They only appreciate the social mobiliser's consensus-building efforts. Furthermore, the behaviour of GAM's officials on sites, such as not coming on time for the meetings, disregarding the social mobilisers' rules, and dominating discussions, portrayed a weak image of the social mobilisers, undermining their capacity to empower the public effectively.

Exit Strategy: Creating Channels of Communication

In the final phase of participation in the UML project, the primary aim was to establish a sustainable connection between the GAM and the community, nurturing an enduring relationship between the state and the public. This aspect, initially unplanned in the ILCA project, arose as a necessity voiced by both the public and the social mobilisers involved in the UML project. To achieve this, the social mobilisers were tasked with conducting three sessions to engage with the community and facilitate communication with GAM (See Appendix J). The urgency of this phase became apparent after the site experienced three separate incidents of arson, destroying more than 90% of the plants (see Figure 6.17). Although the perpetrator responsible for these acts was a mentally ill child, the residents were taken aback by his behaviour, as he had not previously exhibited such destructive tendencies. In my discussions with the residents, their doubts emerged as they speculated that the boy's actions might have been motivated by a desire to express resistance to the project. They believed that his family had been using the site to sell goods informally, potentially influencing his actions as a protest.



Figure 6.17: Photo showing the last fire incident that destroyed over 90% of the site. Source: Al-Manara Facebook Page. (Accessed September, 2020)

Furthermore, in light of the incidents of arson, some residents, including the mukhtar, expressed their belief that using certain materials on the site had been flawed (see Figure 6.18). Despite their efforts to communicate this concern to both the GIZ and Tayyun office, their input was disregarded. He said: *'We know that is wrong what the kid did, but we mustn't look over the type*

*of materials used in the site. They are inappropriate for our context. The hay and sticks will easily burn in this warm weather; they should have adopted the method to our context.*¹³⁰ Nevertheless, all the parties involved, including GIZ, GAM, and the design office, showed little interest in exploring the matter further. Instead, they proposed enclosing the planted area, effectively limiting access to selected residents and the design office responsible for the urban forest for the next two years following its establishment.



Figure 6.18: The materials used for planting the UML project by Tayyun Studio. Source: Tayyun, 2020

The GIZ and the social mobilisers worked with the public and GAM to foster a communication channel that would ease the further development of the project's site and the whole area of Al-Manara by bringing the government close to people. Despite the apparent aim of this stage, I argue in this section that the public was forced to accept a pre-designed agenda that is not open for negotiation. While the residents suggested either appointing a guard for a short period that would take care of the site and maintain a link between GAM and the residents or creating a WhatsApp group between elected residents and one staff member from GAM, both suggestions were refused by GAM. GAM claimed it would require many formal approvals from the mayor, which would take considerable time. In this light, GAM and the GIZ proposed to the social mobiliser the idea of persuading the public to elect a committee responsible for facilitating communication between both them and GAM. According to the Tayyun team: *'When we asked the people about a local committee, they didn't show any interest'* (Amman, July 2021).

'During my observations, a recurring pattern emerged regarding the attendance of the GAM project coordinator in the meetings. In the initial meeting, their arrival was delayed until the final hour, while in the subsequent session, their presence was limited to the initial hour. Notably, in

¹³⁰ Amman, July 2021

the final meeting, the GAM representative failed to attend altogether. This irregular attendance pattern contributed to evident frustration among the social mobilisers, who consistently convened approximately an hour before the scheduled meeting time. Their visible frustration was palpable as they resorted to contacting and messaging GAM's project representatives to ensure their timely attendance. Moreover, it was observed that when the GAM representatives did participate, they tended to engage in side conversations, indicating a lack of full attention to the primary discussions at hand (Fieldnote, 02/07/2021).

On the one hand, the 'invited' participation did not contribute to nurturing the relationship between GAM and the public. Even when one of the local GAM officials showed his willingness to be part of a WhatsApp group as suggested by the community. The GAM project coordinator refused by arguing that it would bring more 'trouble'. On the other hand, the absence of officials from 'invited' spaces intensified people's disappointment with the state and undermined the readability of people's participation in GAM. The officials at GAM expected the local committee to depend on the 'awareness [that should have been gained during the timeframe of the project] responsible for the site and the area' (Interview with the ILCA project coordinator. Amman, June 2021).

In the last meeting with the community and before handing the project formally to GAM, people found themselves voting for a local committee that would act as a body responsible for finding ways to improve and maintain the physical environment at Al-Manara. Before departing from the site, the social mobilisers clarified to the committee members that their role does not entail arranging meetings to lodge complaints about GAM's work or contacting GAM for every issue in the area. Instead, their responsibility lies in investigating emerging matters and finding solutions before contacting GAM officials. In essence, the social mobilisers proposed a specific approach to engage with GAM: *'When you positively approach GAM, they will respond, and even if you wish to complain, do so positively. For example, you could start by thanking them and telling them you value their hard work. You must acknowledge their efforts even if it was very subtle'*¹³¹ (Amman, June 2021).

A noteworthy observation is that despite the intended purpose of these meetings, the mukhtar,

¹³¹ These suggestions came in a meeting without the GAM officials.

along with the social mobilisers, with the GIZ's guidance, handpicked the seven members of the committee, with the mukhtar himself being among them. They committed to conducting regular meetings to address important issues within the area. However, since its establishment, the committee failed to organise any meetings or activities. Through the informal and continuous relationship that I am maintaining with members of the committee spanning various occasions throughout 2022 and 2023, it has been noted that they frequently expressed concerns regarding the lack of initiative and willingness among members to instigate change within the area. Some of the members believe that since they were not elected by the residents of Al-Manara, the committee merely reinforces the top-down engagement system prevalent in the city. Moreover, another committee member voiced the need for financial support from GAM to incentivise people to collaborate with the committee. During one of our conversations, he commented: *'The people barely have what to eat; I don't expect them to spend hours volunteering with us. So, they need small financial rewards.'* (Online, July 2022).

Even if the committee failed to sustain communication with GAM, the GIZ perceived the projects as successfully creating ownership and social responsibility for the whole community and not limited to the committee as one of GIZ team members stated: *'It is true the participatory process creates a sense of ownership. But we also don't want the committee to feel entitled to decide on the project's sites forever. They should better know their limits'* (Amman, June 2021).

In analysing these debates, the role of the state in managing the institutional process of communications within the 'invited' spaces and beyond them is highly depoliticising civil society (including the active citizens and the social mobilisers) and facilitating elite capture (Lemanski, 2016; Bénit-Gbaffou & Oldfield, 2011). Consequently, constraining rather than activating the people's agency and citizenship (Swyngedouw, 2005). Moreover, those spaces led by the state and INGOs expect certain behaviours from citizens who agree on certain channels and modes of action, without a potentiality of political debate or opposition. Yet it is increasingly clear that the GAM officials and the INGOs responsible for the project highly centralise decision-making.

6.2.5 The Failure to Create a Sense of Ownership

This section solely addresses the three sites of the ILCA project. As indicated in the previous section, the UML project was fenced following the fire incidents, leading to access restrictions for the first two years after the plantation. During this period, people cannot utilise the site until the plants have grown and established into an urban forest.

Staircase No.7 and the Leftover Land sites

At both sites, the participants did not prioritise the development of green infrastructure in their area. For example, residents of the leftover land reported how they hoped for a proper parking area instead of a small play area. They claim that the street is too narrow and parked cars obstruct the way for coming cars¹³². One of the diesel truck owners explained how parking on the steep, narrow street almost cost a child's life, and they had no other option for parking in the area. One of the truck owners commented: *'We know it's a green project, which is important to the area, but it was not our priority. We care about our trucks because they are our only livelihood resource. Where can I park them now?'* (Amman, August 2021).

After conducting multiple site visits and engaging in conversations with the residents, the challenges they faced in utilising the site were emphasised. For example, one of the residents commented on the site's present condition, expressing her concern regarding the absence of trees and shaded areas (see Figure 6.19). This absence posed a significant predicament for the residents, as they questioned how they could find suitable seating areas under the scorching sun, in comparison to the proposed designs (see Figure 6.20). Due to the site's lack of frequent visits from children and local residents, it has fallen victim to vandalism, as evidenced by the earlier figures. The site sees occasional use by only a few children. When the residents were questioned about whether GAM or any other involved actors had visited the site or attempted to probe the reasons behind its neglect, they responded negatively, stating that no one had come to assess the situation.

¹³² Interview with the residents (Amman, June 2021)



Figure 6.19: The 3D Proposal for the Leftover Land, illustrating shading trees to provide sun protection. Source: ILCA, 2020



Figure 6.20: The current conditions of the Leftover Land. Author, 2022

Likewise, residents living adjacent to the staircase project hold GAM accountable for not sharing the responsibility of maintaining the site with them. They suggest that by providing proper trash containers near the street or ensuring regular watering of trees and plants, it would be more convenient for them to upkeep the area (see Figure 6.21). Furthermore, they assert that the two awareness sessions conducted are inadequate in curbing vandalism by children and others. Along

with the social mobilisers, they share a vision of a wider act of participation, where the residents could be involved with GAM's activities from the beginning of the project and in every matter which affects their lives. This aspiration inevitably calls for addressing broader governance issues within GAM, which can foster a new and more meaningful relationship with the residents.

For the residents, this kind of relationship needs to render the state more transparent, open, accountable, and committed to issues of participation and not only responding to donor requirements. In this sense, the understanding and conceptualisation of 'invited' participation is beyond the temporary spaces created by the INGOs and inscribed with a state agenda. Instead, it calls into question the sphere of governance where participation occurs critically. This resonates with Gaventa's (2004) assertion in linking community participation from the social sphere to the broader political sphere. This means referring to a new process of governing in which the society is governed (Rhodes, 2017), that is open, transparent and willing to institutionally change, towards effectively involving people in the citymaking.



Figure 6.21: The current conditions of the staircase NO.7 site. Author, 2022

Mahmoud Al-Qudah Park

In contrast to the previous sites, this site benefits from active oversight by a designated guard tasked with maintaining the park's condition and promptly reporting any incidents of vandalism. As a prominent public park in the Al-Naser District, this site is listed on GAM's comprehensive checklists for regular watering, upkeep, and regulatory inspections (see Figure 6.22).

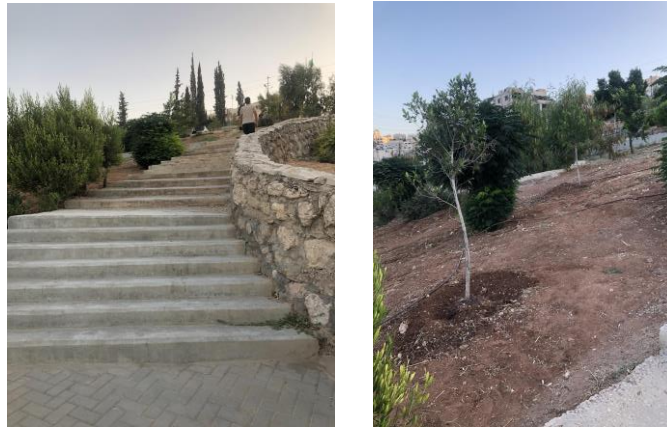


Figure 6.22: The current conditions of Mahmoud Al-Qudah Park. Author, 2022

Although the users did not vandalise the park, they expressed their disappointment with the final implementation, as one of the visitors said: *'We are happy that the park has re-opened, but the final design did not align with our expectations. The 3D proposals presented [see Figure 6.23] did not accurately reflect the result. We are not saying it was better, but we hoped to see more significant changes.'* (Amman, August 2021) (see Figure 6.24).



Figure 6.23: The 3D Proposal for Mahmoud Al-Qudah Park, showcasing sun protection through shading trees. Additionally, the proposal depicts dispersed small playing areas across the park, in contrast to the implemented design with a centralized location for play areas. Source: ILCA, 2020



Figure 6.24: The newly designed park. Author, 2022

'I encountered Samar at one of the newly constructed circular sitting areas but reaching her proved challenging due to the absence of paved paths to the main sitting areas. I noticed Samar, dressed in a traditional black Abaya, was all dusty. During our conversation, I inquired about her thoughts on the new park design, to which she promptly pointed at her Abaya. While glancing at her friend, she questioned how they managed to afford handrails throughout the vast park, which seemed unnecessary for the gentle slope, yet failed to pave around the sitting areas.' (Fieldnote, 19/08/2021), (see Figure 6.25).

When asking the design office about the decision to add the handrail over the whole park, even though the park is considered safe and there were no previous incidents. They explained: *'GIZ's inflexibility, especially regarding technical matters, posed challenges for us, considering our limited budget. Handrails on both sides were deemed unnecessary, yet compliance with the German Code for Designing and Building mandated their inclusion. Consequently, the funds allocated to these extra elements could have been more effectively utilised for other essential aspects of the project.'* (Amman, July 2021)

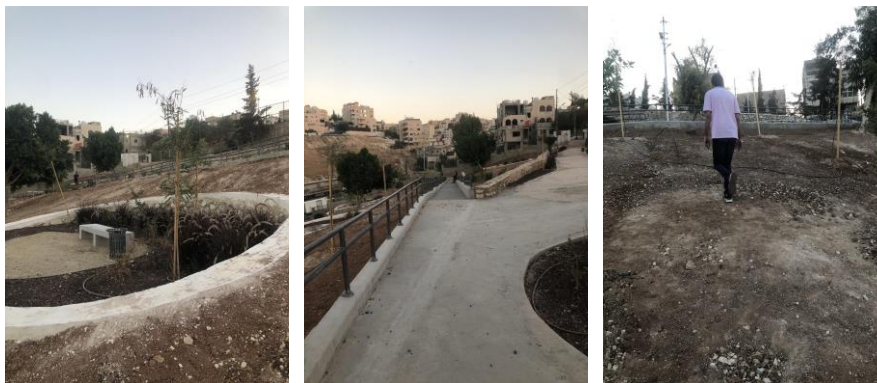


Figure 6.25: Left: The sitting area in Mahmoud Al-Qudah Park. Middle: The handrail around the park. Right: The user's path towards the sitting area. Author, 2022

Drawing on the experience of the residents and users of the three sites, it is clear that they do not show any sense of ownership or social responsibility to the sites. The goals behind the project in making the state more responsive and increasing the dialogue and collaboration between the state and citizens were not cultivated during both projects. Instead of paving the road for the potentiality of institutionalised participatory governance, it reinforced the power of informal relationships between the citizens and the civic actors, for instance, the society association at UML. Furthermore, this exacerbates the gap between the public and the authorities, as individuals perceive that their perspectives remain unheard even within spaces ostensibly created to be listened to. This is also acknowledged by the social mobilisers at the UML project: *'The work of*

the INGOs and GAM is not based on the needs of the people. First, GIZ had an idea, and they wanted to implement it. Next, GAM suggested the sites they deemed suitable for the project without asking if this was a priority or a community need. ' (Amman, August 2021).

This section has located some of the key issues relating to the process of participation in the 'invited' spaces created by the GIZ. Despite GIZ's reputation for being the most transparent organisation in Jordan in carrying out participatory projects, the evidence presented in this study indicates that GIZ attempted in many ways to undermine the political roots of the social mobilisers. Yet, the project's outcomes had little significant impact on the communities. If the criterion for GIZ projects' success is in creating ownership and enhancing residents' quality of life through increasing accessibility to public open spaces through a green infrastructure network, so far, the process has been a failure. Moreover, throughout the projects' processes, people's voices had to go through many filters to reach a decision. On the one hand, this prolonged the participation process; on the other hand, it skewed people's opinions to suit each actor's approach. Confusion and frustration are therefore the outcome of this participation process, in a project led by a variety of actors with a complex set of rules. According to Bénit and Gervais-Lambony (2005), this multi-scale and multi-agent political structure often blurs decision-making processes. Thus, the result is the depoliticisation of urban governance through engagement with mere technical bodies or agencies (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2008).

Comparable to the preceding section, the subsequent section will examine the participatory processes within two projects initiated by the UN-Habitat in Amman. However, as delineated in the following sub-sections, these projects deviate from the procedural steps and analytical criteria outlined in the GIZ case study. Instead, they embody a more *traditional* approach to public participation through 'invited' spaces. Their approach seeks to prioritise short-term, technical methodologies aimed at generating frameworks and plans, instead of physical implementations as further explained in the subsequent sections. As expressed by many interviewed actors involved in the public participation dialogue, this *traditional* way of conducting participation is highly prioritising the end outcome rather than the process itself, even if the outcome is not desirable for the participants. This is also carried by well-known donor agencies like the USAID, UN-Habitat, etc. In other words, this represents the participatory development approach that has been critiqued over the past decades for its top-down, highly controlled systems that may constrain the flexibility needed to delegate decision-making power to project beneficiaries (Harris, 2024).

6.3 Case Study 2: UN-Habitat Participatory Approach

The second part of this chapter looks at another leading International NGO working in Jordan. The UN-Habitat claims to advocate community-led projects that allow the inclusion of all. This section discusses two projects led by the UN-Habitat; the first is Block-by-Block at Fatima Al-Zahra' Park, and the second is Strengthening the Social Stability and Resilience of Vulnerable Jordanian Communities and Syrian Refugees in Amman against Flash Floods Project. The INGO used global tools in both projects to deliver the participatory project. These projects differ from the projects discussed within the GIZ scope. The UN-Habitat projects present a soft intervention without including any physical intervention, instead; they focus more on bringing together refugees and host communities to be part of the decision-making process. Hence, the participation process was comparatively shorter, and notably, the UN-Habitat displayed limited interest in establishing channels of communication between the public and the relevant authorities.

6.3.1 Initiating Platforms of Participation

Block-by-Block at Fatima Al-Zahra' Park

Block-by-Block is a radical idea that started in 2012 through a partnership between Mojang, UN-Habitat and Microsoft to involve community members in co-designing their public spaces by using the computer game Minecraft¹³³. The UN-Habitat implemented this methodology in one of Amman's public parks, Fatima Al-Zahraa', located on the outskirts of Amman in Marka (see Figure 6.26. The UN-Habitat programmes, The Global Public Space under the Mediterranean City to City Migration (MC2CM) project, funded the project¹³⁴.

During the site selection process, the UN-Habitat had to provide GAM with a vulnerability assessment that prioritised the number of refugees and their socioeconomic status since the project's primary objective was to enhance the social integration of refugees and host communities in public spaces. However, GAM's focus leaned towards choosing sites primarily needing infrastructure improvements rather than those with higher vulnerability potential for the

¹³³ <https://www.blockbyblock.org/> Accessed on 8/11/2022.

¹³⁴ The Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project (MC2CM) funded by The European Union through the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement negotiations and co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The programme aims to create more open and inclusive cities by relying on migrants' knowledge to benefit their cities. <https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/projects/mc2cm> Accessed on 8/11/2022.

targeted communities. Nevertheless, the site ultimately selected for the project was in relatively good condition, which, according to GAM staff, was a compromise necessary due to the project's limited funding. They acknowledged that the small funding allocation necessitated selecting a site in good condition that aligned with the funding available, although they preferred other sites in poorer conditions. As discussed in Chapter 5, this manifests GAM's real intentions towards participation, where the focus is precisely on securing the funds, without caring for the *real* needs of the people.



Figure 6.26: The site locations for both of UN-Habitat Projects. Author

CityRAP Lite in Amman Downtown

Another project implemented by the UN-Habitat is the ‘Strengthening the Social Stability and Resilience of Vulnerable Jordanian Communities and Syrian Refugees in Amman against Flash Floods’ Project¹³⁵, funded by the Japan Supplementary Budget (JSB). The project aims to address the problem of flash floods in Amman by implementing short-term intervention measures that enhance the resilience of flood-prone areas. In addition, it seeks to strengthen the capacities of the communities and the government to work collaboratively to manage the flash flood problem by improving infrastructure management and implementing flood risk reduction practices (UN-Habitat, 2021).

¹³⁵ According to the Jordan National Disaster Risk Reduction Plan, flash floods are the second most significant risk after earthquakes. For example, in 2018, flash floods claimed 35 lives, affected approximately 150,000, and resulted in severe damage to private properties and urban infrastructure.

The UN-Habitat collaborated with a local NGO to recruit participants, advising them to engage representatives from local communities, civic organisation leaders, Syrian refugees, and independent merchants operating in Amman Downtown, the designated project site. The project's primary objective is to co-create a community-based flood-resilient pilot project by involving various stakeholders, taking into account the priorities, needs, challenges, and opportunities of the communities and residents surrounding Amman Downtown. The final report of this endeavour will be shared with GAM. To achieve this goal, the UN-Habitat adopted the CityRAP tool, tailored to the Jordanian context, to facilitate realising the project's outcomes. Typically, the CityRAP tool implementation is overseen by the municipality with support from the UN-Habitat. However, in this specific project, the UN-Habitat led the implementation process with the assistance of GAM, primarily due to the tight timeline constraints of the project¹³⁶ (see the stages of the tool in Figure 6.27). However, because of the worsened situation of COVID-19 in Amman at that time, the UN-Habitat had to eliminate the number of participants from 81 to 38 participants in the second stage and divide them into smaller focus groups to discuss five main pillars of urban resilience in Amman regarding flash flood matter.



Figure 6.27: CityRAP Lite new structure. Source : UN-Habitat, 2021

In these two projects, akin to the GIZ's approach to site selection, the responsibility lies solely with the international NGO, guided by advice and approvals from GAM. This extends to their selection process for social mobilisers and design offices, wherein approval from GAM is a prerequisite. The subsequent section will explore implementing participation through community meetings and workshops in both projects while engaging with the public through a local NGO.

¹³⁶ Interview with the UN-Habitat trainer in Amman. April 2021.

6.3.2 Participation, Inclusion and Power in Block-by-Block and CityRAP Projects

Who Participates? Issues of Inclusion and Representation

The recruitment and selection processes for both projects demonstrated similarities. The UN-Habitat stipulated a specific number of participants to engage in the participatory process. For the Block-by-Block project, the local NGO, designated by the UN-Habitat, reached out to a public community centre (owned by GAM) in the park and identified 22 participants, aged between 8 and 25 years, comprising Jordanian Egyptian and Syrian youth (see Figure 6.28). For the second project, UN-Habitat instructed the local NGO to invite community representatives from local civic organisations or society associations. Furthermore, they collaborated with GAM to propose well-known local leaders in downtown Amman, individuals familiar with GAM activities and actively engaged in various GAM initiatives. According to the local NGO project coordinator: *'We could have attracted a significant number of participants if we had openly invited all residents. However, we adhered to UN-Habitat's guidelines on the number of participants.'* (Amman, May 2021).

Another resident of Amman Downtown commented when asked to give his opinion about the project recruitment of participants: *'We have seen the same faces in many workshops and events. Same people, same comments and same attitudes.'* (Amman, May 2021). Therefore, the selection of the participants was far from being transparent and did not mirror the makeup of the populations as suggested by (Fishkin & Luskin, 1999). The local NGO used the same power structures to select community representatives without engaging with representatives' social and political identities or questioning whom they represented. Rigon (2017) and Walker & Butcher (2016) are highly critical of the forms of representation and the challenges that it could imply. In their discussions, they call on 'confront[ing] the exclusionary discourses and practices which reproduce identity-based inequalities at the community level' (Walker & Butcher, 2016, p. 293) and to be more aware of the representation from the fabric of everyday life.

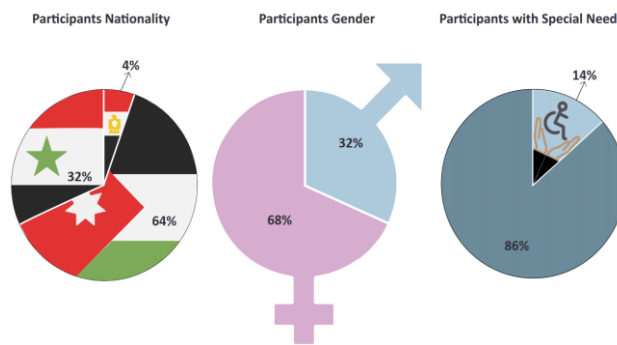


Figure 6.28: The diversity of the participants at Block-by-Block Project regarding their nationality, gender and disabilities Source: UN-Habitat, 2020

It is also important to note here that the local NGO did not search for grassroots groups, informal associations, or other forms of collectives that can add more value to the process, as these collectives are closer to the people and their needs (Beebeejaun & Vanderhoven, 2010). In the same context, Maier (2001) warned about forms of representative groups that can be easily manipulated and ‘bought’ for specific goals as they do not necessarily have civic values and community ties. Thus, the nature of representatives in both projects were traditional leaders in their communities; this can include the mukhtar, the key leaders of local organisations and initiatives or leaders of local associations and others. These forms of representation have become problematic due to the increasing diversity of the public (Beebeejaun & Vanderhoven, 2010). The challenge associated with this situation is the risk of amplifying power to those groups of representatives who find themselves in a position to speak for others’ rights. The residents living in Downtown Amman (the site of the CityRAP project) were not informed about the project, only the so-called community representatives.

In both projects, it becomes evident that the implementation of global tools takes precedence over the active involvement of the participants. The regional consultant in the CityRAP project acknowledged, ‘*The participants were not satisfied with the fact that I am not originally from Jordan, and I was based in Nairobi when the participation took place, but this was it.*’¹³⁷ Consequently, the role of these representatives was limited in both UN-Habitat projects, serving only briefly to confirm and approve frameworks and legislation that had already been determined. Mohammed, a local leader, said: ‘*We are not invited here to bring our knowledge and aspirations, but to be informed on future projects.*’¹³⁸ It is important to note that the local

¹³⁷ Interview, Amman July 2021

¹³⁸ Interview, Amman, July 2021

NGO's role was limited to recruiting these participants and not mobilising or working with the communities as in the previous GIZ projects.

Why participates?

In both projects, the participants were sent invitations by the local NGO to participate. Moreover, they were sent small incentives for the transportation journey, as noted by the head of the local NGO: *'We offered them incentives (from the UN-Habitat projects' budget) to encourage them to come, especially the Syrian refugees because they won't be able to afford the journey.'*¹³⁹ However, the motivation for participation in both projects differed significantly. A third of the participants interviewed in the Block-by-Block project said they didn't care much about the end result of participation or the project implementation; they were excited to use a new software tool that, according to the younger participants: *'Is fun! Like playing Minecraft.'*¹⁴⁰

This was contrary to the participants in the second project, who showed strong motivation and wanted to be included, as they believed it could benefit the area from the severe flooding problem. The interviewed participants expressed their responsibilities as local leaders and members of civic organisations to help in the decision-making of such projects. They viewed themselves as key stakeholders in shaping the development of their communities. They were eager to leverage their expertise and local knowledge to ensure that the project outcomes aligned with the needs and aspirations of the residents. The following analysis explores in more depth the participation process in both projects.

6.3.3 The Process and Outcomes of On-site Participation

Block-by-Block Project: Three Days for Participation

The participation process did not exceed the three-day workshop at Fatima Al-Zahra's Park. The participants joined the UN-Habitat team on the first day for an exploratory walk in the park to familiarise themselves with the site and address the challenges and existing issues (see Figure 6.29). The UN-Habitat staff claim that they have, collaboratively with the participants, noticed many urban challenges such as lack of shaded and seating areas, inaccessibility for disabled or older people, lack of bins and playground fixtures, unsafe flooring and poor lighting. However,

¹³⁹ Interview, Amman, May 2021

¹⁴⁰ Interview, Amman, August 2021

the participants interviewed in this research had different views regarding their first day of participation. Muna, 22 years old, noticed: *'In the short time of walking (30 minutes), the UN-Habitat staff pointed to the urban challenges in the park, and most of us nodded in agreement.'* (Amman, August 2021)



Figure 6.29: Day 1 tour showing the participants with the UN-Habitat staff. Source: UN-Habitat, 2020

Likewise, Hadeel, 24 years old, added: *'Most of the participants were young. The UN-Habitat for sure knows better how to fix the park.'*¹⁴¹ In the next two days, the UN-Habitat staff helped the participants design different park models. It encouraged the participants to present their models in front of a representative from GAM on the last day (see Figures 6.30 and 6.31). However, the participants perceived the participation workshops as an exercise to try new technologies and methods; they were not interested in raising their voices on issues that matter to them. More specifically, none of the participants had any experience participating in any public decision-making before; also, 82% of the participants were below 15 years old, as Ahmad (23 years) notes: *'It was like a training day for most of us ... besides, the transportation was secured, lunch too, why not come and participate?'* (Online, September 2021).

Rather than focusing on creating cohesion and social integrity between the host community and the refugees through participation, the 'invited' spaces were filled with young participants merely passionate about the new design technology. This does not offer the potential for creating a space of participation that fosters active citizens engaged in discourses that affect their lives.

¹⁴¹ Interview, Amman, August 2021



Figure 6.30: The participatory workshops at the Block-by-Block project. Source: UN-Habitat, 2020



Figure 6.31: A 3D proposal by one of the participants in the Block-by-Block Project. Source: UN-Habitat, 2020

CityRAP Project: Eight Days Participation

In the second project, the participants were keen to participate due to the nature of their positions and backgrounds, as most of them worked either in civic organisations, or society associations or were involved in activism work. Therefore, they were familiar with these spaces and events and believed they could raise their status in their communities through the visibility they get to the municipalities or the formal structures behind these meetings. Likewise, in the GIZ projects, the participants used these spaces to demand their needs, even if unrelated to the project (see Figures 6.32 and 6.33). They expressed their frustration about the way GAM deals with urban issues in the eastern (poorer) areas of Amman.



Figure 6.32: The Participatory workshop at CityRAP project. Source: UN-Habitat, 2020



Figure 6.33: The Participatory workshop at CityRAP project. Source: UN-Habitat, 2020

However, in this process, the UN-Habitat were very careful in selecting a type of social mobiliser (a local NGO) who would not try to mobilise the participants. Thus, even when the participants expressed their disappointment about how the municipality works, the social mobilisers were told to kill off these conversations and try to steer them towards the project's specificity. The participants were not allowed to question the rigidity of a non-participative structure of GAM; their efforts were only directed at discussing the flood problem in Amman Downtown¹⁴². The analysis reveals that UN-Habitat played the leading role in both presented projects; they were present at every stage and event, facilitating and managing the projects and giving particular and limiting roles to other actors. UN-Habitat engaged with the participants in designing plans and guidelines without getting back to them for feedback or future steps. One of the INGO staff anonymously asserted that they had a sum of funds that needed to be spent in a particular period while using innovative tools. Therefore, they had only to ensure a specific number of participants on board capable of trying these new methodologies (In this case, Block-by-Block and CityRAP).

¹⁴² Interview with one participant (a local society leader) who have participated in all the eight days of the project. Amman, August 2021.

In both projects, the participatory approach elicited frustration among the people, albeit for different reasons. A common element between the two projects was the culmination of establishing frameworks and guidelines but without tangible on-ground applications. Moreover, the public harboured scepticism towards the social mobilisers, accusing them of corruption and perceiving their focus solely on appeasing the state or the international NGOs. More bluntly, in the concluding stages of the CityRAP workshops, the UN-Habitat attempted to elucidate that the allocated budget was intended for the participatory process itself, focusing on intangible outcomes rather than funding project implementation or policy changes. However, at the project's outset, their initial communication lacked sufficient clarity regarding its specific outcomes. Participants were not adequately informed that the project would solely entail a pilot project, leaving room for ambiguity and uncertainty. One participant commented: *'We thought we would see a real implemented project, but we discovered later it is only a pilot! We wasted our time again on frameworks and plans.'* (Online, September 2021) (see Figure 6.34)



تركيب مزاريب السطح وربطها إلى خزان يحد من تدفق مياه الأمطار إلى الشوارع ويخفف الضغط عن شبكات الصرف

7. الأشرقية
8. رأس العين
9. الجبل الأخضر

إعلان

ضمن إطار مشروع "تعزيز الاستقرار الاجتماعي وزيادة مناعة المجتمعات الأكثر تأثراً من الأردنيين واللاجئين السوريين لمواجهة الفيضانات المفاجئة" الممول من قبل الحكومة اليابانية والذي يتم تنفيذه بالتعاون مع أمانة عمان الكبرى، يرغب برنامج الأمم المتحدة للمستوطنات البشرية "الهبيئات" بتركيب أنظمة لحصاد مياه الأمطار في بعض الأبنية السكنية وذلك للتخفيف من خطر الفيضانات المفاجئة في منطقة وسط البلد. يتكون النظام من مزاريب لتجميع مياه الأمطار من الأسطح وتخزينها في خزانات أرضية خاصة ضمن ارتداد قطعة الأرض خلال فترات العواصف المطرية.

الهدف من هذا المشروع هو المساهمة في تخفيف خطر الفيضانات المفاجئة في عمان وكذلك رفع الوعي حول أهمية دور المجتمع المحلي في بناء مناعة المدينة ضد الفيضانات المفاجئة من خلال تطبيق بعض الممارسات الخضراء ضمن قطع الأراضي السكنية للتخفيف من جريان مياه الأمطار في الشوارع وبالتالي التخفيف من حدة الفيضانات الناتجة عن أسباب عديدة أهمها التغير المناخي والتوسع العمراني.

على القاطنين في إحدى المناطق التالية والتي عانت من فيضانات أثناء العواصف المطرية في السنوات الماضية:

1. المهاجرين	4. جبل النصر
2. الروم	5. جبل الجوفة
3. جبل القلعة	6. جبل التاج

و الراغبين بتركيب مثل هذا النظام مجاناً ضمن ارتداد أراضيهم التسجيل على الموقع التالي:

Figure 6.34: The UN-Habitat advertisement solicits involvement in the pilot project situated in Amman Downtown as an integral component of their participatory approach. The advertisement invites individuals interested in contributing to the project to participate by consenting to the installation of rain gutters. Source: UN-Habitat, 2021

The UN-Habitat regional consultant explained: *'In the first meeting, we encouraged the participants to keep attending the full programme (workshops) because we will have a real project at the end. It is not only frameworks.'* He continued: *'We think they misunderstood the*

word pilot.¹⁴³ The coordinator from the local NGO acknowledges that: *'The people want to participate, especially the activists, but their problem is that we have more plans than implementations.'* However, she also comments on the people's incapability to generate 'objective' opinions that would smoothen the participatory projects with INGOs in Jordan¹⁴⁴. Despite the UN-Habitat's assertion that participation is the primary objective rather than a mere means in both projects, participants expressed discontent about the limited opportunities to voice their opinions and engage meaningfully. Remarkably, even the regional consultants at UN-Habitat acknowledged this issue, explaining that the usual implementation period for the CityRAP method is four months, allowing ample time for meaningful participation. However, due to funding constraints, the Amman project had to be executed within a short timeframe. After all, the promises for on-ground projects were not forthcoming, thus, the participants developed a lack of confidence and resulting trust deficit towards the municipality that generated interest in INGOs as service providers for people with low incomes.

In a shorter version of participation, the UN-Habitat projects failed to actively involve people in creating any policy changes or to be involved in decision-making on matters that affect their lives. Following the completion of the workshops in the CityRAP project and subsequent interviews conducted with three participants engaged in these workshops, all respondents were unaware of the project's following outcomes or the implementation of their ideas and suggestions¹⁴⁵. The only thing they were aware of was the pilot project initiation, evident from photos shared online featuring the mayor and other high-ranking individuals from the international donor and UN-Habitat (see Figure 6.35). Accordingly, the arenas of UN-Habitat which were concerned to appear innovative in using new and novel methods to the context, proved to be fashioned out through a process of re-inscribing existing relationships, hierarchies and rules of the game.

The GIZ and UN-Habitat projects provided examples of institutional participatory urban governance, whereby citizens have been 'invited' (Cornwall, 2004) by the state or other actors like the INGO to participate. The prior two sections have highlighted how a process of public participation that relies on the INGOs' small-scale projects, provides zero mechanisms to challenge the structures within which it functions, instead serving as a tightly controlled space for

¹⁴³ Interview, online May 2021

¹⁴⁴ Interview, online May 2021

¹⁴⁵ Interview, online, April 2022

citizens who already fit the state's normative assumptions of 'good' citizenship. These two cases show a failure, or at least a problem of institutional participatory mechanisms in Amman. Table 6.4 summarises the different aspects and dimensions of the process in both cases. Before formulating the conclusion for this chapter, the subsequent section will comprehensively explore the complex interplay among the actors engaged in the 'invited' participation process across all the projects discussed above. Particularly emphasising examining how these actors' power dynamics significantly influence the participation and ultimately shape its outcomes.



Figure 6.35: The mayor and high-ranking individuals at the initiation of the CityRAP pilot project. Source: GAM, 2022

To sum up, Table 6.4 looks at the matrix of public participation within both organisations (GIZ and UN-Habitat), which includes the four projects discussed in this chapter.

Table 6.4: The matrix of public participation in the case studies conducted by GIZ and UN-Habitat.

Organisation project		Matrix of Public Participation																
		Actors					The Public					Project's goal	Methods of mobilisation	Project Time with the participants	Motivation for participation	Site Selection	On-site activities	Outcome
		INGO	GAM	Local NGO	CBO/Social association	Design Team	Influencers	Representatives	Refugees	Youths	Ordinary							
GIZ	ILCA			3		2						Increasing accessibility to public open spaces through a green infrastructure network, by creating ownership	1. Social media 2. SMS 3. Door-to-door 4. Questionnaires 5. Telephone calls	4 years Intermittent	Raising issues not related to the project	GAM advised by the INGO	Workshops Meetings	3 newly designed sites
	UML											Increasing accessibility to public open spaces through a green infrastructure network, by creating ownership	1. On-site activations 2. Door-to-door 3. Telephone calls 4. Informal chats 5. Urban walks	3 years Intermittent	Raising issues not related to the project	GAM advised by the INGO	Workshops Planting Painting Meetings Informal relations	Fenced planted site for 2 years
UN-Habitat	Block by Block											Social integration between the Syrian refugees and the host community	Selecting participants from one of GAM's community centres	3 days	Invited to + it is fun for the youths	GAM advised by the INGO	Using digital tools for design	Design proposals for the park
	CityRAP											Building community resilience in flash flood areas in Amman Downtown	1. Throughout GAM 2. Selecting well-known local representatives	8 days	To be part of changing and solving the critical condition of floods	GAM advised by the INGO	Workshops Roundtable-discussions	Strategies + framework + Pilot project

6.4 The Multi-layered Relationships Between the Actors in the ‘Invited’ Spaces of Participation in Amman

In both instances, the ideas behind the spaces of ‘invited’ participation were initiated by international aid agencies, namely the GIZ and the UN-Habitat. While they had distinct underlying visions for creating these spaces, their motivations differed. For the GIZ, the participatory approach aimed to foster social responsibility and instil a sense of ownership among residents regarding the newly established green infrastructures. This approach was deemed essential to ensure proper care and maintenance of the newly developed sites. However, the UN-Habitat viewed participation as a tool to facilitate social integration between refugees and host communities. Upon analysis, it becomes evident that both international NGOs encountered shortcomings in incorporating meaningful public participation aligned with the goals that they set for the spaces of participation. Despite their differing objectives, the overall implementation of participatory processes fell short of truly serving the intended purposes of these spaces.

In the context of ‘invited’ participation, the GIZ is often regarded as a comparatively ‘genuine’¹⁴⁶ approach to participation, especially compared to the UN-Habitat approach within the Jordanian context. The GIZ showed an intention to establish effective communication channels between the public and the municipality to foster more sustainable and inclusive citizens’ involvement in urban development projects. However, despite these efforts, the GIZ and the UN-Habitat retain the absolute decision-making power, which they selectively transfer to other actors involved in the process. Throughout this process, international NGOs must secure all necessary approvals and permissions from GAM, and they are bound by the requirement to obtain these approvals before proceeding with various aspects of the projects. For instance, this includes the assignment of the design office, the selection of social mobilisers, the selection of project sites, and organising public meetings, workshops, and other related activities. These dependencies on GAM approvals highlight the municipal power structure in shaping the participatory process as well.

Another level of approval the GIZ had to get was from the donor agency (BMZ) in Germany, which according to the UML team members, placed a greater emphasis on short-term project

¹⁴⁶ Numerous participants interviewed in this research have consistently used this term, along with other synonymous expressions. These participants encompass a diverse group, including GAM officials, local NGO leaders, INGO staff, and architects.

outcomes, such as the specific number of female participants, pictures of children engaging in activities at the newly developed sites, and videos and reports showcasing the institution's achievements. This reinforces the argument on the NGO's neoliberal version of civil society (Chandhoke, 2012; Kaldor, 2003) by being sceptical about their *real* role in enhancing and promoting meaningful participation. The analysis and discussion presented above reveal a clear intention by international NGOs to exert control over the participating actors, thereby limiting their ability to question the structure and regulations of the participatory process. This is evident in how the INGOs restricted the scope of work for social mobilisers to a defined number of community workshops and meetings, requiring approval from the international NGO before proceeding further. A specific incident at UML exemplifies this dynamic: social mobilisers organised a participatory workshop for children during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a gesture following local cultural norms, they provided coloured masks to the children. However, a GIZ staff member later misconstrued this well-intentioned act and accused the social mobilisers of attempting to bribe the children into participating. The international NGOs' little knowledge of the context complicated their relationship with the involved actors.

The controlling nature of the participatory process, coupled with a lack of contextual understanding, had adverse repercussions on the GIZ team itself, particularly when the local Jordanian team – presenting those 'participatory consultants' who have mostly worked in activist local community projects– attempted to question and appropriate the process to align with the site's contextualised culture. An example of this friction arose when a GIZ staff member recounted an incident with her German colleague, where she suggested adding lighting fixtures to enhance safety in the park. However, her suggestion was dismissed because public parks in Germany do not have lighting. Similarly, in another instance, the GIZ manager proposed an activity for children to take small boards home and create stories about the park to share with others¹⁴⁷. The local team, well aware of the community's customs and preferences, emphasised the need to integrate with the community and understand their cultural practices. This led to a clash of perspectives, and eventually, the first local team chose to resign from their positions, as one member explained: *'The manifestation of colonialism in the institution started to be very clear! So, I couldn't stay there, and it was disrespectful!'* (Amman, July 2021).

¹⁴⁷ Interview, Amman, June 2021

Furthermore, the International NGOs – particularly those working in the higher authorities of the organisation – tried to suppress any acts that could challenge their established *modus operandi* or jeopardise their relationship with the authorities. This caution stemmed from the fact that the state, as the ultimate authority, wields the power to permit them to operate. As a result, these INGOs were inclined to avoid any conflicts or political acts that might impede their operational capabilities or sour their relationship with the state authorities. As John Clark (1995) suggested, the government would be more than cooperative with INGOs in providing only uncontroversial services. In this sense, this qualitative evidence highlights that the final decision-making lies with the official authorities (be it GAM or high-ranking personnel at the INGOs). Meanwhile, the GAM officials showed commitment and appreciation to the programmes and activities specifically designed by the international NGOs, as they maintained solid relationships with INGO providing services because they needed all the funding support from international donors. Contrary to their relationship with the public, they did not succeed in nurturing nor with the social mobilisers. The interviewed participants from the public believed in the need for a change from *the inside* (GAM, public authorities, etc.) and not relying on the INGOs and donors, as they were seen as no more than alternative service providers. In this sense, public participation is not part of GAM's city governance structure, despite the rhetoric of 'participation' taking place in these sites.

However, the social mobilisers associated with more activism formats of civic engagement, such as the society association in the UML project, demonstrated more robust and more deeply rooted relationships with the public. Their approach focused on fostering informal connections and empowering the individuals involved in the participatory process. Despite being perceived as mere 'peacekeepers' by the international NGO, their role was far more complex as they navigated between the state, the international NGO, and the architects involved in a hostile political climate. Nevertheless, their authority remained constrained in addressing local issues while increasingly positioned as service providers. This, however, does not align with the practices of the other types of local NGOs engaged in various projects within this chapter (i.e., the NGOs working with Un-Habitat or within the ILCA project) where their accountability was directed 'upward' towards donors rather than 'downward' to the community (Banks et al., 2015). These NGOs did not show any effort to negotiate with the state or the INGOs the public's needs or aspirations. Similarly, while ostensibly engaged in the participatory workshops and community meetings, the architects and design offices primarily maintained their interactions to obtain feedback and approvals from the INGO and GAM, neglecting to loop back to the communities. Throughout the interviews,

several architects expressed frustration with the actions of the residents, often labelling them as vandals. They emphasised that their flexibility with the residents was limited to non-essential matters, such as the colour of handrails while asserting their authority to make crucial design decisions without the need for repeated consultations with the community.

The following diagrams (Figure 6.36 and 6.37) delineate the complex relationship between the different actors involved in creating spaces of ‘invited’ participation in Amman. The first diagram illustrates the GIZ’s approach in two projects, ILCA and UML. By comparing it with (Figure 6.37) - the diagram representing the UN-Habitat approach in the preceding sections’ two projects - evident distinctions emerge in terms of more significant interaction and communication with the public, in which it sustained a new pattern of relationships, described as informal connections on a horizontal level of relationships. Not only between the social mobilisers and other actors with the public but also between different figures of the public. This is because of the opportunities people had to sit together and get involved in dialogues that matter to them. However, the role of social mobilisers, in this context, required them to mediate and navigate these relationships adeptly. Nevertheless, this did not preclude direct confrontations with state authorities or other actors like INGOs or design offices, in both cases, with or without the existence of those ‘peacekeepers’ (i.e., the UN-Habitat projects). Both diagrams, demonstrate a proactive engagement with powerful actors, irrespective of their mobilisation or recruitment strategies. On the other hand, the international and national institutional level, encompassing entities such as INGOs, GAM, the Ministry of Environment, the design office, contractors, and social mobilisers, formal relationships were cultivated in both cases, predicated on technical support, facilitation of permissions, and financial assistance. It is clear in both figures the strong centralised role of GAM, where every procedure within the process should go through GAM, in terms of permissions, and informing, among many others. Finally, the multi-scale and multi-agent participation structure blocks an effective engagement of the public and further blurs the decision-making process, where it results in a depoliticised process with mere technical bodies (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2008; Bénit-Gbaffou & Gervais-Lambony, 2005).

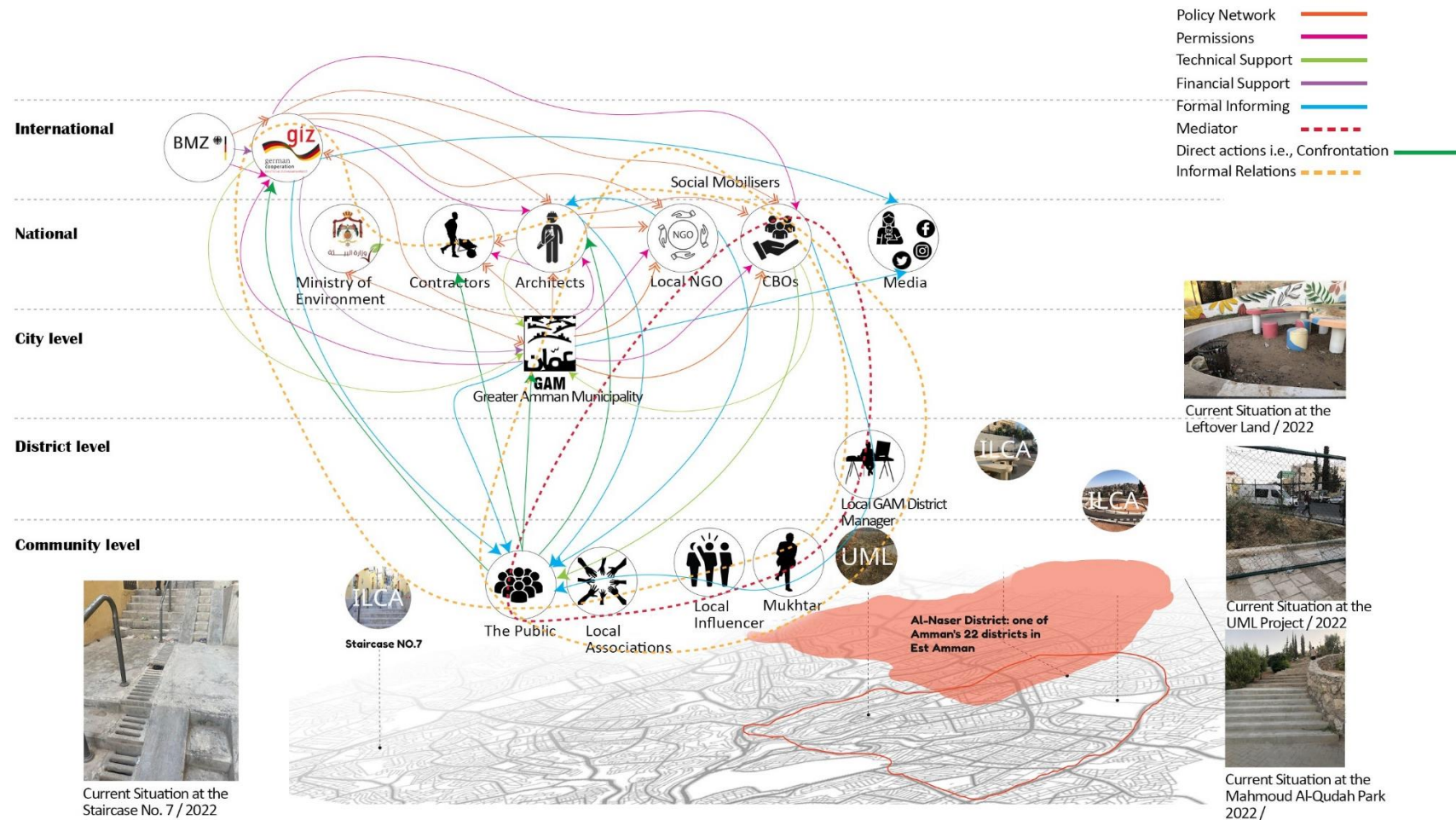


Figure 6.36: The network of relationships between the actors at the GIZ projects. (Author)

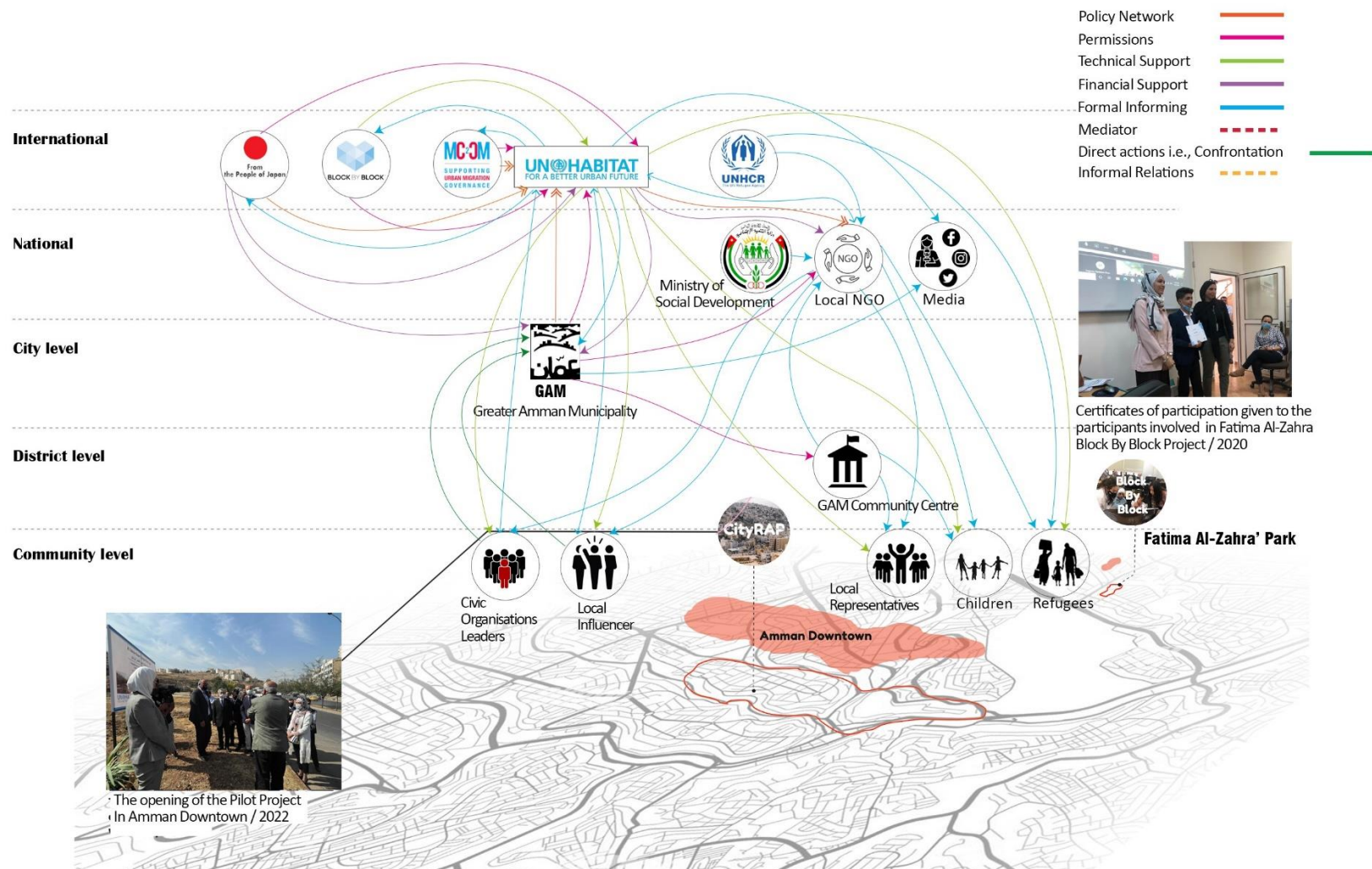


Figure 6.37: The network of relationships between the actors at the UN-Habitat projects (Author)

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the structural and contextual framework of ‘invited’ spaces of participation in Amman by examining the approach of two different international NGOs in producing spaces of participation while partnering with GAM and local civic actors. Those spaces were explicitly designed to promote inclusivity either while building a sense of ownership and creating links between the public and government, or through attaining social inclusion and integrity. However, as shown in this chapter, ‘simply creating ‘invited’ spaces is not by itself enough to bring about ‘real’ participation.’ (Aiyar, 2010, p. 2011). The INGOs, along with GAM, have been associated with a top-down approach that undermined people’s participation. The lack of structured, organised participation and supportive political context was crucial in not fertilising a platform for accountability and communication instead, devaluing participants’ voices and obstructing local engagement. Currently, public participation is not part of the actual city governance structure, despite all the actors’ use of the term that is situated outside the democratic realm. It is certainly not incorporated in policy making or its implementation. Those ‘invited’ spaces of participation have only focused on micro-level interventions without challenging or questioning the overarching economic and political structures that shape people’s lives.

Moreover, GAM and the INGO romanticised the capacity of the social mobilisers against the more robust systems and actors. As a result, they found themselves in a difficult situation, juggling a balancing act between the donor’s institutional NGO, the absent government, and the furious people. However, the capacity of the social mobilisers to change the work of INGO highly depended on the type of organisation they were rooted in. The member-based organisation had deeper ‘downwards’ accountability; the sense of activism pushed them to take an independent stance against the INGO, the state and others. Within this paradigm, future efforts towards a more substantial local civic organisation can be vital in developing a stronger inter-connected civil where they can jointly pursue mutual goals from the state or the INGOs (Banks, et al., 2015). As evident from the discussion above, the society association working at the UML project have focused on fostering informal relationships beyond the formal spaces of ‘invited’ participation to empower, teach, help and mobilise the public. Thus, practices of participation are not one-sided; they remain contingent on the power and social relations creating and negotiating these spaces. Moreover, the circulation of local elites in dominated spaces by donors clearly shows the potential of those in claiming and negotiating some terms and aspects of the participatory process.

The failure of spaces of ‘invited’ participation is leading many other forms of civic organisations and collectives to look at other opportunities to exercise their voice by creating their own autonomous space that may be effective outside the spaces provided by the government or INGOs. The comprehensive depiction of these cases offers a rich empirical reference, engendering a profound understanding of ‘invited’ spaces of participation and processes that have hitherto been primarily understood through the lenses of aid donor development, devoid of in-depth exploration of their socio-spatial and political narratives. Such an endeavour is essential for extending the discussion towards a more transformative approach to participation in contexts of the Global South outside a focus on aid agencies’ development projects.

Chapter 7 ‘Invented’ Spaces of Participation and New Grassroots Initiatives

7.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the case studies of grassroots organisations and activists working on creating spaces of public participation in Amman based on information gathered during fieldwork. Usually, in Jordan, these groups are known as *local* and include a wide range of artists, architects, planners, educators, researchers, students, designers, and city residents. Although being *local*, in Jordan, is used to minimise and limit their position, their local situatedness and tactical manoeuvres prove their complex impact on creating new debates and meanings in the production of urban spaces through mobilising the everyday life and social practices of the city dwellers. The chapter is primarily concerned with understanding the nature of ‘invented’ spaces of participation in Amman, through examining the practices, and spaces created by new grassroots organisations in the city.

The main objective of this chapter is to introduce two different types of case studies from civil society, in order to contextualise their later analysis. However, before delving into the nature of the grassroots organisations and collectives and their projects, it starts with framing the nature of the ‘invented’ spaces of participation in the Jordanian context by a focus on the era after the Arab Spring. The following part introduces two grassroots organisations formally registered and perceived by the state as structured non-profit institutions. These organisations have many volunteer members, whose participation depends on the projects, situations and context. However, the organisations’ initiators (leaders) are now well-known to the public, and usually, their names are affiliated with the organisation’s name. As a starting point for later analysis in Chapter 9, this part examines the two case studies under three headings: commencement,

methodology and practices. This approach introduces the case studies to illustrate their role as grassroots organisations and collectives, which will be analysed in more detail in Chapter 9. The third part of this chapter examines three urban grassroots collectives working and collaborating with local residents to facilitate their role in making decisions about aspects of the urban environment that affect their daily lives. They are different from grassroots organisations in that they are not registered as institutions, but they collaborate individually with residents, urban activists, and researchers in developing projects. These collectives are needs-driven, depending on a specific moment, urge, or event arising in the city. This chapter will introduce these collectives within their specific projects that were taking part at the time of conducting the fieldwork and become the interest of this research. This chapter concludes with reflections on the nature of ‘invented’ participation in the Jordanian context when delivered by the new forms of grassroots organisation and collectives.

7.2 ‘Invented’ Spaces of Participation in Amman

As discussed in Chapter 2, ‘invented’ spaces of participation refer to those claimed spaces that the grassroots invent to challenge existing laws and the status quo, usually through direct confrontations (Cornwall and Coelho, 2006; Gaventa, 2004, p. 44; Miraftab, 2004, p. 4; Miraftab, 2009, p. 39). This is not new to the Jordanian context, as shown in Chapter 4, demonstrations and public protests were the tools often used by the grassroots to claim their rights and to confront the state. However, under the authoritarian dimension in Jordan, the nature of the ‘invented’ spaces, as defined by the previous scholars, looks intermittent, incomplete and fragmented. Whereas the martial law between 1958 and 1989 and the laws and regulations after (See Chapter 4), controlled the formation of civil society and did not nurture a fertile environment for greater political participation or more engaged communities (AlNasser, 2016; Marie, 2019).

More bluntly put, the sites of resistance in Jordan before the Arab Spring are better understood as temporary, episodic sites of political movement that organise themselves to directly confront the status quo. They are far from the ‘invented’ participation claimed by Miraftab in her in-depth study of The Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC) that was founded in 2001 to resist the evictions and service cut-offs in Cape Town and claim their rights in basic needs¹⁴⁸. Although,

¹⁴⁸ For more, see Miraftab ethnographic work (2006, 2009).

the Jordanian street witnessed many acts of resistance, manifested mainly in public protests, strikes and demonstrations; they are better understood in what Bayat calls ‘social non-movement’ rather than the ‘invented’ spaces of citizenship or the ‘coordinated action’ as described by (Young, 2000, p. 157). Luna Khirfan (2018), discuss thoroughly examples of social ‘non-movement’ that took place in Amman after the Arab Spring, in which people showed opposition to urban new policies or initiatives through physical and virtual manifestations over social media, for example, people of the new municipality amalgamation regulation rejected the new decision by protesting and closing main roads in Amman for several days to pressure the government to rescind the policy (p. 211). These acts are more impulsive and un-organised than the ‘invented’ spaces of participation and citizenship as suggested by (Miraftab & Wills, 2005) in studying the spaces of participation created against the evictions in Cape Town. Although both practices showed an aspect of public demonstrations as a means to voice their demands; the latter spaces are more organised through a strong body (the AEC in this case) that is concerned not only with creating these moments of demonstrations, but also, utilise a set of strategies and actions ‘stretching from informal negotiations, capacity building, and training; to mass mobilisations in the form of peaceful protests, sit-ins, and land invasions; to defiant collective action such as illegal reconnection of services and repossession of housing’ (Miraftab & Wills, 2005, p. 207). However, the confrontation acts in Amman are episodic, without the support of an organised body from the civil society. Despite the presence of numerous well-established civil society organisations, as discussed in Chapter 5, these entities have demonstrated a stronger alignment with state interests and regulations rather than those of the general public.

The focus of this chapter comes in alignment with the goal of this dissertation in understanding the many forms of participation in authoritarian contexts of the Global South. It does so by shedding light on the new organisations and urban collectives in Amman that claim to be creating a new mode of participation that could be misperceived as ‘invented’ spaces of participation.

7.3 The New Grassroots Organisations

The new Grassroots organisations were defined in Chapter 5 as the new networks of individuals that operate independently from institutional and corporate structures. Through their non-hierarchical, anti-normative, anti-hegemonic structure, they aim to create new possibilities in the city by focusing on small-scale social enterprise rather than totally relying on significant

international funds. This understanding moves beyond the labelling limits of non-profits and NGOs; instead, it is better situated as an urge, a response to the political climate, and a realisation of the possibility of other ways of doing outside the capitalist production paradigm. Although these organisations voluntarily registered with the MoSD or as for-profit companies –for tactical reasons, as explained later– they work within collective and flexible structures. They prefer to remain in a collection of singularities rather than a unified collective subjectivity to equip them with the tactical spontaneity for generating action. Although these organisations don't require strict membership registration or fees and operate voluntarily, it is observed that they tend to have several members (mostly the co-founders) who do not change over time and are in charge of any required formal procedures. Zikra for Popular Learning and the Hara Initiative are an example of grassroots organisations operating in Jordan, as discussed in the following sub-section (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: The list of grassroots organisations and collectives.

Name	Type of registration	Year of establishment	Year of registration	Place	Funds	Type of Membership	No. of members	The project investigated for this PhD	Project start date	Project funding	Project's site
Zikra for Popular Learning	Grassroots organisation registered as a for-profit company	2007	2019	Amman	Participants fees	Co-founders and volunteers	Originally 2 members	Al-Barakeh Wheat	2020	Participants fees	Started in Amman and now expanded to other cities and Arab region countries
Hara Initiative	Grassroots organisation registered as society association	2005	2019	Amman	Donations	Founder and volunteers	Originally 8 members	Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail	2021	USAID	Al-Ashrafiyah, East Amman
Mahli Initiative	Grassroots collective	2020	Not registered	Amman	Local	Founder and activists	Originally 1 member	Mahli	2020	No funding	Al Lweibdeh, Amman
Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park	Grassroots collective	2020	Not registered	Amman	-	Co-founders and activists	Originally 5 members	NYIT Park	2020	Etihad Jordanian Bank	Jabal Amman, East Amman
Bader Initiative	Grassroots collective	2021	Not registered	Zarqa	-	Founder and volunteers	Originally 1 member	Bader	2020	Crowd-funding	Between Amman and Zarqa city

7.3.1 Zikra for Popular Learning

Zikra for Popular Learning is a local grassroots organisation based in Amman since 2007. Zikra has been registered as a society association for more than fifteen years, however, in 2019 Zikra changed its registration as a for-profit company, due to the restricted and controlling laws of non-profits and NGOs in Jordan¹⁴⁹. Their work is centred around the restoration of popular knowledge inherited in Jordanian society that enabled citizens to live independently and sustainably in the past without the need for development organisations or donor funds to develop their way of living. In addition, they support individuals in inventing new ways of thinking, challenge the domination of foreign knowledge and support community-driven thinking about place and land in order to restore people's agency towards it. The founders, Rabe' Zuriqat and Lama Al-Khatib, aim to present an alternative model for creating independent, productive and dominant societies with control over their land and resources, which is incompatible with the global, capitalist economy characterising the cities today. Zikra collaborates with a wide range of small organisations, associations and researchers that share their beliefs and methodologies¹⁵⁰.

Commencement

According to Rabe' (Zikra's co-founder), the core concepts of Zikra derive from back when he was involved in charity work in Jordan between 2007 and 2009. He explains:

'A long time ago, I used to bring food and clothes to the poor people living in Al-Ghour¹⁵¹. The image of people running towards my car to take what they needed made me realise something was wrong. The image of the protagonist and the victims was very clear. I saw myself as the white coloniser; I am the man coming from Amman (with my privileges) to the poorer marginalised communities to give them the tools so they can look like me.'

The founders of Zikra, while bringing donations from Amman to those marginalised villages of Al-Ghour suffering from poverty, and lack of accessibility to public services like public

¹⁴⁹ Interview with the founders of Zikra for Popular Learning. Online, November 2021.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with the founders of Zikra for Popular Learning. Amman, June 2021.

¹⁵¹ A region in Jordan, where most inhabitants work in agriculture. The villages of Al-Ghour suffer from high levels of poverty and limited economic opportunities. As most members of the families work in the agriculture sector, it adds another burden to their livelihoods. The agricultural sector in Jordan has been dramatically suffering in the last decade because of the decline in demand on Jordanian agricultural products and the decline in the exports of the agricultural sector. Source: The Jordan Times <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/farmers-toil-amid-water-scarcity-trade-challenges> Accessed 26 May 2023. Also, Sadaqa study on the experiences of women in the agriculture sector in Al Ghour. For more see: Sadaqajo.org.

transportation, healthcare and education, realised the fact that they were trying to only provide them with what was supposed to be fulfilling their needs without looking into their own ways of sustaining and producing ways of living. With this in mind, the founders perceived their work differently from their previous experience working for charities; instead, they aimed to collectively understand the actual needs of the marginalised and how to sustain existing local knowledge collectively.

Methodology

Throughout their projects, Zikra developed a method of working that firstly depends on exchanging and reciprocity rather than donating. Secondly, they work to exchange knowledge that leads to transformative change. Both aspects were carried out through an open, participatory approach. This was manifested clearly in their approach to their first community in Al-Ghour (mentioned in the previous quote); they presented and preserved their local knowledge by bringing interested people from Amman to learn from those communities. As the founders eloquently said, *‘For the first time, the beneficiaries were Ammanis people – the ones in power– and not the marginalised.’* (see Figure 7.1). For Zikra, these experiences conserve the potential for restoring local knowledge through empowering the citizens/users on their decisions and actions, and further help in documenting and (re)using these forms of knowledges. Furthermore, by providing access to learning opportunities and resources, the organisation encourages the exchange of ideas and knowledge sharing among individuals and communities¹⁵².



Figure 7.1: Women from Amman visiting the communities at Al-Ghour to learn from their skills and knowledge.
Source: Zikra for Popular Learning (2017)

¹⁵² The residents of the villages benefited also from the small paid fees from the participants willing to learn from the village's ways of living.

One of the dominant concepts running across Zikra for Popular Learning is land and the production of space. The organisation recognises that land is a critical resource that shapes people's relationships with each other and the environment. By promoting traditional land use practices and advocating for the protection of natural resources, Zikra aims to foster sustainable development and preserve cultural heritage. For example, supporting traditional solutions for recycling that have been used in Al-Ghour villages for more than 50 years, also, cultivating native plants and reviving traditional recipes that empower communities to redefine their relationship with their identity and culture that aims to shift away from a predominant consumerist mindset to one centred on productivity. Furthermore, the organisation's approach to the production of space emphasises utilising local knowledge, which empowers citizens to shape their built environments according to their unique needs and aspirations. An example which combines these approaches can be seen in the organisation's recent project: Al-Barakeh Wheat¹⁵³, explored below.

Al-Barakeh Wheat Project

The Al-Barakeh Wheat Project is a project run by Zikra of Popular Learning, which cultivates native wheat varieties by appropriating and sowing on empty plots of land in Amman. The project was founded in early 2020 to respond to Jordan's current import dependency of more than 97 per cent of its food grains – including wheat. In this sense, American wheat (see Figure 7.2, left) has been served on every Jordanian family table since the 1970s when Jordan started slowly adopting policies that liberalised the market and removed subsidies for local wheat production (Aljazeera, 2022, The Jordan Times, 2021). The government only subsidised imported flour, pushing the farmers to cultivate more profitable fruit and vegetable crops instead of wheat. Moreover, the government didn't pay sufficient attention to the rapid urbanisation taking over fertile agricultural lands in large parts of the country. One local farmer says: *'The real problem of urbanisation started in the late 60s when the government lent the land to UNRWA to build a Palestinian refugee camp in one of the most fertile lands in Jordan.'*¹⁵⁴ Figure 7.3, shows the fertile lands given to the American government to build their embassy. According to the project founders, Jordan was

¹⁵³ In English: Blessed Wheat. In the Arab Muslim world, the word 'Barakah' has a very important place in people's everyday life because of its strong religious associations. The notion refers to an invisible but concrete blessing resulting from a person's conduct including, and most importantly, his/her economic behaviour; it establishes a positive correlation between a person's conduct and prosperity. It challenges the capitalist accumulation by referring to a divine blessing or endowment when a person shares part of his possessions, particularly money, with others and especially those in need.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with a local farmer living near The Baqa'a Refugees camp. Amman, Jordan, August 2021

200% self-sufficient in rain-fed whole wheat until the late 1960s and used to export the rest; also, Amman was the most suitable landscape for rain-fed agriculture (see Figures 7.4 and 7.5).



Figure 7.2: Left: The donated American flour sac. Right: The project's founders helping harvest one of their sites in Amman. Source: Zikra for Popular Learning, 2022



Figure 7.3: Photos depicting agriculturally fertile terrain allocated to the American government for the construction of their embassy, situated within one of the most agriculturally suitable regions in West Amman. Source: Zikra For Popular Learning, 2021



Figure 7.4: Google photo displaying the agricultural areas in western Amman in the 1970s. Source: Zikra for Popular Learning, 2021



Figure 7.5: Google photo depicting the urbanised landscape of western Amman in 2020. Source: Zikra For Popular Learning, 2021

As per the Ministry of Agriculture in Jordan, the nation possesses approximately 52 million dunums (each dunam is about 900 square meters) of arable land¹⁵⁵. An estimated 6 million dunums of land need to be cultivated to cater to domestic consumption requirements. According to the founders, the Al-Barakeh Wheat project has cultivated so far more than 75 dunums (17.3 acres) of land in Amman only. However, the founders aim for a more national self-sufficiency project, but they are aware that it needs time and collective efforts to realise a national goal (see Figure 7.2, right).

The project's inception occurred via an open call on social media channels, whereby individuals were invited to offer the use of their private vacant land to cultivate crops collectively with interested participants. Those participants are mobilised by the cultural and historical significance of cultivating native wheat; they are keen to preserve the traditional and agricultural practices and heritage. Some other participants are more interested in nutritional value and health benefits compared to commercial wheat varieties. For example, some interviewed participants were suffering from diabetes and other health issues, and they stated the difficulty of finding clean, antioxidant flour in the market. Most participants were interested, also, to involve their young children in the process, as they believed the significance of this experience in creating a bond with the land and the people too. To put it differently, the participants involved in the project were

¹⁵⁵ <https://thisismold.com/space/farm-systems/zikra-al-barakeh-wheat-jordan> Accessed, April 2023.

mobilised by the ideas of sustainable food sovereignty and restoring local knowledge that aligns with the values and intersects of the Jordanian community.

The inaugural year witnessed an expression of interest from 60 participants, which nearly doubled to 150 in the subsequent year and surged to approximately 320 in 2022¹⁵⁶. Each participant has to pay a sum of 125 JOD (approximately 141£) at the commencement of the initiative, which encompasses rental expenses for machinery and equipment required for land preparation and harvest processing. At the end of each season, an equitable allocation of grain is shared with all involved participants. In this arrangement, each group of participants are assigned to specific parcels of land to cultivate. These lands are estimated to produce a sufficient amount of wheat to meet the yearly needs of each participant. However, as explained by the founders, the actual outcome depends on factors such as crop yields, for instance, in years with episodes of drought; the wheat production may be adversely affected. Conversely, more favourable weather conditions in other years can contribute to increased productivity.

Al-Barakeh project works with local peasants who possess extensive experience in wheat production. These peasants are employed temporarily to facilitate land preparation activities, after which they assume a leadership role throughout the project and actively involve the participants in the farming process. The project has extended its reach beyond the periphery of Amman as numerous cities across Jordan are seeking help and guidance from the organisation in cultivating rain-fed wheat. Furthermore, the founders have received expressions of interest from external initiatives, including Palestine and the United Arab Emirates, to establish partnerships for comparable schemes in their respective nations, with an eagerness to assimilate the successful methodologies employed by the Al-Barakeh project.

Before delving into a comprehensive examination of the Al-Barakeh Wheat project as a form of bottom-led participation in Chapter 8, the next sub-section explores another grassroots organisation that promotes collective efforts with communities to enhance their engagement in urban development.

¹⁵⁶ Online interview with the founders of the project. May 2022

7.3.2 Hara Initiative¹⁵⁷

Hara initiative is a grassroots organisation – registered with the MoSD as a society organisation – that supports marginalised communities in co-designing a more equitable city. Most of Hara’s work is carried out by volunteers passionate about socio-spatial justice. The ethos of the initiative relies on reviving the social ties in the *hara* that allow the possibility of collective existence and communal bonds. Hara’s approach starts from its name (Hara, حارة), an Arabic term referring to the core community unit in Arab and Islamic culture; it represents a traditional local neighbourhood in the Arab region that has served for many decades as a unit representing a strong sense of community and connection between residents that share most of the time a common identity and culture (Chatterjee, 2004; Lapidus, 1973). There is no specific size of *hara* or number of households, it varies based on how the local community defines its boundaries (Chatterjee, 2004). Thus, in Amman, a *hara* can vary between 20 households to over 200 households (see Figure 7.6). A *hara* often has a strong presence of local businesses, such as shops, cafes, and restaurants. Community members often own and operate these businesses, contributing to the local economy and creating a unique character for the *hara*, which is not easy to find in Amman’s explosive growth. However, the concept of *hara* had almost totally disappeared in West Amman, due to the several modern master plans imported from western consultants that were aiding in controlling the rapid urbanisation since the 80s. Moreover, the construction of the West of Amman was in a more organised, capitalised approach that did not allow for an organic shape of *hara* to develop. On the contrary, some small parts of East Amman are still fighting to preserve the organic form of *hara* by creating, for example, socioeconomic connections between the residents or religion and ethnic relations that would unite them as one *hara*.

¹⁵⁷ In this thesis, the distinction between Hara and *hara* is important. Hara (with a capital “H”) refers to the initiative, while *hara* (in italics) refers to the geographical concept of a neighbourhood.

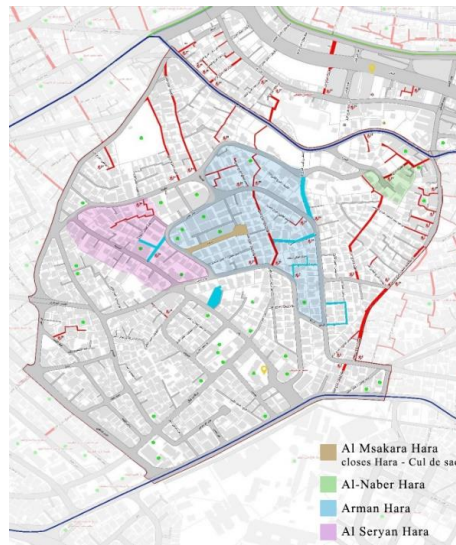


Figure 7.6: The four *hara*(s) within the Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail Project in Jabal Al-Ashrafiyah. Author, 2021

Commencement

The initiative started in 2005 when the founder was working at GAM (between 2004 and 2006) as a mayoral advisor and suggested altering GAM's interest in developing and enhancing the resilience of the poorer areas in East Amman (Myriam Ababsa & Daher, 2016; Daher, 2013), instead of limiting the investments to the western (more affluent) areas of Amman. The initiative focused on areas facing top-down transformation, where most residents were excluded from the decision-making. Although, at that time, the mayor expressed an interest in working in the city's eastern parts, the suggested plans have never seen the light. However, the provocative moment that prompted the founder to resign from his position at GAM and initiate the Hara Initiative was an incident wherein a man shot his neighbour over a parking space in the *hara* where he resides. According to Mohammed (the founder of Hara initiative): *'The idea of the Hara initiative is to restore the hidden relationship between the built environment and care, in which the lack of care is negatively affecting the lives of the residents'* (Amman, April 2021). From this point of view, the founders refused at the beginning to register the initiative at The Ministry of Social Development. They perceived themselves as part of the first *hara* they started to improve (since they lived around it), and they hoped this could be replicated and sustained in another *hara*(s) around Amman.

Methodology and Practices

Since its establishment, the Hara Initiative has sought to weave together the various fragmented communities living within Amman's most underrepresented communities (i.e. East Amman) reviving the spirit of collaboration while encouraging community self-expression. Hara looks at the full engagement of all stakeholders and residents as the key element for fostering the people's collective ownership and social accountability towards their small-scale *hara* and then the whole city. Hara's participatory approach targets many aspects such as the physical, social, economic, environmental, and educational conditions that contribute directly to enhancing the living conditions of any community (see Figure 7.7).

In order to achieve this, the initiative looks into the power of care that existed once in the concept of old *hara*, to rebuild the broken cities that Jordanians live in. This resonates with a wide range of feminist scholars who use care as a critical concept in the politics of urban planning and design (Petrescu & Trogal, 2017; Tronto, 2019) and look at the potential of care as a relational activity in creating sustained relationships. Thus, the founders recognise the different activities, diverse economies, educational levels, and social situations in each *hara* as interconnected and acknowledge that these relationships and networks can produce a sustained system on the micro-scale of *hara*. Similarly, Trogal (2017, p. 163) argued for the potential of care in producing commons. Although the founders of the Hara Initiative didn't use the word commons literally, they described their goal as collectively creating a *hara* where their residents can share the existing resources and sustain them in common through a form of shared responsibility and ownership, which is the definition of the commons in its most traditional form (Harvey, 2012). Moreover, they define *hara* as neither private nor public, but rather, as a way of life characterised by accumulated trust and care (see Figure 7.8).

In this way, the founders did not seek international or local funds to carry out the physical improvement activities in each *hara*; instead, they used to raise funds locally in each *hara*. Each family had to participate in a small monthly payment to help improve their *hara*. However, the founders were aware of the dire economic situation of some of the families; therefore, they were excluded from paying. Instead, people used to collect money to help them. This was built over a long time; according to the founders, it took them more than ten years to sustain this sort of relationship with the residents and more than six months to convince the first resident of the first *hara* to work with the initiative in improving their area. Mohammed, Hara's founder, comments:

‘Although convincing the first resident was very hard, it got easier afterwards. The people were mobilised just by seeing someone actually working on the ground.’ Between 2005 and 2022, the initiative worked in five different *hara*(s) in three different districts in eastern Amman: Al-Yarmouk, Jabal Al-Joufeh and Al-Nasr districts, one of the most deprived areas in the city.



Figure 7.7 Left: The Hara team conducting one of their meeting on the street with the residents of the *hara*. Right: Women meeting in one of Amman’s public parks to discuss issues concerning their *hara*. Source: The Hara Initiative, 2013



Figure 7.8: Residents gathering over a Ramadan feast. Source: The Hara Initiative, 2014

Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail

This project is one of Hara’s initiative recent projects that addresses the story of Al-Ashrafiyah by creating a tourist trail experience of Amman’s oldest yet neglected neighbourhood. Al-Ashrafiyah is one of the seven hills of Amman, boasting a rich cultural heritage that sheds light on the Ammanis people’s history and the capital’s evolution (see Figure 7.9). The hills capture a picturesque panoramic lookout of the cityscape while its magnificent historical buildings cascade

down the mountain (see Figures 7.10 and 7.11). Jabal¹⁵⁸ Al Ashrafiyah accommodates prominent religious landmarks that make it famous for its diverse ethnic groups who settled in the 30s of the past century, shaping its multi-cultural identity. Coupled with a distinguished old mosque and churches, Al-Ashrafiyah is recognised for its narrow alleys and streets. The urban layout of this area is characterised by a pedestrian network of long and narrow stairs that ascend the mountain and extend for hundreds of meters to the City Centre. The area's existing diversity fostered a cohesive and distinctive community wherein people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds coexist harmoniously. However, perhaps surprisingly, the tourism sector has had no significant activity in the area. The absence of attention from authorities has led to its subsequent neglect, vandalism and sharp decline in economic activity. Thus, many small businesses and shop owners faced dwindling business prospects over the years, which have gradually moved to other areas, exacerbating the area's state of neglect and economic suffering.

The Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail aims to narrate the tale of Jabal Al-Ashrafiyah and its cultural heritage, ethnic and religious diversity, and social cohesion. The area has been losing its legacy and heritage during the past 20 years as a result of the displacement of its original families to new districts, or through migration to other countries. The project sheds light on Al-Ashrafiyah's tangible and intangible assets while introducing potential tourist attractions based on narrating stories throughout the trail. This trail manifests in the *Al hara* experience (Live the locals' life) while emphasising the cultural heritage through physical and non-physical interventions. For example, improving the condition of public spaces in the area, or empowering local women to profit from their handmade artefacts. It strives to revive Al-Ashrafiyah's heritage by creating suitable conditions for long-term sustainable tourism and development process, by firstly, allowing the local residents to be part of the project and benefit from it. Secondly, it aims to attract the state and municipality's attention to develop the area that would lead to the revival of the local economy of its residents.

¹⁵⁸ Jabal (جبل), translated in English to mountain. Al-Ashrafiyah area is usually called Jabel Al Ashrafiyah, like many other areas in Amman. This is because Amman extends over twenty mountains. Among its most important mountains are the top seven, namely Jabal Al-Qusour, Jabal Al-Jawfa, Jabal AL-Taj, Jabal Al-Nuzha, Jabal Al-Nasr, Jabal Al-Ashrafiyah, Jabal Al-Nathif and Jabal Al-Akhdar.

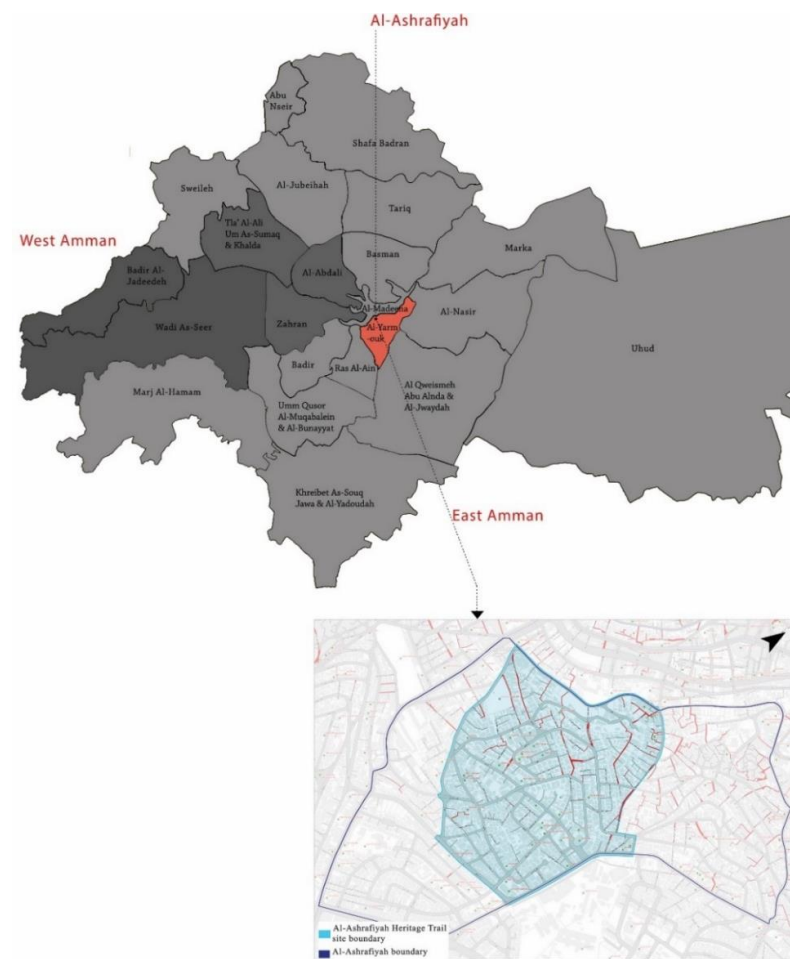


Figure 7.9: Al-Ashrafiyah and the Heritage Trail site location. (Author)



Figure 7.10: Panoramic view from the Hara initiative office. Source: Author, 2021



Figure 7.11: Views from Jabal Al-Ashrafiyah. Source: Author, 2021

Moreover, the project endeavours to cultivate a sense of ownership and responsibility among the residents by actively involving them. It also seeks to ensure its sustainability by encouraging the participation of local residents and generating economic benefits through the project, for example, by providing support to residents in the form of various small business opportunities, such as providing local food for tourists from the residents' own kitchens, allowing them to gain some profit. Another example is selling the tourists handmade crafts, clothes and antiques. In addition, some residents were offering their houses for residency and hospitality for a low price compared to the prices of hotels. Therefore, catalysing enhances their livelihoods and elevates the local economy.

To conclude, this section introduced two different grassroots organisations working in the Jordanian public realm. Their methodologies are a testament to their merely critical point in creating their own counter-cultural market and not directly challenging established structures. Through their work, they try to derail the capitalist structuring by defending (re)producing and protecting the commons. They are committed to developing a system of working that celebrates the local knowledge of their communities and benefits them in the first place. Besides these registered grassroots organisations, there is another form of organisation that has been taking place in Amman, with the same aim as those discussed in this section. These 'grassroots collectives' have many in common with grassroots organisations, for example, they are also self-organised focusing on small-scale interventions and changes, however, they are more experimental and organic forms of activism that enable creating spaces for people to participate in issues that concern them regarding their cities. In order to capture the full picture of bottom-led spaces of participation in the Ammanis context, it is crucial to understand the different forms of practising participation and the type of actors enabling it. The following section will look into

three urban grassroots collectives working on issues around participation and taking action on the ground.

7.4 Urban Grassroots Collectives

This section will explore three collectives that consist of groups of individuals with shared values and objectives (refer to Table 7.1). They have emerged recently in Jordan after the events of the Arab Spring as important actors in urban governance, pushing for greater citizen participation in decision-making processes and advocating for more equitable and sustainable urban development. By working collaboratively to identify and address critical urban issues, these collectives have mobilised communities and promoted collective action, often using innovative and creative tactics to achieve their goals. (See Chapter 5). Interestingly, these collectives work openly under the radar and aim to create networks and connections on many levels to attain their goals. They do not use a language of violence or direct confrontation with the state. Instead, they try to negotiate and mediate between different actors and systems of governance.

This section of the chapter will introduce these urban activists' collectives, exploring the various forms they take and the issues they address before turning to the tactics they use to effect change in Chapter 8. Through this initial introduction and subsequent analysis of three case studies, this chapter and Chapter 8 will highlight these collectives' diverse and complex nature and the potential they hold for promoting spaces of Participation in the city.

7.4.1 Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park

In 2019, a multidisciplinary group consisting of people from different backgrounds and experiences, varying from architects, social mobilisers, designers, educators, researchers, and residents from Jabal Amman, formed a small initiative to focus on questioning the relationship and power imbalances that often underpin the production of public spaces in Amman and recognising the local knowledge of the community members. The group worked to re-design an abandoned neighbourhood park in Jabal Amman by involving the surrounding communities (see Figure 7.12). The idea was developed when a group of educators working at Mutran Private School in Amman noticed that students used an adjacent small park to the school building to play and meet with other students from surrounding public schools. The neighbourhood park, formerly

referred to as NYIT, gained its name in 2009 when the New York Institute of Technology University rehabilitated the vacant area and added seating areas and a kids' playing zone¹⁵⁹. However, since then it has been left in a state of disrepair and abandonment. In addition, the park was predominantly used by adolescents engaging in inappropriate behaviour at night, destroying the play and seating areas (See Figure 7.13). Although, as explained by the initiative team, the parents were dissatisfied with their children using the park due to the potential risks associated with its unsafe condition, they kept using the park for a short period after school hours.

Figure 7.12: Jabal Amman Park site location. (Author)



Figure 7.13: Images from NYIT park before the new intervention. Author, 2021

Commencement

The educators at the school asked architects known in the Ammanis context for their anti-capitalist and participatory approach to researching and designing the city to join them in designing the park. This led to other activists and social workers interested in the area and, more specifically, in the participatory approach to join the team (more details will be discussed in Chapter 8). Thus, the team were interested in re-designing the park with the surrounding local communities to create a sense of ownership and attachment, as most residents who live around the park are immigrants and refugees from Sudan, Somalia, the Philippines and Ethiopia. The initiative sought to extend the relations between the children in the park and include the wider community in creating and utilising public spaces in the city. They were also aware of the city's lack of free public spaces, particularly in East Amman, and the need to create spaces connecting the people and building relationships that strengthen the neighbourhood and sense of community¹⁶⁰. It is noteworthy to mention that the allocation of funding for Jordan's refugee response is predominantly focused on Syrian refugees (Johnston et al., 2019) via the Jordan Response Plan. According to the UNCHR (2022), the capital Amman is home to more than 200,000 Syrian urban refugees, compared to the 4,000 Sudanese refugees in Amman¹⁶¹. Consequently, the state has neither prioritised nor supported other immigrant and refugee projects. The team worked through different creative tactics with the residents and Sudanese refugees to be able to implement their project (as discussed in Chapter 8). As a result, the park was officially opened in April 2024.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with a team member from the collective. Amman, August 2021.

¹⁶¹ Source: ammannet.net Accessed May 2023

Methodology

The group was interested in creating reciprocal relationships with the communities around the park that would build trust and create different relationships between them towards achieving social change. Thus, they started with the idea of carrying informal walks and dialogues to dissolve the barriers and equalise the power dynamics between them and the community. To do this, the team decided to go to the communities around the park instead of inviting them to designed and structured conversations (Abdul Majeed, 2020). According to the team, throughout these informal approaches, the residents spoke and expressed freely their desires, hopes and struggles; they built friendships with the team, including the more marginalised groups (i.e. migrant women). Furthermore, the team mentions being experimental with the informal chats, as one of the members says: *'We didn't plan a specific number of the walks that should be conducted before starting the co-designing sessions. We used to go around the park and talk, share a laugh, sometimes a tear, a meal, or a game, whatever the site offered us.'* (Amman, May 2021). Besides the informal walks, the team used to observe the park on different days and times to document the park activities and the users and their behaviour in the park and mapped out the different physical and social behaviours (see Figure 7.14).

Before starting the co-designing workshops with the communities, the team consulted with GAM, as the public park is now owned by GAM; where they signed a legal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to manage the work between the team – in which several members work at the school next to the park– and GAM. Although the team received a positive verbal endorsement from the mayor in one of their meetings, the GAM official in charge explained to them that they have to consult with many different departments at GAM which might significantly lengthen the process (Abdul Majeed, 2020). In the co-designing workshops, the team explained using a very flexible way in designing and delivering the workshops, to adapt to the nature of the participants involved and to whatever the situations require. In this regard, the team comments on keeping the workshops, less structured and using different methods and tools to suit all the participants involved.

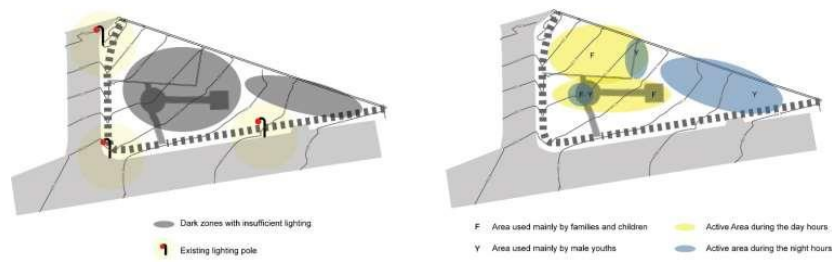


Figure 7.14: Social and Physical mapping of the park. Source: Abdul Majeed, 2020

7.4.2 ‘Mahli’ Initiative

‘Mahli’ (محلي), which translates to ‘local’ in English, represents a local grassroots initiative established by a small cohort of activists and artists in Amman. Their primary aim is to develop a pragmatic critique of the capitalist-driven urban environment in Jabal Lweibdeh (one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Amman, see Figure 7.15) to preserve the area’s cultural, social capital and socioeconomic diversity. Furthermore, they strive to ensure that the benefits of the neighbourhood’s revitalisation extend beyond individuals with higher incomes, for example, the international franchises that have recently opened in the locality.

Jabal Lweibdeh is well known for its vibrant art scene, historic architecture, and lively streets. It has a rich history, with some buildings dating back to the Ottoman era. In recent years, the area has faced rapid development projects that resulted in demolishing or converting many historic buildings into modern apartments and cafes. As a result, many low-income families and residents were forced to leave the neighbourhood and look for more affordable rents elsewhere. This has led to a significant loss of cultural heritage, and community; displacement, social exclusion, and disruption of the neighbourhood’s social fabric (see Figure 7.16). The area has been attracting more high-end projects that only a specific type of people can afford to come to these spaces. For example, tourists, upper-middle class and students from the Arab Gulf have been the regular customers for the new projects in Jabal Lweibdeh. In response, the Mahli initiative aims to preserve historic buildings and public spaces, and advocates for rent control policies, to preserve the unique character of the neighbourhood. They have utilised a multifaceted approach to fight gentrification and enable the residents to have an active role in the rapid changes taking place in the neighbourhood.



Figure 7.15: Jabal Lweibdeh location. (Author)



Figure 7.16: Images of Jabal Lweibdeh, showing the new touristic developments. Source: Jabal Lwiebdeh Facebook Page. (Accessed May, 2023)

Commencement

A local activist who lives in Jabal Lweibdeh started ‘Mahli’ in 2019 with the arrival of Starbucks¹⁶² and Carrefour¹⁶³ in the area. The activist behind the ‘Mahli’ initiative has been advocating for many years issues related to the resident’s rights in the Jabal Lweibdeh in public talks, through social media platforms or around small informal gatherings with residents and shop owners in the area. According to ‘Mahli’ founder, the initiative is the result of many talks,

¹⁶² Starbucks Corporation is an American multinational chain of coffeehouses and roastery reserves headquartered in Seattle, Washington. It is the world's largest coffeehouse chain. In 2022, Starbucks had 29 branches in Amman.

¹⁶³ Carrefour is a French multinational retail and wholesaling corporation headquartered in Massy, France. In 2022 Carrefour had 40 branches in Jordan.

workshops and observations carried out collaboratively with the residents of Jabal Lweibdeh concerning the deteriorating condition of the area. For example, while the area has been attracting high-end businesses and investments, the number of visitors increased dramatically, leading to strain on infrastructure, particularly in terms of parking availability. As a result, streets become congested with vehicles, obstructing pedestrians and causing inconvenience to residents who find their parked cars blocked or inaccessible. The influx of visitors, particularly young men frequenting bars, further exacerbates the issue, generating disturbances within the residential area during late-night parties and social gatherings.

At the arrival of the new international stores, the founder with several volunteers went door-to-door to sign a formal petition refusing the opening of the new businesses; 3000 signatures were collected and handed to the local municipality to be signed and transferred to central GAM. Not only this, but they also went to the Prime Minister's residence and handed him a copy of the petition, explaining how the opening of these businesses would affect tens of local shops and small-business owners. The 'Mahli' founder comments on this: *'We heard from the Heritage Department Committee at GAM that they refused the new modern designs to be resumed and they won't permit these businesses to take place. They were stopped for only six months; it seems the new owner has a big wasta (In English; nepotism) or a big bribe.'*¹⁶⁴

Methodology

'Mahli' is not the only initiative for the activists behind it; she has also, organised many campaigns in Jabal Lweibdeh to foster right-talks in the area. However, throughout these self-organised initiatives and campaigns, the founder perceives them as being experimental whatever the circumstances of the site and political environment allow. For example, they had to stop in the middle of campaigns in the past because of the political situation in Palestine – the Jordanian street often reacts immediately to the situation in Palestine, for example, through protesting. Moreover, they followed some norms when starting any new campaign; they used to first send a petition to the formal authorities in the area to explain the situation and try to solve it formally. The 'Mahli' founder says: *'We believe that we have the right to be heard, even if we don't have any regular council meetings like the western countries. In this case, we just send them a formal paper – usually with the mukhtar, because he is well respected and has some sort of formality to*

¹⁶⁴ Amman, June 2021.

GAM. It is an act to show them that we are aware of what is happening around us. ' Then she continues by explaining how through a participatory approach with the affected communities they try to address the issues in their neighbourhoods. For example, the founder with some residents in Jabal Lweibdeh worked in the past in co-designing a small area called 'Al-Matal'¹⁶⁵ that was used at night only by gangs for drugs and alcohol and causing significant trouble for the residents (see Figure 7.17). The municipality refused the design, as part of the land is private and the municipality does not wish to buy the land from their owners; they also, do not want to fence it as suggested by some of the residents, as a large part of it is considered public open area¹⁶⁶.

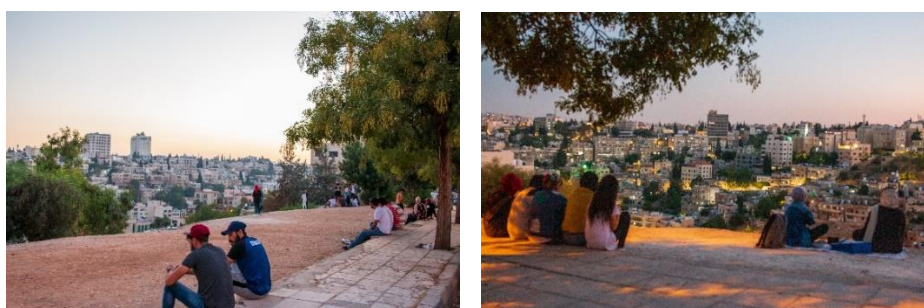


Figure 7.17: 'Al-Matal' view in Jabal Lweibdeh. Source: Yazan Melhem: www.7iber.com (Accessed April, 2023)

7.4.3 'Bader' Initiative

The 'Bader' initiative, which translates to 'initiate(بادر)' in English, is a grassroots effort that aims to fix the poor conditions of roads in the neighbourhoods between Zarqa, a neighbouring city, and Amman (see Figure 7.18). The initiative uses many DIY techniques with donated materials (i.e. sand and cement) from volunteers or small local associations. Zarqa City is located East of Jordan, approximately 22 kilometres Northeast of Amman. With a population of over one million, it is the country's third-largest city and is well known for its large population of refugees settling there for more than 50 years. With the conflict in the neighbouring countries, Zarqa has received refugees from Palestine, Iraq and most recently, Syria, which has burdened the already stagnant financial resources of the municipality and the services provided to residents. Moreover, with a high unemployment rate, Zarqa's vulnerable youth are often stereotyped as disengaged

¹⁶⁵ Al-Matal in English means the overlooking area. In Amman, it is very common to use the high, overlooking areas (on the top of the mountains and hills) for picnicking. However, Al-Matal in Jabal Lwiebdeh was used for Shisha smoking, but also, for inappropriate behaviour like using drugs. These lands could be either public or private lands (in many cases, their owners are living abroad).

¹⁶⁶ Interview with one residents involved in co-designing the Al-Matal area. Amman, September 2021

troublemakers. However, according to the mayor of Zarqa¹⁶⁷, the municipality is working to keep pace with rising demands, escalating after over 100,000 Syrian refugees settled in the city in 2012 (UNCHR, 2023)¹⁶⁸.

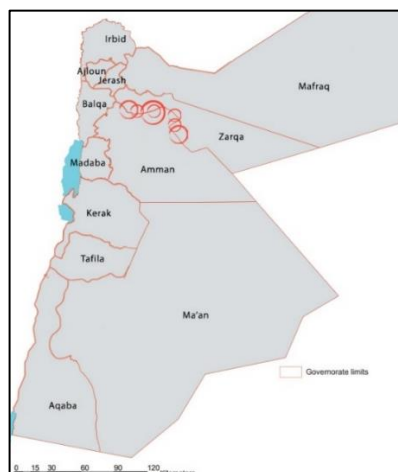


Figure 7.18: Jordan map showing in red circles the areas of ‘Bader’ work between Amman and Zarqa City. (Author)

Commencement

The initiative was born out of frustration with the poor conditions of streets causing much damage to cars and posing safety hazards for pedestrians. The founder used to commute everyday between Amman and Zarqa, noticing the damages and slow response of the municipality regarding the roads. ‘Bader’ initiative believes that the situation in Zarqa was not improving, and the municipality’s slow response was accelerating the problems; the founder claims that there have been potholes in some streets for more than six years and the municipality did nothing, although, people complained formally many times to the local authorities¹⁶⁹. Thus, the ‘Bader’ founder collaboratively with friends and volunteers started to work on small-scale interventions with local resources and tools to change urban situations (see Figure 7.19). Although the founder admits that his work could cause a scandal, because of the fact that he is highlighting many issues and failures of the municipality, he says: *‘No one from the municipality came explicitly rejecting my work, nor supporting it. But there were phone calls from The Royal Hashemite Court and The Crown Prince Foundation asking me for formal interviews, where I accepted them, but I still didn’t hear back from them.’* He also mentions, the Ministry of State Affairs contacting him to offer support

¹⁶⁷ <https://alrai.com/> Accessed, May 2021.

¹⁶⁸ Fact sheets: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/36> Accessed, May 2021.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with the founder of ‘Bader’. Amman, September 2021.

and promising him to help in scaling up the initiative work, by connecting them with the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Culture.



Figure 7.19: Volunteers from Bader Initiative working on fixing a road in Zarqa. Source: ‘Bader’ Initiative, 2021

Methodology

The founder with the volunteers perceives their work as experimental and involves new approaches that involve using simple techniques and local basic materials for fixing the streets and pavement. The founder comments on this by stating the importance of a participatory and collaborative approach with the residents living around the sites of work, not from a charity point of view or simply volunteering, it is a collaborative political response to the many years of municipality failures in providing appropriate infrastructure. He comments: *‘We used to publish everything we do online, via Facebook and other popular platforms, so people would know about us and learn from us. It is a way to say we are active, and we want a better life. A lot of people would call us to either physically volunteer or support us with money or materials.’*¹⁷⁰

To sum up, this section looked at three different initiatives created by grassroots collectives, that are being governed by a common interest rather than an obligation or a formality. Their new, experimental, organic and small-scale interventions, render a vibrant scene taking place in Jordan in the wake of the Arab uprisings. Those collectives happen not to be formally registered due to their preference to be more authentic, spontaneous, and not limited to the Ministry’s laws and regulations. Also, as one of the founders of the initiatives says: *‘The paperwork and reports that*

¹⁷⁰ Interview with the founder of ‘Bader’. Amman, September 2021

*have to be submitted to the ministry is time-consuming and exhausting*¹⁷¹, whereas most of those working and volunteering with the previous initiatives have already full-time jobs, including the co-founders.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter briefly explored the type of work done by the new grassroots organisations and urban collectives in Jordan in order to situate some of the issues discussed in previous chapters and to explore the specific context and events that nurtured the fertilisation of their work. While the aforementioned five collectives vary in their interests, structures, and organisational approaches- (i.e. the formal registration of grassroots organisations with the Minister of Social Development or as for-profit entities) in contrast to the lack of registration for urban collectives-they share a common objective. Both entities seek alternatives for urban practices and beyond, engaging in collaborative experimentation with urban residents within a more egalitarian framework. While grassroots organisations aim to sustain their projects and initiatives by being officially registered, others are more organic, where they lay their independence on a common interest that might arise very spontaneously.

These bottom-up approaches to participation in citymaking are infused with a certain type of activism and do things that allow them to seek more independent and novel outreach. Although these emerging forms of civil society still face restrictions and limitations, as discussed in Chapter 4, and shown in this chapter, they do not tend to confront the state politically. The next chapter will explore their forms of acting to survive and sustain their actions in a restrictive political context. With this in mind, specific questions can be formulated to unsettle ideas of ‘invented’ participation and examine the ambiguities of the concept, particularly in restrictive, authoritarian regimes to better understand the nature of public participation in Jordan. For instance, how do these practices of so-called participation subvert the structures of power and processes of exclusion? How are these practices accommodated within the authoritarian state-institutional structure? In addition, what happens when they face state technologies and strategies? In the context of bottom-up participation, the tensions and the dynamic of power seem very little explored in authoritarian contexts like Jordan, particularly in the aftermath of events like the Arab

¹⁷¹ Online interview, December 2021.

Spring. Considering this, the next chapter will explore the different tactics and ways of acting and surviving of these collectives described above.

Chapter 8 Between ‘Invited’ and ‘Invented’: Tactical Participation

8.1 Introduction

The so-called Arab Spring, as discussed in Chapter 4, indicates the potential of the ‘social non-movement’ (Bayat, 2013a). This concept relies on ‘collective action’ through the ‘fragmented but similar activities’ of ‘non-collective actors’ who lack ‘formal’ organisation (Bayat, 2000, p. 15, 20), to become the base for actions that could create the form of collective action (Ismail, 2006). This chapter contends that this historical moment of the Arab Spring has also fuelled a re-imagining of the relationship between citizens and the state. The notion of ‘quiet encroachment’ cannot be underlined as ‘a politics of collective demand-making’ (Bayat, 2002 p. 22) nor as a silent, passive act; it is a ‘mix of individual and collective actions...that is tolerated in practice as long as it appears limited, but once it goes too far, governments often react.’. This persistent and self-generating activism occurs at the level of everyday life to challenge the dominant power structures in subtle ways rather than direct confrontation¹⁷². Yet critically, most of the everyday life scholarship in the Arab region focuses on the binary between resistance and coping mechanisms and propositions to support their survival, often viewed from the narrow constraints of the state and a small elite that is not constitutionally responsible for the body of the people (Martínez, 2018)¹⁷³.

This chapter, in line with the overarching aim of this dissertation to understand public participation in citymaking in the case of Amman, aims to explore the grassroots organisations’ new modes of working and their challenges to participate in the production of urban space in

¹⁷² See the work of (Scott, 1990a) on everyday forms of resistance.

¹⁷³ See also the work of (Gerges, 2016; Charles, 2013; Ismail, 2013; Ryan, 2015)

Amman. Focusing on the organisations introduced in Chapter 7. This chapter looks at the practices of these organisations beyond the dichotomous lens of formal/informal, state/civil society, revisionary/ passive or ‘invited’/‘invented’ participation that often categorises urban politics and planning work and theory. Instead, this chapter is interested in participatory actions, which may neither directly resist nor go under the radar but do something in between (as discussed in Chapter 9). It draws on both Lefebvre’s (1997)¹⁷⁴ concept of *everyday and everydayness*, privileging the primacy of human actors’ creativity in their production of the city (Crawford, 2011), and the notion of ‘tactics’ from de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). De Certeau explains the individual ‘way of operating’ in everyday activities that do not seek profits and are not the result of planning but depend on the situations and opportunities as ‘tactics’ (p. xiv). A closer examination of these modes of action and the ways they negotiate, manipulate, and trespass on the government’s power to manage, reveals their transformative agency, not only tracing a shift in the role of grassroots organisations in politically restricted environments as passive or confrontational but offering insights into bottom-up participation beyond the concept of ‘invented’ spaces of participation (Miraftab, 2004). This chapter foregrounds the innumerable ‘minor’ everyday practices that creatively resist and challenge the discursive regime imposed by the dominant strategies of the state represented by GAM and other ministries or by international NGOs (See Chapter 6). Meanwhile, it offers the potential for an alternative vision to be imagined and aspired to that, I would call ‘tactical’ participation. I argue that this approach to public participation is perhaps specific to what Bhan called ‘modes of Southern urban practice’ (Bhan, 2019).

This chapter is organised into four sections. After the introduction, this chapter explores the context of tactics within five different grassroots organisations and collectives introduced in Chapter 8. It discusses their unique way of engaging with participation under the three themes: intervening, negotiating and sustaining. Additionally, this study will specifically investigate the impact on grassroots collectives when confronted with governmental measures aimed at impeding their activities. It will also explore how the unintended consequences of these actions can contribute to the amplification of the agency of these grassroots initiatives.

¹⁷⁴ Translated by Christine LeVich with the editors of Yale French Studies. This essay originally appeared as ‘Quotidien et Quotidienneté,’ in *encyclopaedia Universalis*, vol. 13, ed. Claude Grégory (Paris: *encyclopaedia universalis*, 1972).

8.2 Situating Tactics

This section draws on Michel de Certeau's (1984) notion of 'tactics' to demonstrate the practices of the grassroots organisations used to negotiate power and participation within the context of neoliberal top-down authorities. Driven by everyday politics these activities reveal the further agency of the civil society to subvert the structures of power in Jordan by celebrating the 'achievements of the subalterns' (Perera, 2009). In this way, they generate local contingent knowledge and implicitly establish sites of non-confrontational creative resistance (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 10-11) that shape the politics of participation itself. Through their spatial and social everyday life practices, they produce new meanings of participation, where they aim for a transformative change. As Beard (2003, p. 28) discussed, these small interventions are a way of 'creating a sense of collective agency and the social and political spaces for radical actions'. This section is divided into three sub-sections: to intervene, to negotiate and to sustain represent the actions of tactical engagement as drawn from the research findings.

8.2.1 To *Tactically* Intervene

To tactically intervene means here, stepping in and interfering for the aim of transformative change, whether collectively or individually, without imposing any direct political meaning in confronting the state or the municipality. It is about the nuanced understanding of the political, economic and social context before interfering. Most importantly, it is the understanding of the component of time before bringing people or things together. This means paying careful attention to specific moments and events (i.e., politics, pandemics, etc.) that carry the opportunity to either foster the intervention action or obstruct it. Thus, stepping in by tactically manoeuvring the situatedness of the context and the project. Moreover, such interventions address the significant role of collective agency in supporting the actions undertaken by the grassroots. Intervention (in line with later sections) is explored through the experiences of the different grassroots organisations and collectives described in Chapter 7, revealing an array of tactics demonstrating the potential permanence of bottom-up non-confrontational participation, as shown in the following subsections.

It begins with organisations and collectives taking action by relying on the guise of innocence without arousing immediate resistance or suspicion. It involves a deliberate act of feigning conformity or adhering to established norms and regulations in order to intervene and navigate

systems of control and oppression. In other ways, some grassroots show the ability to capitalise on unexpected or favourable circumstances that arise within the urban landscape. This tactical approach involves seizing opportunities as they present themselves, often in an improvised and resourceful manner. Finally, the attributes of being agile and witty encompass the capacity of grassroots actors to intervene swiftly and intelligently in a constrained environment while at the same time involving quick thinking, resourcefulness, and adaptability without implying resistance.

The Art of Innocence

‘Hundreds of people would wait for hours just to receive one kilogram of bread (khubz ‘arabī) that won’t cost more than sixteen qirshes [Seventeen pence in GBP], this situation lasted for weeks ... people fought over bread when it was delivered by governmental buses in the first days of the lockdown.’ (Ahmad, June 2021, Amman).

Ahmad (a local Jordanian farmer) was trying to explain the COVID-19 lockdown scenes in its first weeks in Amman, carrying his sickle over the golden wheat next to one of the biggest shopping malls in Amman – logos of international franchises – in his casual *dishdasha* دشداشة (kaftan) with the red *shemagh* (شماغ) to protect him from June’s hot sun. He pointed to the prestigious villas around us in one of western Amman’s affluent neighbourhoods. He described how these lands were once wheat fields as Jordan is part of the Fertile Crescent, where wheat was domesticated since Antiquity (see Figure 8.1). Ahmad was not alone; dozens of people reaping the crop accompanied him, part of Al-Barakeh Wheat project promoting food sovereignty, introduced in Chapter 8.



Figure 8.1: Jordanian farmer growing wheat in Amman within the Al-Barakeh Wheat Project. Source: Zikra for Popular Learning, 2021

Due to the shortage of bread production during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 (see Figure 8.2), the project's founders took action to bring people together to (re)-produce local flour. For the founders, this was an urge, a cry to collectively reclaim the people's food sovereignty by creating a network of self-cultivated native wheat lands in vacant urban lands to '*liberate food and rebuild the relationship with the land and the society*'¹⁷⁵. While acknowledging the Jordanian import dependency and its political circumstances, the founders were more worried about the country's stability¹⁷⁶ in the future. They are, however, not creating spaces to challenge the state directly. As one of the participants puts it: '*We are only baking bread with our own wheat from our own lands*' (Amman, May 2021). Their skilled reclaiming of local knowledge while broadly applying it makes local wheat production possible. They defy governmental regulations by tactically manipulating a realm of ordinary activity and coding their productions with political meanings.

Al-Barakeh Wheat project is therefore an example of tactical confrontation with the state. Legally, the organisation adheres to governmental regulations without breaking any rules theoretically. Yet, they do not passively accept them; instead, they change the mode of confrontation. Thus, Zikra, the organisation facilitating the project, avoided asking the government for vacant public land for cultivation. Instead, they have directly taken action and started to grow wheat in the city by securing land from private owners. The use of private land was one of the tactics to avoid state control over the project that would have potentially caused disruptions in wheat production. The absence of power, in this case, the state power, is their tactic's strength (de Certeau, 1984).



Figure 8.2: Left: People waiting to buy bread from one of GAM's buses. Right: inside one of GAM's buses used to distribute bread during the pandemic's first days in Amman. Source: GAM, 2020

In the same sense, the 'Bader' initiative, also outlined in Chapter 7, claims that their work to fix the roads and pavement conditions is not charity; rather, it is a tactic offering a continuous legal

¹⁷⁵ Interview with the founders of the project, Amman, August 2021

¹⁷⁶ A recent report published by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace found 53% of Jordanians are vulnerable to food insecurity. For more see <https://carnegieendowment.org>

technique to forge new change. In this context, the ‘Bader’ initiative intervened creatively and innocently, to address infrastructure limitations (see Figure 8.3). While the initiative demanded solutions from the municipality, which was too slow or too ineffective to provide them, they also sought to take action. They worked with existing local resources to repair the streets as an act of non-confrontational resistance and as a step to ‘take from themselves rather than [working] against the enemy’ (Marsh & Śliwa, 2022, p. 477). This resonates with the literature on non-confrontational resistance, as Dudouet (2008) points to the ‘contentious techniques for the prosecution of necessary conflicts, to the point of resolution’(p. 6). They claim their ‘basic’ and ‘innocent’ acts do not confront the municipality’s failure to fulfil its duties; instead, they tactically highlight them by doing it for them. The founder notes, ‘By doing this, we can explicitly tell the municipality that we are only helping you, but also that you have failed in doing your job.’ (Amman, interview, July 2021). In this sense, the art of innocence can be seen as a tactical approach to intervening in complex social and political dynamics. This tactic involves embracing a perspective of innocence or naivety to step in and act to question established norms.



Figure 8.3: ‘Bader’ volunteers working in a street between Amman and Zarqa. Source: ‘Bader’ initiative, 2021

Opportunistic

In 2021, the Hara initiative members agreed to accept a small fund from USAID¹⁷⁷. ‘*Muttarreene مضطرين*’ (we had to), the founder said, and continued¹⁷⁸: ‘*What can we do? We had no other alternative; we tried many ways to make this initiative work, but people started to lose faith. We cannot simply expect them to keep paying from their own pockets*’. The members of the Hara initiative have been working in Al-Ashrafiyah for more than 15 years without receiving any

¹⁷⁷ The USAID under the SCHEP programme funds local actors in Jordan to develop their own enterprise to manage and benefit from their cultural heritage. For more details see <http://usaidschep.org/en> Accessed: 2 May 2023

¹⁷⁸ Interview with the founder of Hara Initiative in Amman, August 2021.

external funds, as they tried to eschew relying on donor money to maintain credibility and authenticity. However, the Hara team acknowledge the difficulties of sustaining this type of work, particularly in low-income communities like the ones in eastern Amman. While keeping in mind the difficulty of the economic situation in Jordan after the COVID-19 pandemic, they also acknowledge the vital role of tactical interference in such an environment. According to the initiative, the donor's money is a tactic to implement part of their vision while quickly getting approvals from the state under the USAID umbrella. Tactically, the initiative invented a project: The Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail, to apply for a fund from the USAID that targeted the heritage sites in Jordan¹⁷⁹. They recognise the funding as an opportunity to focus on conserving heritage sites in Al-Ashrafiyah and use the fund to improve the local economy and social cohesion in Al-Ashrafiyah by creating sustainable tourism. The initiative is aware of the INGO approach in prioritising short-term studies, reports, and guidelines rather than on-site implementations.

Thus, they explain that the Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail is part of their wider project of collaboratively reviving the concept of *hara* (see Chapter 7) based on concepts of care. However, their tactical approach in asking for funds is an example of the 'art of the weak' – to quote de Certeau (1984) – as it depends on time and opportunities in the least expected places. The Hara team realised the urge to interfere in this dire economic environment in Amman; thus, they turned this funding opportunity to benefit their *hara*. Although they lack the view of the whole and cannot proceed with further planning after the fund ends, they use the funding to act, even if it means transgressing the international organisation's rules. Despite the apparent differences between Zikra's and Hara's intervening actions, Zikra founders find time crucial in taking action. COVID-19 paved the way for a less constrained relationship with structures of power through organisations initiating practices based on people's needs¹⁸⁰. In parallel, the people were self-motivated by the events happening worldwide; together, they embraced empathy, compassion and a sense of solidarity. As claimed by the founders, although there will never be a perfect time to intervene, the COVID-19 situation fertilised an opportunity for action.

Similarly, the Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park collective intervened in gathering the communities around the NYIT Park to talk, listen and imagine a better public space to serve them

¹⁷⁹ USAID provides funds for social enterprise in Jordan as part of its vision to develop sustainable cultural heritage through funding projects that engage with local communities.

¹⁸⁰ For example, allowing small clothing businesses to produce masks, due to the shortage of masks production worldwide.

and address their difficulties. They used the park to meet weekly to discuss their views on the different designs and public spaces generally in the Jabal Amman area. As one of the collective members says¹⁸¹: *‘When we noticed how schools’ children use this neglected park to play and meet, we realised that we should do something; we should work with those who live here and wish to enjoy the little space the municipality is offering’* (see Figure 8.4). The collective stressed that they utilised the opportunity of GAM’s plan to rehabilitate several public parks in Amman¹⁸². They perceive their intervention as explicitly supporting the municipality while at the same time working against it. In this sense, the collective used to meet with GAM and engage in dialogue, offering knowledge-sharing on participatory design and further collaboration. Simultaneously, the collective employed tactics that challenged the constraints imposed by the municipality (as discussed throughout this chapter).



Figure 8.4: Meetings and workshops carried away in the NYIT Park. Source: The founders of the collective, 2021

Agile and Witty

In a small old office, only large enough for a messy desk, a few chairs, an old wooden wardrobe, and books piled everywhere, the cracking door allowed me to squeeze into the room to meet the founder of Hara Initiative. There was nothing fancy about the neglected building either, but what captured my interest was the closed doors of a multi-million-JOD public community centre next to Hara’s office located in the Al-Ashrafiyah district in the eastern part of Amman, in one of the most densely packed areas, known for its diminished quality houses and deficient infrastructure. Both centres (Hara and Al-Ashrafiyah Community Centre, which is part of GAM) are located next to each other (see Figures 8.5 and 8.6). They seem to carry the same purposes as indicated

¹⁸¹ Interview with the co-founder of the collective; she is also an educator at Al-Ahliyyah and Mutran School. Amman, April 2021

¹⁸² GAM website: https://www.ammancity.gov.jo/ar/news/news_archives.aspx. Accessed: 6 May 2023

by the word ‘community’ in their titles. However, I rarely observed any community activity in the fancy building next door during my six months of voluntarily working with Hara.

Although the founders of Hara have been working in various available shared places, without committing to a fixed office, in 2020 the founders sought to rent an office next to GAM’s community centre. They perceive the initiative’s new location as a tactical statement confronting GAM, specifically, the official employees working next door in the community centre. As described by the team, the centre is mostly empty, and it is unclear how the multi-million community centre is involving or collaborating with people in the neighbourhood to create communal cohesion, as the municipality claims. Moreover, the project has been criticised over time for not fostering a public space for the communities. Instead, because of its current unpopularity, it has transformed into a space where disruptive and unacceptable conduct thrives, impeding the development of harmonious relationships and shared experiences among diverse individuals within the space¹⁸³. GAM’s failed project became Hara’s opportunity to showcase its approach and initiative.

In their new project (Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail), the Hara initiative tactically planned how to use USAID’s funding in a way to benefit the local people of the *hara*. For example, the fund was not only spent on salaries for researchers and social mobilisers or renting luxury conference rooms for meetings (the way most funds are spent). Instead, local researchers and social workers were recruited from the local area of the project, Al-Ashrafiyah, who held considerable knowledge about the area and expedited the participation process. Furthermore, the meetings were held on the project site, in the *hara*¹⁸⁴, thus allowing many forms of participation to be sensed and imagined together, for example, creating games with children, and cleaning the *hara* with residents or informal group meetings over lunch (see Figure 8.7). Their calculated actions allowed them to bypass USAID regulations by inviting everyone to participate and not limiting it to a small number of people in participatory activities taking place on the streets. By trespassing the rules of the organisation (USAID, in this project), the active participation and the on-site activities turned out to be more than a phase within the project as initially requested by USAID. (See Appendix M).

¹⁸³ Local newspapers and social media platforms (i.e. Facebook). Also interviews with residents living around the park. (Amman, June 2021) <http://www.alshahidonline.net/index.php?page=article&id=2781> Accessed: 5 May 2023. <http://www.jordanzad.com/print.php?id=134178> Accessed: 5 May 2023.

¹⁸⁴ People used to voluntarily offer their houses, private gardens, rooftops or their shops for holding the meetings.

In a like manner, the ‘Mahli’ initiative seized the opportunity presented by the arrival of another international franchise in Jabal Lweibdeh to intervene publicly without explicitly taking the form of a protest against the authorities. Instead, they formed small groups in front of the new businesses to talk with the users; offering them alternative local business options and sharing the histories and stories of these local enterprises and their deep-rooted relationship with the neighbourhood and its residents (see Figure 8.8). Moreover, they created an online platform to map the different stories of these local businesses and printed posters and leaflets of the small enterprises in Jabal Lweibdeh that are fighting the rapid gentrification crawl. ‘Mahli’ shows the significance of taking small actions creatively on a micro-scale level without aiming to disrupt wider systems. These acts stimulated a sense of responsibility towards their neighbourhood and raised their awareness about local issues. ‘Mahli’ acts of intervention; aim to lead to a different and more ethical understanding of spatial practice in Jabal Lweibdeh, as they look at understanding the spaces within Jabal Lweibdeh as open for negotiations to reclaim their rights. Therefore, the empowered residents collaboratively composed a formal petition to the city mayor calling for the cessation of building permissions for new developments in the area.



Figure 8.8: Left: ‘Mahli’ leaflet prints posted around the Jabal Lwibdeh area. Right: Residents talking and learning the history of the local businesses. Source: ‘Mahli’ Initiative, 2021

These interventions don’t try to challenge the state directly, as they realise the political consequences of *confronting the authorities*, as claimed in Miraftab’s (2004) definition of ‘invented’ spaces. This is witnessed in light of the events of Arab uprisings and their subsequent demonstrations, which have precipitated escalated levels of violence and the emergence of politically hostile and contentious environments. Instead, they play on varying degrees of independence, trickery and innocence. They defy governmental regulations by tactically manipulating a realm of ordinary activity and coding their productions with political meanings through their skilled reclaiming of rights, community cohesion and social capital. This could be

by either intervening in a naïve, trickery way by seizing on opportunities and making the most dynamic and unpredictable approaches or by utilising quick and creative acts to intervene within existing power structures. In order to practice this tactical approach, these interventions always take place through negotiation and mediation, through a continuous manoeuvre ‘within the enemy’s field of vision’, (Von Bulow quoted in De Certeau, 1984, p. 37) and a continual search for being ‘opportunistic’. The following sub-section underpins the manoeuvres and continues negotiations that these grassroots inhabit to forge their aims.

8.2.2 To *Tactically* Negotiate

Born of necessity, the tactical actions described in the previous section lay claim to a specific terrain through direct, purposeful and collaborative actions that play within various levels of power. To be able to practice participation, these practices continually negotiate fields of power to make their actions in the city possible. They aim to render the spaces of participation as terrains of negotiations; thus, they refuse to mould their actions within the ‘invited’ spaces nor the ‘invented’ spaces of participation. This fluidity is their guarantee to fill a certain gap, and their negotiation is ‘a practice of finding one’s way, rather than assuming a fixed position’ (Simone, 2023, p. 354).

Transgressing

At the Hara project, the founders hoped over the years to gain support from the state; they recognise that the state is key and is much needed in their work regarding approvals, permissions, and funds. While they could not convince the state to embrace Hara’s vision, they decided to cultivate relations with the residents and international donors and negotiate and mediate power via their relations with GAM. The founders hoped to gain some support from the state after gaining ‘formality’ while working with a well-established NGO like USAID. This meant ‘*Hope for people, hope for Hara*’¹⁸⁵. The project’s purposeful navigation between the state and the international NGO is also a way to disrupt the state’s regulatory planning system without directly challenging its order. However, this does not prevent the project from imposed decisions or dramatic changes from the powerful side of the donor (USAID, in this case).

¹⁸⁵ Interview with the founder of Hara Initiative in Amman, April 2021.

For instance, the USAID fund was limited to only providing a study for the potential of creating a heritage trail in the area that could be sustained by the residents who will benefit from it. However, to overcome the rules of donor-funded projects in less developed countries, which only propose frameworks without any on-ground actions, the initiative used the connections and spaces they were allowed to enter because of their partnership with USAID to negotiate other needs, such as requesting GAM to clean vacant, abandoned land to be temporarily transformed into public areas for residents (see Figure 8.9). After all, the Hara initiative has chosen not to contest the legitimacy of GAM or other state institutions directly; their tactical manoeuvre is to recognise GAM's authority as an opportunity to do work that will improve people's living conditions.



Figure 8.9: GAM's vehicles cleaning one of Hara's project sites: the abandoned areas in Al- Al-Ashrafiyah Source: Hara Initiative, 2022

In this context, the Hara initiative sought to build a constructive relationship with GAM; after 15 years of working independently with the community, the organisation chose to work with 'power' to sustain a long-term transformation process. Therefore, for Hara, it was essential to work with a formally structured, well-recognised body like USAID, which would help them to get funding, access and visibility within the existing power structures. Although, as claimed by the initiative's founder: *'Our continued negotiations with the USAID, regarding our terms, values, methods and process might not nurture other future collaborations with the same organisation, but we had successfully cultivated other relations with members from the municipality'*¹⁸⁶. Therefore, their negotiations enabled them to make decisions with GAM and USAID that allowed people to make choices they did not have a chance at before.

¹⁸⁶ Interview, Amman, August 2021

At ‘Mahli’, the initiative had to negotiate temporary regulations imposed by GAM in the area to respond to their actions (discussed in more detail in section 8.3). Therefore, the initiative participated in the ‘invited’ spaces of participation created by GAM to formally negotiate their needs in the area (see Figure 8.10). GAM, advised by the local architectural office assigned to work on adapting new regulations for the area, asked to have a meeting with local community representatives to discuss the situation of Jabal Lweibdeh. As claimed by the initiative activists: *‘We knew that we could not achieve anything in these spaces, as the decisions are already made, but we had to show and let the municipality (GAM) know that we are here to negotiate our terms. We are using both, our ways and spaces of participation, and the municipalities’ too’.*¹⁸⁷ This specific space might not have offered the answers for the activists and people. Still, it carried other significant negotiations and meanings. For Simone, ‘every place is a node from which lines of flight ensue’ (Simone, 2023 p. 354) and this ‘invited’ space highlighted that people are aware, mobilised, and ready to negotiate their terms. The attendance of a significant number of participants indicated a widespread interest and concern regarding the local context. At the same time, the nature and scope of the discussions demonstrated a genuine commitment to understanding and addressing the pressing issues affecting the area.¹⁸⁸



Figure 8.10: A formal meeting initiated by GAM to discuss the issues arising in Jabal Lweibdeh. Source: ‘Mahli’ Initiative, 2021

Similarly, the activists and social workers at Jabal Amman Park found themselves in the same position of ongoing negotiations with the municipality. The team fully intended to maintain a constructive and robust relationship with GAM; clearly, they are operating on public land owned by GAM. In the end, they are seeking a partnership relationship with the municipality. Thus, when

¹⁸⁷ Interview, Amman, August 2021

¹⁸⁸ Interview, Amman, August 2021

working with the different communities around the park, the team looked at building relations with the Sudanese communities¹⁸⁹, as they were active and seeking to work with the team of activists. However, this was not fully approved by GAM; according to one team member, GAM would prefer to focus on the refugee communities already gaining interest and funds from international cooperation (i.e. the Syrian refugees). However, the team had to tactically involve the Sudanese community without fully addressing their involvement with GAM. As one of the members commented: *'We had to formally highlight the Syrian refugees' involvement during our meetings with GAM. However, the Sudanese communities are the ones who helped design and work this park. But we couldn't openly state that.'* (Amman, May 2021).

Additionally, the group had to use powerful positions they were able to reach to negotiate their terms. For example, to overcome the bureaucratic delays at GAM, which they feared would result in losing trust between them and the communities involved in the project, the group used the high position of one member¹⁹⁰ in the Al-Ahliyyah and Mutran School board to speak to the mayor regarding the project. Although these arrangements and connections might be perceived as acts of nepotism, in this context, they are better perceived as tactics used by the grassroots that depict participation in Jordan.

Mundane Acknowledgment

Although these grassroots organisations and collectives do not necessarily agree with the government and municipality's ways of doing things, they do not tend to contest the status quo explicitly. Contradictorily, they have tried to show their acknowledgement of the formal governance and system in Jordan. They perceive it as a necessity to support their precarity condition. However, this does not mean supporting the state or the municipality fully, instead of showing mundane acknowledgement of recognition. Thus, it will not place them as opponents but as tactical allies to the state. This acknowledgement took various forms, as explained below.

While Zikra for popular learning initially declined one of the minister's requests to join them in harvesting wheat in one of Amman's lands to feature the event on the front page of a local newspaper. This hesitance stemmed from the team's perception that the minister's interest was

¹⁸⁹ The Sudanese represents a significant demographic presence within the local population in the projects' area.

¹⁹⁰ A former member of the House of the Notables.

solely focused on gaining positive publicity and portraying himself as supportive of local initiatives, given his previous lack of response when the organisation sought assistance for the project. Nonetheless, the organisation has shown acknowledgement in other manners. For example, they have asked the support and help from the National Seeds Bank to secure the native local wheat seeds for their project. Although, as claimed by the founders, they could have secured it from any local farmer. However, they had intentionally approached the formal system to acknowledge their support and help to show them that they were not against the state or trying to confront the state's approach to managing food security or sovereignty. This was obvious at the Hara project too, where the co-founders visited the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and called for a partnership to support their new Heritage Trail project as a gesture of acknowledging their efforts in promoting the tourist sites in Jordan. They deliberately asked the ministry to collaborate on the project in a way that the ministry would benefit, too, in terms of promoting their visions of creating sustainable and responsible tourism. Additionally, the organisation would benefit from having them on board and gaining their support in negotiating other terms and needs.

Similarly, the 'Mahli' initiative requested support from the local municipality in Jabal Lweibdeh. They invited them to the site to discuss their concerns and demands and asked them to voice their needs and concerns to the central GAM. As one of the participants puts it: *'We knew that this is only formality and actually they would do nothing to help us, but we had to give them the credibility and trust we have in them.'*¹⁹¹ By engaging the municipality, the initiative tactically positions itself as an active stakeholder in decision-making. It is a way to show the municipality they are open to negotiations and solutions through formal channels. In other words, it allows the initiative to maintain a constructive relationship with GAM.

Through transgressing different power structures, these initiatives engage in purposeful and collaborative actions to claim specific terrains for continuing negotiations. Additionally, they demonstrate a nuanced form of acknowledgement towards the formal governance and systems in Jordan without fully aligning themselves with the state or municipality, instead a way to negotiate the terms and conditions of their wider engagement in making and intervening in the city. The section below discusses the different tactics these grassroots utilise to sustain their interventions and impact.

¹⁹¹ Interview with one participant working with Mahli initiative. Amman, August 2021.

8.2.3 To *Tactically* Sustain

To be able to create social and transformative change, these initiatives experienced both intentional and non-intentional ways to sustain their work. Some faced governmental strategies that aimed to inhibit their actions, and others were more freely independent in carrying out their actions. However, both types are not fully secured in the authoritarian context of Jordan, as the Zikra initiative founders comment: *‘When you work on a micro-scale, the government would applaud for you and fully support you ... but once your wings started to spring, they will run to cut them ... we are still not there yet’*¹⁹². The following paragraphs discuss how these practices while facing the situation of precarity and imbalances, aimed to sustain ‘action’ through everyday acts while forming alliances and partnerships with others.

Local Alliance

Although some of these practices received foreign funding to support their projects, they attempted to create alliances with other grassroots organisations, activists, collectives or interested bodies to address and sustain the participation of various marginalised groups in matters that affect their lives. For instance, Zikra for Popular Learning formed an alliance with interested local bakeries and cafes to sell bread made with 100% local wheat (see Figure 8.11). According to the founders: *‘[This] connects small-scale farmers directly to restaurants and bakeries. Moreover, they receive better prices in comparison to the state prices.’*¹⁹³



Figure 8.11: Local bakeries and supermarkets selling bread and flour made from Al-Barakeh wheat. Source: Qabalan Bakery, 2022

¹⁹² Interview with Zikra for Popular Learning founders. Amman, July 2021

¹⁹³ The Jordanian government was responsible to create an alternative market for the local peasants, after their agreement to import wheat from United States of America. Nevertheless, the government’s exceedingly low price did not yield any profitable returns for the farmers.

The founders have created a new local demand in the city, where people depend on and request buying the new local wheat grown without chemical inputs (Aljazeera, 2022). While the Al Barakeh Wheat Project approached only one local bakery to produce bread made from their grains, many bakeries and restaurants today import their wheat demand from the Al-Barakeh Project (see Figure 8.12).



Figure 8.12: Wheat grinder mill used for the Al-Barakeh Wheat project to grind and crush the wheat produced from the project to be distributed to bakeries and restaurants. Source: Zikra for Popular Learning, 2023

Similarly, the Hara initiative formed alliances with other small-scale, grassroots initiatives to support the Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail project. For example, the ‘Yalla Nela’ab’ initiative (Translated to let’s play in English), which is focused on placemaking and endeavours to reclaim the city with the communities through the power of play, worked with Hara initiative to design the children’s basic play fixtures at the heritage trail site (see Figure 8.13). Moreover, the initiative ‘Yalla Nela’ab’ worked with Hara even after the end of the fund (which was not part of their playing fixtures); they supported the projects’ vision and aligned with their paradigm of thinking in co-creating spaces of care for the children in their case. One member of the Hara initiative comments: *‘Even if we have now a small fund of only (10,000 US dollars), we are building alliances with local grassroots that could form the base for wider projects in the future. Moreover, it would help us sustain and implement more sustainable solutions’*¹⁹⁴. The founders of Hara claim

¹⁹⁴ Interview, Amman, June 2021

that forming alliances is another tactic to force GAM to tolerate their work in the future. This would be achieved by leveraging the support of multiple grassroots and collectives.



Figure 8.13: Left: Outdoor workshops with children to experience the designed games. Right: workshops with children that included co-designing and imagining play areas in their *hara*. Source: ‘Yalla Nela’b’, 2022

This was also observed in Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park, as the team was supported by two other grassroots organisations, ‘Hmazet Wasl’¹⁹⁵ and ‘Playscapes’¹⁹⁶ (see Figure 8.14) both of which have worked in different locations in Jordan to support the people’s right to be involved in making their cities. Therefore, they helped the team at the neighbourhood park to conduct different workshops with the participants involved. For instance, ‘Hmazet Wasl’ supported the project by conducting the ‘7-Jar’¹⁹⁷ workshop (translated to the seventh neighbour in English). The workshop gave the participants (in this case, children who collaboratively worked on designing the park) an opportunity to learn more about their neighbourhood, themselves and the diversity in their city, both on foot and using public transportation. Additionally, ‘Playscapes’ introduced tactical urbanism to the group and supported the idea of co-creating temporary, low-cost, scalable and mobile playing systems to allow the children to test and experiment with them. This would give the children the flexibility to understand, interact and change their designs to improve their functions.

¹⁹⁵ Hamzet Wasel (همزة وصل) is a social venture - a social change lab - that works to revive and enrich the social cultural fabric of urban communities in the Arab region, beginning with Amman and other cities in Jordan’ (Web: Hamzet Wasel, 2014).

¹⁹⁶ ‘Playscapes’ is a local initiative, founded by two Jordanian architects who aim to design a mobile playing system in cities, refugee camps and other environments lacking public spaces in Jordan.

¹⁹⁷ The title comes from a saying, traditionally attributed to the Prophet Mohammad that recommends honouring one’s neighbours including those as far as the seventh neighbour - a reference to the workshop goal of bringing fellow Amman resident’s closer to one another and to their city’s history.



Figure 8.14: Left: Example of ‘Playscapes’ designs at Amman Design Week Exhibition 2018. Source: (dezeen.com website), accessed May 2023. Right: ‘Hamzet Wasel’ team elaborating on their workshop with the participants. Source: Jabal Amman Neighbourhood team, 2021

In this sense, these grassroots organisations and collectives perceive this alliance as a support system that aids in creating a structure for recognising the bottom-up efforts in Amman, in which they hope to contribute to effective future engagement in policy and politics (Post, 2015). In parallel to the previous examples, the ‘Mahli’ initiative sought alliances with the local shop owners and merchants in Jabal Lweibdeh. As a result, the shop owners helped the initiative to compose a formal petition to Amman’s mayor. In addition, they worked collaboratively with the support of the ‘Mahli’ initiative to mobilise the residents of Jabal Lweibdeh to sign the petition to voice their demands.

Everyday Practices

The ordinary everyday life practices mattered for the grassroots organisations and collectives; they are perceived as a source to cultivate resistance and shape the hoped political change (Lefebvre, Moore, & Elliott, 2014). For example, the Hara Initiative focused on the everyday practices of the Hara involved in the Heritage Trail project to challenge the structures that shape their lives. They worked with the people to clean and repair the infrastructure for their *hara*, and plant together; for example, they encouraged them to practice the act of collectively cleaning their *hara* as their grandparents used to do when they lived in small villages and before the introduction of municipalities systems (see Figure 8.15). According to the founder: *‘This is not the residents volunteering for free to clean the hara instead of GAM doing their job. It forms social relationships; it takes care of the environment, the hara, and the people.’*¹⁹⁸ In other words, Hara’s approach invested in small-scale actions that carry the hope for more significant societal

¹⁹⁸ Interview, May Amman 2021

transformations. Besides cleaning, the residents were encouraged to carry out some repairs and fix the infrastructure of the *hara*, such as painting rusty walls, while using local resources from the charity associations in the area.



Figure 8.15: The residents of a *hara* collectively doing different works for their area within the Al-Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail Project. Source: The Hara Initiative, 2021

Hara's approach through the years created a sense of bonding between the different residents; thus, according to the founders, it was easy to mobilise people for the Trail Project, as they had played, cooked, ate, walked, and worked together for many years (see Figure 8.16). This was not only achieved through this project; it was even possible in more challenging times. For example, during COVID-19, the residents of different *hara*(s) offered support, provided basic needs and volunteered to ease the COVID-19 implications in the sense of solidarity that exceeds charity (Gravante & Poma, 2020). The residents asserted that the solid relationships built throughout the years based on care and mutuality that challenge a top-down individualistic neoliberal capitalism made it very easy during COVID-19 to offer the help needed for the most vulnerable residents. As the Hara founder notes: *'In the past 15 years, the residents of the different hara(s), created long-term relationships by working together and doing everything together. They know those in need and what needs they require.'*¹⁹⁹ (see Figure 8.17). With the initiative's help, the residents were assigned to help produce and distribute food baskets, sanitisers, masks and other basic needs, and cook for people in need, for instance, the elderly living alone. Moreover, they have arranged local groups to set up small gatherings for children, the elderly, and people living alone to cope with the impacts of self-isolation. During the first months of the lockdown, they helped more than 500 families²⁰⁰.

¹⁹⁹ Interview, April Amman, 2021.

²⁰⁰ Interview with the Hara Initiative founders, Amman, April 2021.



Figure 8.16: Images showing the activities done collectively in one of the *hara(s)*. Source: The Hara Initiative, 2021

Hara initiative showed that the experience of *hara* is more than mutual help, for example, delivering food, medical care and others; instead, it builds a sense of ‘communality’ and solidarity among the residents that many scholars referred to as the seeds for future democratic revolutions and change (Pleyers, 2020)²⁰¹. More recently, Johansson & Vinthagen (2019) showed the importance of alternative practices from the grassroots in generating social and political change. According to Escobar (2018) and Thompson (2013), these actions of everyday life are the pillars of resistance to global capitalism and top-down systems. This is best captured in Escobar’s words reflecting on the time of the pandemic, ‘It is crucial at this stage to have narratives about other ways of lives, and to have them ready’²⁰².



Figure 8.17: Volunteers from one of the *hara(s)* preparing essentials for people in need during the COVID-19 lockdown. Source: The Hara Initiative, 2021

²⁰¹ This refers to the power of self-organised local groups and networks that stand in solidarity to create alternative ways of living that could create impact on institutional politics.

²⁰² ‘Coronavirus y disputas por lo público y lo común en América Latina’, Online seminar organised by CLACSO, ALAS and ISA, 9 April 2020. <https://youtu.be/pOFQlsesLf8>

The practices at the everyday life scale are an essential part of the Al-Barakeh Wheat Project as well; the everyday practices of growing, harvesting, grinding seeds, baking, and now selling the bread suggest a different mode of criticism and confrontation with the governmental policy. Although most of the participants in the Al-Barakeh Project did not join with a political purpose, this does not imply they have no political dimension. On the contrary, throughout their everyday life, they create other ways of living and building relationships with each other, the land and nature. Salma, a mother who participated with her children in the project's first year, comments: *'We didn't only learn about the importance of sovereignty over food, we built relationships with the land, the plants, the birds and ants, too.'* She refers to the continuous and collective care of the ecology that the founders developed. Al-Barakeh project perceived their everyday practices as a way to maintain the nature and resources which the well-being of the next generations rely on (Davis, 2022). Muna, another participant, comments on the process of growing local wheat: *'We have learned from the farmers not to dig the seeds very deep in the soil, but to leave them just a few inches below the surface. Which allows birds to eat from them.'*²⁰³ This approach stands in stark contrast to the prevailing hyper-individualistic system that we live in.

Moreover, they valued the new public spaces created because of the newly formed relationships among them. The new wheat lands become public spaces for people to gather, eat, play, sing and learn together (see Figure 8.18). In this sense, the project claims to bring new meanings to what is considered 'public space' in architecture and planning in a city like Amman, which lacks public spaces. This is a form of 'production of space' in the sense of Lefebvre (1991) that looks beyond the physical dimension into the social and political relationships that constitute these temporary wheat lands. These spaces resonate with Petrescu's revival of the commons that 'involves a tactical re-appropriation and a collective investment of immediately accessible spaces in order to invent new forms of property and shared living that is more ethical and more ecological' (p. 88) (see Figure 8.19). As discussed by Petrescu, these spatial commons spaces consequently reinvent social, cultural and environmental commons (p. 88).

²⁰³ Interview, Amman, September 2021



Figure 8.18: Different activities are seen at the newly cultivated lands of the Al-Barakeh Project. Source: Zikra for Popular Learning, 2022



Figure 8.19: People working on the newly cultivated lands of the Al-Barakeh Project. Source: Zikra for Popular Learning, 2022

Flexibility and Adaptability

An additional approach devised to maintain the continuity of the grassroots work involved utilising resilient and adaptable tactics to navigate the challenging environments encountered throughout the different projects. The different grassroots perceived their projects as experimental laboratories. For example, the Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park team faced many approval delays from GAM to start the physical interventions. The team leveraged the obstacles encountered as opportunities to foster networking and cultivate relationships among the communities surrounding the park. They utilised the park as a public space to host focused and small-scale events, as illustrated in (see Figure 8.20). The team prioritised working closely with the Sudanese communities, who demonstrated interest in forming a committee responsible for the park's upkeep following the intervention. The team designated these meetings as informal gatherings outside the formal design process that must be shared with GAM based on the signed contract between both parties²⁰⁴. In this instance, the team focused on empowering the Sudanese

²⁰⁴ Since the land is a public property, any design intervention should be approved with a formal contract by GAM and all the parties involved.

communities without requiring approval from GAM. Furthermore, the educators associated with the Al-Ahliyyah and Mutran School collaborated with the institution’s administration to enable public access – only for the communities surrounding the schools and must be arranged before– to the schools’ football fields on Fridays (when the school was not in session). Participants contended that this initiative bolstered their sense of belonging and cohesion.



Figure 8.20: Different activities in Jabal Amman Park before the formal opening. Source: Jabal Amman team, 2021

This is the case for the ‘Bader’ Initiative, too; the founder elaborates on the many complex challenges that required him to constantly adapt to the evolving circumstances. For example, the initiative had to relocate its work sites on multiple occasions because the municipality initiated new construction works on the same sites, disregarding the initiative’s ongoing work. They have also shown flexibility with their resource utilisation approach. They had tried experimenting with the limited available materials to work on their project. This is also the case of the Al-Barakeh Wheat project, as the municipality or private construction companies disrupted their work repeatedly without concerning their crops or newly cultivated lands (see Figures 8.21 and 8.22).



Figure 8.21: Destruction caused by GAM through the construction of a new road in one of the newly cultivated lands for the Al-Barakeh Wheat project. Source: Zikra for Popular Learning Organisation, 2021



Figure 8.22: Destruction caused by GAM by using one of the newly cultivated lands for the Al-Barakeh Wheat project as a dumping area. Source: Zikra for Popular Learning Organisation, 2021s

The initiatives' ability to navigate such challenges and maintain momentum in the face of power is a testament to the importance of micro-scale interventions, horizontal alliances, normalising everyday activities and flexibility in realising forms of non-violent resistance by producing meanings of urban spaces through their spatial and social practices of everyday life (Certeau, 1984) (see Figure 8.23). However, this does not suggest that the state will abstain from attempting to suppress these activities. As articulated by numerous interviewed activists, they are cognisant of grappling with various uncertainties associated with the state's authority and control. Additionally, some activists remarked on the government's inclination to endorse micro-scale initiatives within the city until they begin to exert significant influence. As debated by Bayat (2002), the government will tolerate only small acts, 'but once it goes too far, governments often react' (p. 22). The following section discusses in more detail the uncertainties faced by these practices and what happens to those collectives when faced with governmental strategies to further inhibit their actions.

Organisation	To Intervene			To Negotiate		To Sustain		
	Innocent	Opportunistic	Agile/witty	Transgressing	Mundane Acknowledgment	Local Alliance	Everyday Practices	Flexibility
Zikra for Popular Learning								
Hara Initiative								
Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park Collective								
Mahli Initiative								
Bader Initiative								

Figure 8.23: The Array of tactics used by the grassroots organisations and urban collectives. (Author)

8.3 Participation in Permanent Times of Uncertainty

The five grassroots organisations discussed above showed a new way of interpreting participation that goes beyond ‘invented’ participation by relying on de Certeau’s concept of ‘tactics’ as a framework for understanding bottom-up participation, making that account for Southern modes of practice. Despite the similar approach of the two types of grassroots (as discussed in Chapter 7) in utilising less decisive and ideological approaches to participation, both types of grassroots entail different internal structures to maintain their original goals. On the one hand, Zikra and Hara organisations represent a more structured and grounded structure, where they have worked in the context for many years. Although their work entails episodic moments of tactics, their prolonged action is their guarantee to achieve gains. On the contrary, the grassroots collectives embody a more fragile less-organised spontaneous system, exposing them to more state strategic strictures. This does not mean the organisations could not be subjected to the same strategies and governmental technologies. It is important, however, to note that the distinctions between the two types of collectives are not always clear-cut, and there can be overlaps between them. Some grassroots organisations may face the same restrictions as other more fragile collectives, depending on the circumstances and the matters they address. Nonetheless, in the present, these organisations create pressure that, to some extent, can still be tolerated by the state. The significant public support for Zikra and Hara organisations illustrates their success and acceptance and further puts pressure on the state to tolerate them. Zikra’s co-founder explains that they have become the main wheat supply for tens of bakeries in Amman.

The prevailing political circumstances play a crucial role in the organisations’ ability to tactically and actively navigate and expand their activities on the ground. Thus, time is very crucial for their endurance and survival. Hara’s founder further comments, *‘We cannot simply mobilise the hara, when the general situation is tense, and political restrictions are rendered more visible. In this case, we will be easily convicted as rebellious.’* However, this mode of participation does not look at the need for well-framed strategies to counter the top-down planning in Jordan, as claimed by many scholars (i.e., Brenner, 2017) discussed in detail in Chapter 9. Instead, it is the ‘possibility of things being together without the hint of a system or framework, that things can be with each other without being subsumed into an imaginary of a larger totality...’ (Simone, 2023, p. 357). This does not exclude these lived spaces of representation in generating local non-formal and contingent knowledge and establishing sites of resistance (Lefebvre 1991).

However, some of the collectives mentioned above faced strategic constraints while carrying out their tactical interventions, for example, in response to the ‘Mahli’ initiative’s actions mentioned above, the state enacted temporary legislation prohibiting the issuance of new building permits in Jabal Lweibdeh. Additionally, an architecture and design office was commissioned to develop and revitalise specific zones within the neighbourhood, focusing on preserving the area’s heritage sites. However, these regulations did not extend to the extensive ongoing development projects, significantly altering the area’s identity. Implicitly, the initiative was asked to alleviate their actions, as the new temporary law will preserve their rights and fulfil their requests. A senior municipal official commented on the ‘Mahli’ initiative: *‘They should leave the rest of the work for us; they can rest now. We assured them that the Jabal will be preserved for its residents.’*²⁰⁵

However, no significant progress has been seen over the three years since its implementation in 2020. Instead, recent advancements are occurring, asserting that they were pre-planned before implementing the new law. In addition, the suggested regulations from the architecture and design office are still awaiting approval from the municipality. In the same sense, the Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park collective faced many bureaucratic strictures from GAM, which ended in eliminating their work and transferring it to the school administration near the park. One of the collective’s members explains: *‘We were given many reasons for transferring the project responsibility to the school administration, for navigating bureaucracy between the stakeholders and the community. We had to give it up because we feared losing it all.’* The municipality justified their actions, as it is easier for them to deal with a formal institution such as the school (Part of the team was already working in this school), and this would be only for departmental politics’ sake. However, this side-lined the team and the communities around the park and rendered the school administration representing the municipality in producing and managing the public park in a way that reinforced the rigid system of producing public spaces in Jordan. The community now had to make official appointments to meet with school officials and go through formal procedures similar to those at GAM. On another aspect, the collective lost many alliances with local activists regarding the new rules of work.

Nevertheless, labelling the actions of those grassroots collectives as passive or subaltern resistance is arguably inadequate. ‘Mahli’ and Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park collectives

²⁰⁵ Interview, Amman, May 2021

created new debates and meanings in producing urban spaces by mobilising the wider community's everyday life and social practices.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter proposed an expanded understanding of grassroots participation in Jordan, moving beyond the notion of 'invented' participation towards 'tactical' participation, which holds the opportunity to capture 'certain distinct and unconventional forms of agency ... that do not get adequate attention, because they do not fit into our prevailing categories and conceptual imaginations' (Bayat, 2013 p. 3). These activities, whether hidden or visible, direct or unselfconscious, collective or individualised (Berke, 1997), politically intentioned or not, taking place at the everyday level, hold the potential to re-imagine, challenge and transform 'the urban' (Crawford, 2011). By exploring the participatory lived experiences of grassroots organisations and collectives in Amman, this chapter offers an analysis of the alternative possibilities that could actively initiate the process of social transformation, as acknowledged by Lefebvre, these everyday activities stand on shifting ground but continually offer new potentials (McLeod, 1997).

The practices and spaces of tactical participation are different from both the organised spaces of 'invited' participation and the demonstrative spaces of 'invented' participation. They tend to explore new ways of initiating and sustaining participation beyond 'confronting the authorities' (Miraftab, 2004).²⁰⁶ Moreover, they do not work to 'provide the poor with coping mechanisms and propositions to support survival' (Miraftab, 2004). Instead, they exist between the rebel resistance and acquiescence, posing the possibility of re-imaging the co-existence of diverse power systems and governance structures that foster participation in radical and diverse ways, that deviate from the centre or the norm (Kamal, 2023). This in-betweenness equips those practices to exist and tactically act in the face of power. However, in many ways, these tactics are not visibly directed against the authoritarian regime but are instead more entangled in a 'contingent constellation of practice, milieu and materiality' (Moore, 2005, p. 44) allowing people to reclaim their agency in shaping the city.

²⁰⁶ Quoted from Miraftab definition of 'invented' spaces of participation and citizenship. (Page 1)

The multiple embodied tactics of intervening, negotiating and sustaining by the new grassroots organisations and collectives described above (and similar to other organisations in Jordan) provide a fresh understanding of public participation that functions within relational, dynamic and mobile agencies. Thus, tactical participation is a way of doing participation without constituting straightforward forms of subaltern resistance or acquiescence with a governmental apparatus. Instead, they coexist with and subvert the existing system of power by building resilient social systems that can act within or alongside other systems, thereby providing avenues to bypass various barriers. Their opportunistic, witty, innocent, agile, self-organised, indefinite practices act together without being imagined in a larger totality (Simone, 2023).

Chapter 9 The Agency of Tactical Participation: Towards a Coexistence of Diverse Modes of Governance

‘And he who would not languish amongst men must learn to drink out of all glasses, and he who would keep clean amongst men must know how to wash himself even with dirty water.’

(Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1994 [1883], p. 145)

9.1 Introduction

This dissertation started with the overarching goal of understanding the different approaches to public participation in the authoritarian context of Jordan, specifically in Amman after the Arab Spring. To do so, the previous empirical chapters (5, 6, 7 and 8) focused on analysing the actors and case studies taking place within the two different approaches to participation – state-led, top-down participation and the bottom-up approach to participation – and the actors involved in both processes and spaces. This discussion chapter brings the empirical findings into a conversation to provide an integrated analysis of public participation conditions in Amman. Additionally, it proposes an analytical lens for understanding participation practices beyond the binaries of ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ spaces, emphasising the dynamic coexistence of governance structures, through which participation can be shaped and imagined in authoritarian contexts of the Global South.

This chapter is structured to answer the research questions. Following the introduction, the first section addresses the first three research questions and further reflects on the failure of spaces of ‘invited’ participation to achieve their goals. Answering the fourth and fifth research questions related to so-called ‘invented’ participation, the following section argues for a new mode of participation practice in authoritarian contexts of the Global South, termed ‘tactical participation’. Section 9.4 proposes a new structure of governance for participation derived from the spaces ‘in-between’. This mode of governance could enable and enact radical hopes in restrictive political environments, allowing other organisations to exist, interact with and shape the different spheres

of governance and participation. The last two sections, which aim to answer the sixth and last research question, reflect on the methodological approach of this research in decolonising the imagination of participation to open new productive dialogues that speak back from situated contexts and experiences. It does so by first looking at the practice of *makāna* as an interstitial movement that pushes this research to activate ‘action’ and ‘doing’ and finally by reflecting on conducting a Southern research to understand ‘public participation’.

9.2 A Critique of the ‘Invited’ Participation in the Authoritarian Context of Amman

This section analyses how the case studies in Chapter 6 add to conceptual debates about the tyranny of ‘invited’ spaces of participation in citymaking, particularly in the restrictive Global Southern contexts of the Arab region. Moreover, it will help understand the failure of these spaces to promote the democratic engagement of citizens in the decision-making process. To do so, the present section deals with a granular analysis of how the approach is generated and impacted by the actors involved and an explicit interrogation of the relationships between the different actors in urban settings characterised by exclusion and patronage. Drawing on Cornwall’s (2004) concept of space, as discussed in Chapter 2, which is itself grounded in Lefebvre’s (1991) conceptualisation of spaces as social constructs shaping and (re)shaped by specific societal perspectives, a better comprehension of the dynamics of the participatory process can be achieved. This framework views spaces as acts of power, providing insights into both the positive and negative effects of power. This is useful for understanding how the actors use these spaces to negotiate power that either enhances or undermines the process of participation. To this end, the section deals with three key facets that have influenced the participation process and its outcomes: the complex interplay between participatory processes and the broader political machinery governance, the impact of foreign funding and the performative dimensions of negotiations.

9.2.1 The Complex Interplay Between Participatory Processes and the Broader Political Machinery of Governance

Chapter 4 of this dissertation delved into the different approaches, which could be seen as survival strategies, undertaken by the Jordanian government to ostensibly initiate a political liberalisation that would enhance legitimacy in a context of prolonged economic and political crisis (Wiktorowicz, 2000). However, these new legal frameworks towards democracy, decentralised

governance or participation do not suggest a significant transfer of political, administrative or fiscal competencies to lower tiers of government (OECD, 2017b)²⁰⁷. In fact, they sustain a largely concentrated day-to-day service delivery system while giving a more active role in the development process to local non-governmental stakeholders. The government thus remains a unitary state with a high degree of political, administrative and financial centralisation. In such a centralised system, planning is detached from citizens' needs, and civil society has no substantial political impact on the Jordanian government (Conrad, 2017). Notably, the state claims that the new participatory schemes in planning, funded and initiated by foreign donors and international agencies, are part of the new legal framework of mandates and procedures of citizen-centred governance and not merely a response to donors' pressure to adopt participatory schemes.

The structural and contextual constraints in Jordan pose a challenge within the evolving dynamics of the recently established 'invited' spaces of participation. These spaces are inherently fraught with numerous challenges that have impeded the realisation of their objectives, as detailed in Chapter 6. Furthermore, Jordan's exclusionary urban political milieu acts as an additional hindrance instead of fostering the enhancement of public participation endeavours. According to the non-state actors involved in this process, GAM's official actors are not used to practising public participation in any other formal activity; no legal or institutional reform is sufficient to oblige them to practice participation. Thus, it is more obvious to the people that public participation is only a tool for delivering the donors' vision.

In these 'invited' spaces, while individuals expressed concern about urban inequalities and emerging planning issues, their primary focus extended to broader urban governance matters that transcend the scale of individual projects. In the interviews, people recurrently referred to the King Abdullah discussion papers²⁰⁸ or the Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law, which promises government restructuring towards a commitment to decentralisation development through public participation. However, many scholars underline the need to pay attention to the broader political arena and balance of power within which such participatory and deliberative practices are conducted (Pieterse, 2003; Gaventa, 2004). Much of this literature was born in the

²⁰⁷ Beside the survival strategies discussed in Chapter 4, in 2015, Jordan initiated the Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law to improve public governance. The establishment of elected governorate and local councils has generated elevated expectations regarding the enhanced responsiveness of public service delivery to the specific needs of local communities. For more, see OECD (2017b).

²⁰⁸ For more, see: <https://kingabdullah.jo/en/vision/discussion-papers>.

apartheid system of South Africa, with highly polarised party politics and weak governments (see, for example, Horn, 2021; Lipietz, 2008; Robinson & Friedman, 2007). The present research adds to this debate by shedding light on the authoritarian, postcolonial monarchy of Jordan, which combines a weak civil society, corrupt bureaucracies and a strong, despotic internal government that holds the power to suppress any endeavours that may pose a threat to the stability of the monarchy. It shows that coercion and discipline remain critical to the Jordanian state's exercise of power in the 'invited' spaces of participation²⁰⁹ as part of Hashemite authoritarianism and survival strategies. Hence, the shortened format of the participatory procedure potentially aligns the emerging 'invited' participation spaces in Amman with certain more 'tyrannical' critical evaluations of participatory deliberative processes. This implies that participation may result in 'illegitimate and/or unjust uses of power', as Cooke and Kothari (2001, p. 14) suggested.

9.2.2 The Impact of Foreign Funding

The donor-initiated 'invited' spaces of participation in Amman underscore the potential depth of tensions and conflicts inherent in such processes. The cases show that INGOs did not seek to challenge the recipients' overarching structure and political status quo. Instead, their strategies were project-centric and focused on micro-urban settings. This is evident in their approach of suppressing local voices, including those of engaged civil organisations, when advocating for increased municipal involvement. The INGOs consistently sought to channel the public's goals and needs towards what aligns with the preferences of the funders. Throughout the process, none of the civic organisations were explicitly critical of the planning system and governance at GAM²¹⁰. Consequently, the INGOs maintained control over the structure and framework of the participation process, allowing social mobilisers limited autonomy to design their participatory frameworks, such as workshops and focus groups.

This corroborates numerous arguments in the literature that underscore the potentially detrimental role of external funding in fostering the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of civil society organisations and social movements (Jenkins, 1987; Piven, 1974; Skocpol, 2003). The social mobilisers found themselves compelled to dedicate significant time to report writing and process documentation, diverting their energy and motivation away from their constituents towards

²⁰⁹ For example, the decision to paint the walls in the Staircase No.7 project was made without consulting the project executors or the relevant stakeholders, in addition to the many unkept promises to the participants (see Chapter 6).

²¹⁰ At least not in the presence of the INGOs.

completing measurable tasks (Biggs & Smith, 2003; Gibson et al., 2005; Honig & Gulrajani, 2018; Mosse, 2005). Furthermore, as the INGOs took the lead in designing the structure for the spaces of participation, their approach was characterised by a vertical organisational structure, lacking attempts to establish horizontal, fluid connections among actors. Instead, the INGOs assigned distinct tasks and responsibilities to each actor within the prescribed setting and timeframe, transforming all involved actors into professionals oriented towards the project outcomes. This approach notably disrupted the operations and mandates of various actors as collaborative efforts to facilitate the participatory approach were lacking. Moreover, this exacerbated the divide between the participants and the social actors, eroding faith and hope in local civic organisations, which were once seen and imagined beyond formal employees of the INGOs or the government. This was especially clear when the INGOs enlisted local NGOs²¹¹ as social mobilisers responsible for activating and organising communities around the project sites, with very structured contracts that highly limited their agency.

Further, INGOs in Jordan typically employ foreign staff members who temporarily travel to the designated project countries to implement the projects. Notably, a segment of the team comprises local professionals, such as architects, planners, social workers or ‘participatory consultants’. According to the donors and their representatives on the site, ‘by including this “local” element, we are trying to be closer to the people, thus avoiding the pitfalls of agencies working in the developing world’²¹². Although the INGOs and donors claim to have departed from a participatory development²¹³ approach, the highly controlled process of participation in both case studies suggests otherwise. Nevertheless, some of these local Jordanian teams advocated for a more genuine and engaged process of participation (see Chapter 6). Their grasp of the contextual nuances prompted them to incorporate social mobilisers renowned for their proactive engaged practices. However, this was not always the case, as discussed in Chapter 6: the INGO bureaucratic, top-down system pushed some of the local team away from the projects. In this sense, the circulation of the local ‘elite participatory consultants’ benefited the process of participation. The next section explores the various negotiations and tensions that arose with the

²¹¹ Most local NGOs in Jordan are used to working as professionals, detached from the grassroots (see Chapters 5 and 6).

²¹² Interview with a project coordinator at GIZ. Online, September 2021.

²¹³ Participatory development, as commonly understood, involves delegating the implementation of specific development activities to a designated subset and granting the beneficiaries of these activities varying degrees of decision-making power in selecting and designing project activities (Lundy et al., 2007; Cornwall, 2008).

inclusion of activist social mobilisers in the ‘invited’ spaces, a dynamic facilitated by the local team.

9.2.3 Performative Dimensions of Negotiations

As previously illustrated, this research extends Cornwall’s (2004) conceptualisation of space as a framework for comprehending the dynamics of participatory processes. In this context, the spaces of ‘invited’ participation across various cases are not merely perceived as geographical settings filled with actors facilitating participation; instead, they embody ‘a dynamic, humanly constructed means of control and hence of domination, of power’ (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 24). Following Cornwall (2004, p. 83), the spaces of ‘invited’ participation are not confined to concrete locales but should be regarded as sites that both constitute and express power relations. Within this conceptual framework, these spaces hold the potential to introduce alternative possibilities that may not align with the agendas of INGOs or donors. The extent to which such opportunities materialise in the case studies discussed here largely hinges on how the civil society actors perceived their roles and positions as community forces capable of negotiating and resisting the manipulative tendencies of either the INGOs or the state.

This phenomenon was particularly evident in the UML project in the GIZ case study. In this project, social mobilisers were key in initiating dialogues and negotiations among the actors involved. Operating within the constraints of their authority delegated by the INGOs, these mobilisers tactically seized opportunities to enable individuals to articulate their perspectives and voice their needs. Notably, the mobilisers extended their efforts beyond their formally assigned responsibilities by cultivating connections and networks among mobilised residents in informal meetings beyond the formal spaces of participation. They aimed to disseminate awareness and impart techniques and tactics for engaging with GAM and the state more broadly. According to the mobilisers, they were meticulous in approaching only GAM officials who implicitly conveyed their willingness to negotiate other terms and needs of the community. As observed by Cirolia and Berrisford (2017), these networks and (re)negotiations are particularly conducive to development in Global South cities given that much of the planning and service delivery occurs through negotiations conducted outside formal spaces. The mobilisers asserted that an initial prerequisite is to augment the capacity of individuals to articulate their demands within designated spaces of participation. However, they acknowledged the difficulty of achieving this within a

confined timeframe of sessions, emphasising the imperative for sustained participatory efforts that enable communities to be consistently involved in decision-making processes.

While increased participation with the state is frequently represented as positive, the reality is less straightforward. From the above, it is obvious that the reality of ‘invited’ participation is an add-on with official control over the process. The saliency of participation in INGO projects in Jordan disguises important contradictory political dynamics, where the new decentralisation laws are far from real (OECD, 2017b). Consequently, the spaces of ‘invited’ participation did not seek to challenge broader national and global processes that bind people into a state of marginalisation in the first place but functioned within the confines of institutional resources. Far from enabling residents to participate in and transform development, the ‘invited’ spaces of GIZ and UN-Habitat remain a managerial tool in the hands of the state and the INGOs that is used to achieve an end. As for the state, these spaces serve as a broader representation of another regime survival strategy under participation and democracy. Meanwhile, for the foreign funders and INGOs working in the context of authoritarian governments, they are a ‘technical fix’ on which they can spend their funds to better “Develop” the “underdeveloped” (Rahnema, 2009). In addition, the multiplicity of actors contributed to the fragmentation of the people’s participation and created further conflict between the different stakeholders. In many instances, the architects of the UML project showed dissatisfaction at not being involved in the participatory process as much as the social mobilisers.

However, the UML experience sheds light on the key role of non-state actors – in this case, the social mobilisers of activist collectives or members-based organisations (see Chapters 5 and 6) – in pushing for efforts to enhance participation. The lobbying and negotiations of the social mobilisers clearly influenced the involvement of the marginalised in decision-making. They also reveal that non-state actors cannot act alone in ‘invited’ spaces; they need to engage tactically with the authorities to change their attitudes and practices as they cannot be confrontational with the state given previous experiences and the attitudes of GAM officials. This confirms Mitlin’s (2006) assertion that the more successful strategies for social mobilisation seem to be those that can ‘innovate new approaches which strengthen collective capacity, and which maintain the autonomy of such collective capacity, enabling the poor to renew its pressure on the state constantly’ (p. 59).

9.3 The Agency of Tactical Participation

Establishing arenas for grassroots participation in Amman does not represent a direct confrontation or an evasion of authoritative entities; instead, it embodies a complex amalgamation of numerous endeavours by diverse grassroots organisations and collectives seeking to enhance their lives on their own terms within the existing social and spatial contexts. These spaces emerge organically from citizens with a shared concern, grounding these initiatives deeply in the citizens' 'lifeworld'. In contrast to various forms of participation orchestrated by governmental or non-governmental bodies, which invite citizens to partake in formulating or executing official policies, grassroots organisations deviate from claimed or 'invented' spaces that directly challenge the prevailing order. To help understand the new mode of participation as argued in this research, this section returns to the theorisations discussed in Chapter 2 and employed in the epistemological and methodological framework from Chapter 3 and speaks back to the case studies and sites of participation in Chapters 7 and 8.

The new grassroots organisations in Jordan – born in the aftermath of the Arab Spring – do not aim directly to create spaces of public participation that are oppositional to the authorities to confront the hegemonic planning in Jordan. Instead, they create in-between spaces for their own activities, which do not replace but provincialise the hegemonic spatial narratives of participation. They employ their own culture and worldview to view these spaces from their own backgrounds, including the community, history and memory (Umemoto, 2005). One crucial aspect in which these grassroots organisations differ from the traditional type of civic organisations in Jordan (for example, NGOs, CBOs and social associations; see Chapter 5) is their independence from governmental and non-governmental professional organisations.

These actors have created complex identities and socio-political spaces for themselves and their communities, guided by passions and aspirations and through daily practices going far beyond mere problem-solving. For example, the everyday activities at Al-Barakeh Wheat project sites involve planting, harvesting, grinding, cooking, eating, dancing and singing. Moreover, these activities go beyond tangible actions to encompass the building of relationships, knowledge and moments of care and solidarity through shared experiences and alliances instead of depending on sites of confrontational resistance (e.g. protests and mass demonstrations). However, these actors recognise the authorities' power to close these spaces. Hence, they tactically work in a messy middle ground between the status quo and their transformative capacity, from which they develop

wider awareness and action. They are neither revolutionary nor submissive ‘consumers’; instead, they negotiate, manipulate and advocate for new forms of governance that ‘cannot be critically assessed by mobilising the separation of public from private, political from personal’ (Cruikshank, 1993, pp. 340–341, as cited in Khirfan, 2018, p. 213). This resistance carried out through tactics more than strategies (de Certeau, 1984) ‘is not evident to the dominant; it has a sense of moving away’ (Perera, 2016, p. 9).

These grassroots appropriate the environments imposed by the power structures through everyday actions. These everyday modes of action do not fit adequately with the claims of IP (Miraftab, 2018) and are not explicitly counter-hegemonic as they do not work against the structures of the robust regime or hide their activities from the state to avoid detection or disruption. They are neither part of a life-long process of ‘quiet encroachment’ (Bayat, 2000) nor part of Scott’s (1990) disguised, dispersed or seemingly invisible form of resistance that focuses on the politically intentioned individual everyday life. Instead, they are often unplanned, temporary, overt and fluid, individualistic or collective modes of action that the grassroots inhabit actively to fulfil their needs in restrictive political environments. They operate between the ‘invented’ and the ‘invited’ spaces of participation. This does not mean, however, that they do not have an intent or purpose, but this purpose ‘cannot be adequately defined’ (Giddens, 1986, p. 9). The underlying motivations, values and purpose that shape their actions, along with the symbols, norms and ideological constructs they generate, form an essential backdrop for this manifestation of agency (Hosagrahar, 2005; Perera, 1999). According to Giddens (1986), agency or acting like an agent ‘presumes the capability of acting otherwise’ (p. 9). As shown in Chapters 7 and 8, many of these grassroots organisations think and act beyond the bureaucratised, capital-led rules that control so much of public life; they perceive themselves as agents of change. This depends on the ethical and political commitment of the concrete actors and their historical circumstances, proposals and actions (de Souza, 2006).

These spaces and practices have as a commonality the fact that they are not exclusively utilised and inhabited by economically disadvantaged or subordinate groups. As illustrated in Chapter 7, certain spaces can be instigated, inhabited, traversed and utilised by the middle class, exemplified by initiatives such as the Al-Barakeh Wheat Project and the Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park Collective. Another shared characteristic is collaboration among individuals or collectives working towards a shared goal, seeking to maintain this relationship over time and fostering a sense of ownership through ongoing participation. Furthermore, many of these grassroots

organisations and activism are not ‘urban’ *stricto sensu* (e.g. Zikra for Popular Learning and their project Al-Barakeh Wheat; see Chapters 7 and 8), but they collectively counter the hegemonic practices of planning in Amman, such as urban expansion onto agricultural lands in western Amman. The vital element in this context lies in the transformative potential of the actors. Grounded in imagination and creativity, this capacity renders these actors and the spaces they generate ‘subversive’ to different extents. While these incremental transformations may not comprehensively resolve their challenges or tackle all aspects of socio-spatial justice and equity, the legitimacy of these actors within the formal urban landscape grants them increased negotiating leverage. The process of subject formation is intricately linked with resistance and subversion. However, not all new organisations work similarly to enable substantive rights; some are less successful in negotiating the fine lines between pragmatism, necessity and resourcefulness. Moreover, others may face strategic challenges from the government (as shown in Chapter 8, section 8.3).

Despite the state’s utilisation of strategies as a means of deterrence and control over discussions of civil liberties within the city, numerous residents have been galvanised by these fleeting moments and have continued to engage with these initiatives to expand discourse and rights independent of state intervention. They are becoming an alternative source of informal rights. This resonates with Jabareen’s (2017) claims that marginalised collectives seek alternative sources of informal rights when the state cannot deliver the basic rights – the right to the city is inherently rooted in liberal-democratic contexts, where the state is the sole provider of rights. For instance, at the ‘Mahli’ initiative, residents of the Jabal Lweibdeh continually seek help and advice from ‘Mahli’ to fight gentrification through various approaches. Furthermore, they continue sharing, mapping and narrating stories about Jabal Lweibdeh, aligning with the initiative’s actions. Residents demonstrate solidarity by posting flyers and posters on their front doors and regularly organising meetings with the initiative in a local café to discuss issues related to the area. Additionally, these individuals seek guidance and mobilisation from the grassroots collectives (the original initiators of actions), leveraging their efforts to realise the desired transformative change. Thus, the grassroots collectives, not the state or the development architecture office, tactically provide the residents with the necessary legitimisation for their actions.

This is also the case for the Jabal Amman Neighbourhood Park. Despite the team’s discontinuation of their activities within the park, the surrounding communities continue

collaborating with them to maintain a sense of ownership over the park. These communities have taken it upon themselves to organise informal gatherings and meetings within the park grounds, even before its official opening. For instance, a session dedicated to acquiring knowledge on cultivating native plants from their countries of origin was held with the help of the original initiative. In addition, these surrounding communities have organised different sessions to clean the park and keep it safe for children. A number of individuals also established a small committee to oversee the park's organisation and facilitate collaborative ventures with others. The communities recognise that the group of initiators are no longer in charge of organising the park; however, they return to them to continue rights talk in the city. They now hold a conception of the park that differs from the municipality's. They have a deeper sense of belonging and caring for a place, which contributes to its production. The mobilised residents and communities view these collectives as a power source and tend to foster transformative change as hoped continually. The examples discussed above embody the potential for transformation within the messy participation framework by producing alternative meanings of participation in making urban spaces through everyday life practices or creative temporary interventions. As Beard (2003) discussed, the small actions create a sense of collective agency by empowering individuals and fostering a collective sense of purpose and impact. They raise awareness and consciousness about an issue or a cause. The cumulative effect of these minor individual actions can be significant, creating a sense of collective agency as people realise that their combined efforts can bring about meaningful change. They also provide opportunities for individuals to connect and collaborate, generating social and political spaces for radical change.

In this sense, these spaces are better understood as the locus of tactics and negotiations and not entirely separate from stronger power structures and processes. Yet, they are not structurally determined by those either. In many ways, these tactics are not visibly directed against the authoritarian regime but are instead more entangled in a 'contingent constellation of practice, milieu and materiality' (Moore, 2005, p. 44), allowing people to reclaim their agency in shaping the city. However, the emphasis on these tactics explores the possibilities that emerge from the experience of a grounded approach to participation within a fraught urban landscape in the Global South. Tactical participation is becoming a dynamic and contested process that uses cooperation and resistance to challenge the urban status quo and renegotiate the relationship between the state and mobilised residents.

To sum up, the idea of ‘tactical participation’ or ‘spaces of tactical participation’ is quite different from that of ‘invented’ participation (Miraftab, 2004) or spaces of persistent, lifelong struggles of the poor labelled as ‘quiet encroachment’ by Bayat (2010), as well as James Scott’s (1989, 1985) conceptualisation of spaces of everyday resistance. Although these spaces could be viewed, to some extent, as insurgent practices of the grassroots in Sandercock’s debates (1999, 2003), among others, I underline throughout this research the usefulness of de Certeau’s understanding of tactics in explaining acts of resistance in the face of power as it offers a less decisive, less ideological lens through which to analyse the many ways citizens inhabit spaces of participation (see Figure 9.1). As explained above and in Chapters 7 and 8, the practices and spaces of the new grassroots organisations and collectives were initiated from the subjects’ vantage points. For the most part, these processes were neither directly oppositional to the authorities’ provision of space nor hidden or silent regarding the hegemonic dominant social and spatial arrangements. However, they should be perceived as areas and mechanisms involving intricate and radical socio-spatial strategies, embodying a form of ‘alternative’ participation that frequently aligns with the establishment of genuinely ‘horizontal’, non-hierarchical, self-organised frameworks.

As emphasised by Hamdi (2004), ‘this type of understanding is less prescriptive, less readily systematised in its routines and procedures, less accommodating of data-intensive study, and less dependent on statistics and systems analysis’ (p. xxii). Although it incorporates conventional scholarly components such as concepts, theories and analytical frameworks, the present study underscores the importance of the perspective of inquiry and the examination of these participation spaces from the subjects’ viewpoints and production sites. In this context, the phrase ‘tactical participation’ indicates an epistemological condition. Table 9.1 illustrates the differences between spaces of tactical participation and ‘invented’ participation, that were discussed in the previous sections.

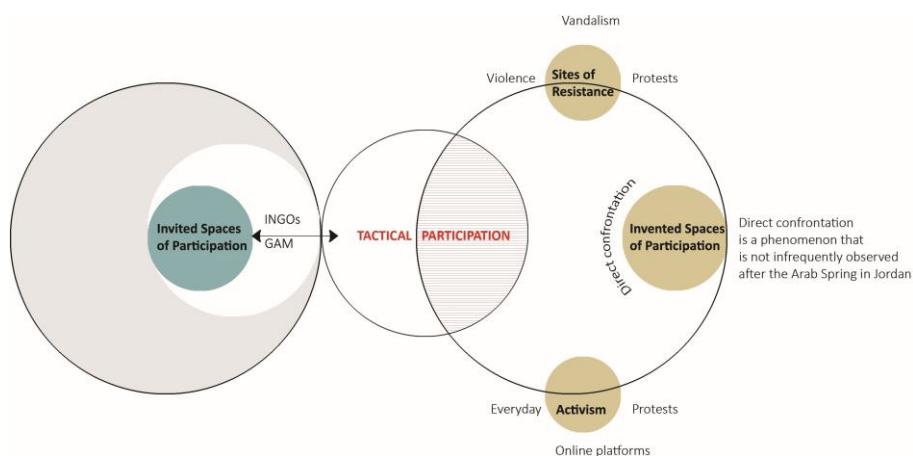


Figure 9.1: Diagram showing the in-between spaces of ‘tactical participation’. (Author)

Table 9.1: Comparison between ‘invited’ spaces of participation and spaces of ‘tactical participation’.

Space of Participation	Initiator	Funding	Partners	Main actors involved							Scale	Main Activities	Time	Outcomes				
				Design offices	Research groups	Public	Public representatives	Social mobilisers	Civic organisations	Refugees				Reports	Guidelines & frameworks	Physical implementation	Relations	Policy change
Invited Spaces	INGOs	Donor Agencies	GAM + Formal institutions (The State)								Micro scale	-Design workshop -Community meetings	Short			Minimal		
Spaces of Tactics	New Grassroots Organisation and Urban Collectives	-Local Funding -Crowdfunding -Donor Agencies -Fundraising -Shared Commons -Charities	The Public								Micro scale & Macro scale	-Activities embedded in the everyday life -participatory workshops and event -Mapping	Long					

Tactical participation occupies a fluid and ambiguous space, navigating between ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ spaces of engagement. This space, while offering agency to grassroots actors, is not without its fragilities and complexities. One of the key challenges lies in the constant negotiation between being seen and remaining obscure. On the one hand, grassroots initiatives gain legitimacy and strength by making their activities visible, enabling them to build alliances, mobilise communities, and influence policy change. On the other hand, this visibility can expose them to the risk of state co-option or suppression. The act of making tactical participation explicit can render these organisations more vulnerable to state scrutiny, turning what was once a flexible, adaptive form of engagement into a target for regulation or repression. This precarious balance adds another dimension of complexity, as grassroots actors must navigate the fine line between empowerment and vulnerability. The fragility of tactical participation also lies in its temporal nature. Unlike more formalised spaces of participation, which may have stable structures and institutional backing, tactical participation is often characterised by moments of intense activity followed by periods of dormancy. These temporal fluctuations reflect the ability of grassroots actors to adapt to changing political conditions and shifting power dynamics. However, they also expose these movements to potential burnout, fragmentation, or co-option by more powerful actors. As these initiatives ebb and flow, the challenge becomes maintaining momentum and continuity in a context where state actors may seek to exploit these vulnerabilities.

Another complexity arises from the fact that the fluidity of tactical participation does not always protect grassroots actors from state intervention. By operating in the interstitial spaces of participation, these initiatives can become more visible to the state, making them more susceptible to control or repression. The risk of state co-option or suppression is particularly high in authoritarian contexts, where the state may use tactics of manipulation, surveillance, or even co-optation to neutralise dissent. As noted by Comelli (2022), the hybridity of these spaces can lead to a form of insurgent citizenship that is both empowering and precarious. Grassroots actors, while striving to carve out spaces of autonomy, must remain vigilant to the ever-present threat of state intervention. In this context, the temporality of tactical participation becomes a double-edged sword. While it allows grassroots movements to remain agile and responsive to changing political conditions, it also introduces uncertainties that can hinder long-term planning and strategic development. This temporality is not only about the duration of the participatory process itself but also about its relationship to broader policy and planning frameworks. Grassroots actors often operate outside formal planning processes, yet their actions can have significant implications for how urban policies are shaped and implemented. However, the fluid and often spontaneous nature

of tactical participation can make it difficult to align with the rigid timelines and procedures of formal governance structures.

Lastly, the wider social networks and informal alliances that underpin tactical participation are crucial to its success, yet they too can be fragile. These networks cultivate aspirations for meaningful participation, but they are often dependent on personal relationships, trust, and informal channels of communication. The risk of fragmentation or co-option increases when these networks become more visible or when they are exposed to the pressures of external funding or state intervention. As noted by Cociña et al. (2023), the discursive and material practices of grassroots movements operate through scale, but this scaling-up can also introduce new risks. In the context of Amman, the grassroots organisations' ability to navigate these risks will determine whether their tactical participation can remain a viable mode of resistance and governance, or whether it will be absorbed into the formal structures they seek to challenge.

9.4 Coexistence of Different Modes of Governance and Participatory Approaches

Studying the contestations of participatory spaces from above helps to understand the logic of space production and how it operates in Amman. As previously discussed, the new practices and spaces of 'tactical participation' exist between rebel resistance and acquiescence. This helps to elucidate the logic of governance that links the various artefacts of the making of the city. As the multiple interactions in the tactical participation spaces reveal, the connection between the emerging grassroots organisations and state officials is not only confrontational but also cooperative, echoing Sherry Ortner's (1995) 'more than opposition[al]' and potentially 'creative and transformative' (p. 191). Just as the grassroots' use of the newly created spaces suggests innovations in participation ideas and the production of urban environments, their diverse relationships with the state and other organisations (e.g. INGOs) offer innovations in political forms.

Nevertheless, the multiple embodied tactics of negotiation and resistance of the new grassroots organisations described above (and similar to other organisations in Jordan) do not constitute straightforward forms of subaltern resistance or acquiescence to a governmental apparatus nor 'invited' or 'invented' spaces of participation. Instead, they coexist with and subvert the existing

system of power by building resilient social systems that can act within or alongside other systems, thereby providing avenues for bypassing various barriers. The coexistence of these multiple systems requires an understanding of how power operates, where power is not simply a matter of force or domination but a much more complex and subtle process that involves the construction and maintenance of cultural beliefs, values and norms (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Gramsci, 2009). By understanding how power operates in subtle and indirect ways, grassroots organisations can develop their own tactics for resisting, challenging and transforming dominant power structures. Therefore, the capacity for civic agency can be observed in the multiple ways people engage with power, not limited to dependence on dominant structures (Mahmood, 2012). In failing to understand the complexities faced by individuals living and operating in authoritarian settings, with their distinct modes of participation, we foreclose certain questions about agency and the workings of power (Abu-Lughod, 1990). The assumption that power operates in oppositional patterns (civil society versus the state) and the received notion of civil society as passive or directly confrontational towards the state – or, indeed, confronting the dichotomy of ‘invented’ versus ‘invited’ spaces – are inadequate for analysing participation in Jordan.

Instead, these spaces propose a coexistence of different modes of governance that hold the possibility of constructing autonom(ies) within the authoritarian contexts of the Global South. In contexts characterised by restrictive, authoritarian governance, the prevailing system of governance is intricately intertwined with both regional and global political dynamics. Within such environments, the coexistence mode of governance operates as a set of practices intricately situated within specific temporal and spatial dimensions and inherently contingent on prevailing political openings and opportunities. This system of governance is thus more entangled in constantly agile, changing and reactive practices that have the potential to create heterogeneous nodes of change embedded in everyday life. The fluidity and contingent mode of this governance allow civil society groups to exist and push against formal structures. Within the authoritarian contexts of the Global South, a situated coexistence model of governance is about constructing autonomy through different tactical constellations of ‘doings’ and ‘(re)existence’ spanning multiple scales. I rely here on the decolonial term of ‘(re)existence’ as borrowed by Catherine E. Walsh and Walter D. Mignolo (2018) from Adolfo Albán, who described it as ‘the redefining and re-signifying of life in conditions of dignity’ (Albán Achinte, 2013). This is also what Walter D. Mignolo defines as ‘the sustained effort to reorient our human communal praxis of living’ (Mignolo, 2018). Therefore, instead of foregrounding capitalist, top-down governance as the catalyst for life in the spaces of participation, I reflect on these tactical practices as modes of (re)existence, that is, of ‘being’ or ‘living’, that gesture beyond one governance domination to

imagine a coexistence mode of governance. To imagine this new mode of co-existence of governance, I rely further on concepts of ‘worlding’ and ‘reworlding’. Both concepts entail a multiplicity of ontologies that are continuously situated and involved in the formation of heterogenous assemblage involving human and more-than-human actors (see for example, Haraway, 2003; Latour, 2004). The use of the prefix ‘re’ is useful here in signifying a process of reweaving diverse models of existence and ‘worlding’ (Huybrechts et al., 2022).

What is significant about these tactics is their content and effectiveness, which suggest a heterogeneously operating political landscape that can coexist with the centralised governance models and enhance the capacity of suppression. Situated within the Global North’s understanding of democracy, Acosta Alvarado and De Tullio (2020) propose ‘legal hacks’ for instituting a common model of self-governance that could contest centralised governance models. They trace this within the declaration of the use of l’Asilo where ‘legal hacks’ translate as ‘creative use of law from the part of the community’. They state: ‘In this case, the community sought in the law not a simple regularisation, but a tool to imagine “new institutions” and to influence local policy and include in national legislation the notion of these community governed spaces as “civic goods”’ (Alvarado & De Tullio, 2020, p. 10). The present research follows these aspirations to suggest a coexistence model of governance, in which counter-hegemonic social institutions could exist in tactical contestations of power in the authoritarian contexts of the Global South. This model contests the centralised authoritarian system of governance by presenting new modes of resistance by existing. As indicated by this discussion, these spaces of contestation are not in confrontation with the state, nor total passive. Instead, they operate tactically, in certain circumstances and through learning by doing.

At the same time, we must be wary of over-idealising or romanticising the possibilities offered by the grassroots as sites of transformation that could create these new modes of governance. Despite their tactical performances, some of these practices situate grassroots organisations outside the law, and many remain insecure. Certain entities find themselves entangled in a complex terrain, grappling with government regulations and informal norms and facing challenges in navigating this precarious environment. Others contend with selective enforcement, recurrent closures and persistent government prosecution. Regardless of the vitality of their efforts, the tactical practices and spaces created by the new grassroots organisations and collectives exist in particular circumstances entangled in specific political conditions. Rather than dualistically defining these spaces as ‘invited’ or ‘invented’, ‘alternative’ or ‘mainstream’, it is

essential to adopt a perspective of openness to learning. Recognising these spaces as fluid and contingent becomes imperative as their actors strive to navigate and improve prospects in the challenging conditions of the present.

9.5 A Southern Approach to Participation

‘Lingua franca functions differently from the language of power. A language of power assumes that for it to be, other languages must cease. It desires to replace or silence all the other languages. But a lingua franca... simply facilitates communication and dialogue among language equals.’

(Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, 2023)

From a Southern perspective, I ask what ‘public participation’ might mean in the domain of urban development in contested authoritarian contexts. What forms of urbanism emerge when certain types of participation are employed? These questions are important because they allow us to reflect on the validity of popular urban vocabulary. To accomplish this, I initially engaged with the epistemological challenge, where assertions of ‘globality’ (Roy, 2015, p. 345) tend to linguistically limit the spatial aspects of the urban process to a one-dimensional framework. This framework is characterised by centre/periphery, formal/informal and ‘invited’/‘invented’ binaries. Actively challenging prevailing paradigms, theories and epistemologies provides an opportunity to construct a novel foundation emerging from the periphery, from the ‘colonised’ (Oldfield, 2022). According to numerous Southern theorists, this should be accompanied by developing a fresh lexicon (see Chapter 2), wherein unconventional concepts, tropes, theories and explanations are employed for scrutinising ‘the urban’ (Yiftachel, 2022). Only through this approach can one ‘provincialise’ (Lawhon & Truelove, 2020) numerous unjust yet frequently dominant assumptions inherent in the English language across a significant portion of the urban studies literature.

Miraftab (2022) contends that the language shaping our connections with the world and ourselves confines us to indifferent relationships, impeding the exploration of alternative relational possibilities. This linguistic constraint distances us from the historical-geographical context shaped by local-historical conditions, which often manifests in their unique vernacular terms. Sachs (1988) and Harvey (1996) have both critiqued the inappropriate use of language,

emphasising the challenge of crafting an adequate language for a global examination of urban issues. The implications of language and vocabulary extend beyond theoretical concerns as the urban studies literature has engaged in debates over ‘concepts’ and ‘differences’ (Robinson, 2016) with both theoretical and epistemological implications. Scott and Storper (2015, p. 12) argue for the necessity of a shared urban vocabulary to uncover the logic of urbanisation (Schmid et al., 2018). Consequently, there is a call to invent a vocabulary and implement tools that can align planning and its practice with contemporary political-economic and ecological realities, particularly in contexts marked by conflict, violence, crises and disasters (Fawaz & Harb, 2022). This approach aims to acknowledge the potency of local terms in narrating diverse stories of the urban frontier and facilitating meaningful dialogues among communities.

To understand ‘public participation’ in Jordan through a Southern lens, it is essential to consider two significant aspects related to the language and vocabularies of dialogues. First, caution is required regarding the hegemonic role of English (Anglo-Saxon hegemony) in knowledge production, as emphasised by scholars like Desbiens and Ruddick (2006) and Sidway et al. (2004). Second, there is an acknowledgement of the challenge of ‘untranslatability’ from a postcolonial standpoint, as discussed by Apter (2013) and Jazeel (2019). Despite their distinct concerns, both perspectives underscore the uneven geography of languages. Jazeel (2019), in particular, emphasises the productive aspect of untranslatability, suggesting that moments of translation failure reveal how ‘incommensurable differences encounter one another’ (p. 16). These considerations add a linguistic dimension to ongoing discussions about the politics of knowledge, where non-Anglophone scholars often grapple with a lexical convergence that involves translating their languages into English.

In this regard, and to better capture ‘public participation’ from grassroots situated perspectives, it was crucial to recognise and appropriate differences in and through languages. In many instances, the grassroots organisations investigated in this research referred to ‘Other’ conceptualisations and understandings of public participation that stretch the mere act of partaking in the decision-making processes related to planning and design. For example, the Hara Initiative referred to the concept of ‘*hara*’ as a process that goes beyond the limits of ‘public participation’ in its specificity and rootedness in the Western context. The concept of ‘*hara*’ (الحارة) is not easily translated and framed into the limitations of language. It represents a tradition of fostering a sense of community and social cohesion within specific geographical areas that build on spaces of radical care, responsibility and commitment. It also draws on an Islamic principle of caring and moral

commitment to neighbours, honouring one's neighbours, including those as far as the seventh neighbour. This materialises beyond the physical conditions of the urban settings to work with care with all the members of the *hara*, including non-humans (for example, caring about the ecology or animals in the *hara* by installing birdfeeders). This situated conceptualisation extends what Alexandre Frediani and Camila Cociña (2019) termed as 'participation as planning' by examining the broader scope of citymaking, which involves participation forms evolving into the actual practices of planning. On the one hand, *hara* is an epistemological condition that challenges the ideas of mainstream onto-epistemological values. On the other hand, it expands the concept of 'public participation' to concepts of 'care', 'ethical commitment', 'values' and 'morals' embedded in the residents of one *hara*, which lead them to 'act', 'participate' and 'produce' different spaces of 'life-making' in the city. The term 'life-making' is used in reference to the concepts explored by Arruzza et al. (2019), who articulate the range of practices, institutions and values that make life, particularly for marginalised populations, within the framework of patriarchal racial capitalism.

In the same fashion, the organisation Zikra for Popular Learning referred to their project Al-Barakeh Wheat (قمح البركة) – the Blessed Wheat – as a broader conceptualisation than simply participating in citymaking. For them, this is a life-making process that constructs humane urbanism. However, the word '*barakeh*' itself is rooted in Islamic, Arabic theology and everyday life and refers to the concept of divine blessings or spiritual grace. *Barakeh* is a form of divine favour, abundance and protection that brings goodness, prosperity and success to individuals, families and communities. People are encouraged to seek and share *barakeh* with others. Acts of generosity, kindness and charity are believed to attract divine blessings and increase the *barakeh* in one's life. In this way, the Al-Barakeh Wheat Project is a paradigm of thinking that aims to rebuild the relationship with the land and society by working together in different agricultural spaces in the city to restore 'Al Barakeh' as the key component of the region's living and working culture and a lost element of people's relationships with each other and with nature, land and society. This culture sees the 'common' as a resource, a process and an approach of unity in the communities with each other, nature and animals. In these cases, 'public participation' or 'citymaking activities' can refer to the conversation between the communities' own cosmologies, knowledge and ways of living, which aims at 'life-making'.

Nevertheless, a prevalent homogenising approach is evident in numerous popular concepts, where local nuances and global diversities are frequently reduced to 'insignificant details' and 'basic

translations’ (Schmid et al., 2018, p. 24). Consequently, subordinate voices are frequently overlooked in theory or practice despite their articulations because they use Othered languages, Othered codes and Othered meanings (Vainer, 2022). However, recognising with Vainer (2014) that any form of universality is always incomplete and limited, it is equally critical to note that no translation can be perfect. With this in mind, and as discussed earlier, the concepts of *hara* or *al-barakeh* vividly present the impasse of searching for any hypothetical linguistic equivalence. Gautam Bhan (2019) suggests that ordinary words can offer a theoretical vocabulary immersed in practice because they represent ‘different life-worlds of knowledge’ (p. 2). Within this approach and in line with the previous debates embedded in Southern thinking, this research delves into the multiplicity and diversity of discourses and practices inherent in the realm of ‘public participation’ in citymaking processes.

Consequently, the various practices of ‘public participation’ attempt to coexist within the challenging top-down, capitalist structures of power and governance to sustain the structures of life-making. They employ a tactical approach that dwells in the ‘in-between’ spaces of resistance and passivity while envisioning a new structure of life-making that challenges dominant power paradigms: ‘*We see beyond participation... we sustain a way of living that incorporates acts of being together to be able to produce, and (re)make our cities*’ (member of the Hara Initiative, Amman, June 2021).

9.6 *makāna*²¹⁴: A Collective for Tactically Performing Southern Urbanism in Amman

The ethos of this research resides in tackling the critical question of how alternative ways of participation can still be practised even within constraining contexts rather than remaining on the fringes critiquing the status quo whilst at the same time ‘resisting’ particularisation. Thus, this dissertation builds on what is done to focus on what *can* be done to develop alternatives that challenge the dominant paradigms. In this context, it breaks away from looking only at issues of power or domination by concentrating on what Peter North (2014) calls ‘developing our power

²¹⁴ *Makāna* refers to the place, position or designated location of something. It also signifies an elevated status. This designation aligns with our message about the importance of creating spaces that achieve social and spatial justice and opportunities for dignified living. This concept also draws on Islamic values; for example, *makāna* is explained in the Qur’an: ‘And We have certainly established you upon the earth and made for you therein ways of livelihood. Little are you grateful’ (Sura 7, ‘Al-Araf [The heights]’, Juz’ 8).

to create the world we want to see, theorising barriers as issues to be grappled with, not fundamental blocks to progress' (p. 1058). As shown in Chapter 3, bringing together the different assumptions of feminist, decolonial and Southern approaches that point to the potential of lived caring engagements, stimulate a critical analysis of social relations of power and inequality that can motivate us to push for systemic change. However, this research does not offer neatly packaged solutions to such challenges. Instead, it generates spaces for potential and possibilities for learning, sharing, relating, networking and being in solidarity with others. The learning generated throughout this research informed action to establish a politicised care-based form of moral accountability towards the new practices of public participation.

During my fieldwork, I became aware of activists, practices and socio-spatial projects attempting to counter the hegemonic planning structure in Jordan (See Chapter 4). This opened up the possibility to continue the PAR approach beyond the case studies and start to collaborate with communities and co-researchers to use this knowledge in support of making the changes they have identified as important. In this process, *makāna* evolved as an entity (a collective) that embodies the potential for community-based planning. It seeks to support the practices of grassroots collectives and communities to come together and organise the modalities within which they will live, imagine, shape and occupy together in the future of shared spaces in their city. *makāna* aims to build bridges and connect these diverse efforts into a cohesive network. It exists to nurture dialogue and foster the co-creation of urban spaces that reflect the needs and aspirations of the people.

makāna was inspired by the call for many Southern theorists and scholars (e.g. Miraftab, 2022; Ortiz, 2022) to think and build spaces of solidarity and radical care with the constellation of actors that remain at the margins of who is considered a theory maker or researcher. Thus, the urgent need for *makāna* is to create multi-layered, translocal forms of alliances stemming from the fact that civil society in Jordan suffers from restrictive control systems that hinder its political agency. Hence, *makāna* aims to promote active advocacy, establish connections, express solidarity, address inequality, support local initiatives and strive for progressive social change. Implementing solidarity in tangible ways involves collaboratively producing contextually relevant knowledge beneficial to groups' struggles. This is put into action and exemplified through diverse formats that engage communities and are accessible to the general public, such as workshops, open discussions and collaborative mapping, as well as showcasing the work on websites and social media and at open houses and exhibitions (see Figure 9.2).

The next sub-sections will reflect on these aspirations by pointing out the practical dimensions of *makāna* in initiating performative dimensions of citymaking in Jordan. I refer here to ‘performative’ dimensions and objectives from the group’s (*makāna*) belief in creating and finding new ways for participation and planning to go beyond the mere formulation of policies, or ‘invited’ spaces and blueprints. Instead, our aim is to foster a radical system of change. Showcasing this is quite crucial to this Southern decolonial research as it engages with what Vasudevan and Novoa (2022) and Escobar (2018) urged, that is, the importance of writing on community-based contributions, which ensures that the decolonial pluriversal planning project does not become ‘one more academic endeavour’ (Escobar, 2018, p. 216). Furthermore, this helps link theory and praxis more effectively, providing other scholars with examples of how methodologies, theories and community contributions are entangled (Vasudevan & Novoa, 2022). The next three sub-sections focus on some of the dimensions that have been experimented with at *makāna* in the last two years. These objectives are collaboratively envisioned with the co-researchers and through the many workshops, meetings and conversations held with different groups of people (e.g. activists, leaders and members of grassroots organisations and collectives).



Figure 9.2: Meetings at *makāna* with different groups and individuals. Author, 2022

9.6.1 Creating Horizontal Alliances And Solidarities Between The Counter-Practices

It has been argued within social movement studies that by combining resources and coordinating strategies, movements and their allies are bound to be more effective in achieving goals and creating social changes in culture, institutions and public policy (Staggenborg, 2010). From this point of departure, *makāna* realises the significance of creating a horizontal alliance allowing

diverse groups and individuals to network and communicate based on shared goals and values. These solidarities create a collective strength that can be more powerful than isolated efforts, providing a larger and more influential voice. Through these collaborative efforts of solidarity, we aim to increase the visibility of these practices and social movements to attract more attention from the public, policymakers, academia and the media. Implementing solidarity in tangible ways involves collaboratively producing contextually relevant knowledge beneficial to groups' struggles. This is implemented by creating space for critical dialogue and interactive workshops and working to link and join various grassroots practices that share interests (see Figures 9.3 and 9.4).

This horizontal networking enables the sharing of valuable insights and practices among grassroots groups and nurtures a collective awareness of the importance of fair urban development. The sharing of resources and coordinated strategies among movements and their allies enhances effectiveness in attaining goals and instigating social changes in culture, institutions and public policy (Staggenborg, 2010). Thus, together, these alliances become a formidable force in advocating for participatory decision-making processes and social justice. Not only do these alliances serve as platforms for the exchange of experiences and strategies, but they also co-create knowledge about more situated, context-sensitive urban planning. This knowledge is a potent force that challenges the status quo and advocates for more inclusive, sustainable and socially just urban environments.



Figure 9.3: Collaborative project between Hara Initiative, Yalla Nella'b and Masahit Alhayy, made through connection with *makāna*. Source: Yalla Nella'b, 2023



Figure 9.4: Another collaborative project between Hara Initiative, Yalla Nella'b and Masahit Alhayy, made through a connection with *makāna*. Source: Yalla Nella'b, 2023

Crucially, given the persistent regional geopolitical instability marked by factors like the continuous influx of refugees to Amman, the recent COVID-19 pandemic and political conflicts in neighbouring countries, it is imperative – rather than discretionary – to consider urban justice a proactive field. This necessitates exploring novel avenues for generating alternative knowledge and practices.

9.6.2 Constructing Resources For Participatory Planning

makāna aims to create a new dimension of performative planning that coexists with other planning structures. This is imagined as a resource and legitimacy for the right to the city that supports the different grassroots organisations, activists and communities. Therefore, we aim to build a space of dialogue, within which commonality and connection between groups can be created and through which change can be enacted. To implement this on the ground, *makāna* has embraced the creation of knowledge platforms. These platforms serve as the foundation for developing a collective understanding of the city. This shared knowledge, in turn, contributes to establishing the legitimacy of planning by enabling claims rooted in objective facts and science, recognising that such assertions may go unheard by public decision-makers. Instead, the act of presenting rationality as a viable course of action fosters unexpected partnerships and coalitions among city residents who might otherwise be cautious of each other and planning agencies. Moreover, it facilitates the development of a shared vocabulary, ultimately contributing to an envisioned legitimacy for the citymaking.

These spaces are significant for universities and students of architecture, planning and other humanitarian disciplines. Whereas processes of spatial production are controlled by powerful political, international organisation and profit-based practices, the university may act as an important site from which contestation emerges and spills beyond academic walls. In creating these spaces of dialogue and collaborative work, we aim to attract passionate students and academics who could learn from this contextually situated knowledge and disseminate it through their own practices and research. Thus, we always look for opportunities for collaborations with universities and academics that also have the agency to create a pedagogical change. By offering this space of dialogue and imagination for people, where they set priorities for themselves rather than focusing on predefined objectives, we aim to decolonise the imaginations and build our own practices, vocabularies and futures.

9.6.3 Documentation and Mapping: Towards a Repository

Documenting and archiving spatial practices, urban interventions and their associated narratives are key tools and methodologies employed by *makāna*. The objective is to establish a repository that compiles diverse informal, multi-scale urban practices stemming from a shared interest in cultivating equitable, participatory futures. These autonomous practices act as responsive measures within intricate systems, striving to explore, challenge and establish a new political reality. Various documentation methods, including writing, mapping, drawing and photography, are being experimented with to unveil the stories of places, their creators and their users. This repository presents numerous possibilities for reimagining and interpreting the city, offering a fresh perspective beyond the formal narratives of planning. Recognising and narrating these emerging stories serve as a political tool for envisioning our futures, realising new worlds and bringing them into existence. This approach may lead to a participatory understanding of community needs, proving valuable in reconsidering shared spaces, addressing various municipal aspects and enhancing communal well-being.

Furthermore, these archives have the potential to generate knowledge and new avenues for action (Eichhorn, 2013). Rather than being viewed merely as a storage facility, the documentation is perceived as ‘reactivated’ by the individuals who employ its diverse records in various resistance forms. Documents are selected and interconnected in ways that circumvent their typical hierarchies and roles. In addition, the documentation of local practices highlights successful models of community-driven citymaking, showcasing instances where collaboration has led to

sustainable development and positive transformations. These success stories serve as valuable case studies for urban practitioners, offering practical lessons on fostering community engagement, promoting social cohesion and leveraging local resources effectively. By drawing on these documented narratives, urban professionals, academics and practitioners can adopt a more adaptive and responsive approach that prioritises the needs and aspirations of their communities. In essence, we hope to offer through documentation a dynamic tool that could guide others in navigating the complex and evolving landscape of citymaking, fostering a more sustainable, resilient and people-centred urban development paradigm.

Mapping is one method employed at *makāna* to implement our documentation process and unveil latent or concealed structures (see Figure 9.5). Mapping serves a dual purpose as both a representation of reality and a guide for experiencing actual space, aiding in identifying and contextualising significant places while strengthening community bonds. In one of our current projects, we are revising Amman's official map by mapping the newly established grassroots spaces collaboratively created with local communities. These emerging spaces encompass a range of micro-urban areas, including small neighbourhood gardens and collectively cultivated urban lands for sharing common resources. This tangible visual resource facilitates knowledge production and meaning, making it easily understandable for city residents, leading to negotiations and fostering further imaginative thinking. These maps are collectively crafted with grassroots organisations and communities, empowering them and creating spaces for collaborative creation. These monthly meetings occur at *makāna*'s location (refer to Figure 9.6), a shared space in the city utilised by various artists and activists²¹⁵. Here, we engage in collaborative work, experimenting with diverse methods and methodologies. Additionally, the maps, documentation and generated data are archived on *makāna*'s digital platforms and made publicly accessible online through various channels, including Instagram and Facebook pages (see Figure 9.7).

²¹⁵ The communal area is affiliated with the MMAG Foundation, which falls under the umbrella of the private company Abu Ghazaleh I as part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. MMAG is a community-oriented social programme aiming to contribute to the advancement of artistic practice and pedagogy by integrating insights from historical experiences and contemporary issues.



Figure 9.5: Mapping activities organised by *makāna*. Author, 2023

The concrete outcomes of the mapping workshops encompass collaborative drawings of the area by the participants, details about recognised locations and their occupants, as well as indications of activities within these spaces (see Figure 9.8). This information is then integrated into an online interactive map. Consequently, the new map extends beyond geographic boundaries, illustrating the activities, individuals and organisations interconnecting these spaces. Collectively, the visual mapping unfolds as a dynamic canvas of ideas, fostering a shift for participants from static notions towards a view of the future as dynamic and interconnected. Thus, this repository aims to be a useful tool for inspiring, accompanying and assisting spatial professionals, researchers, students and non-academic communities in engaging with urban places and discovering and developing responsible approaches to current urban challenges.

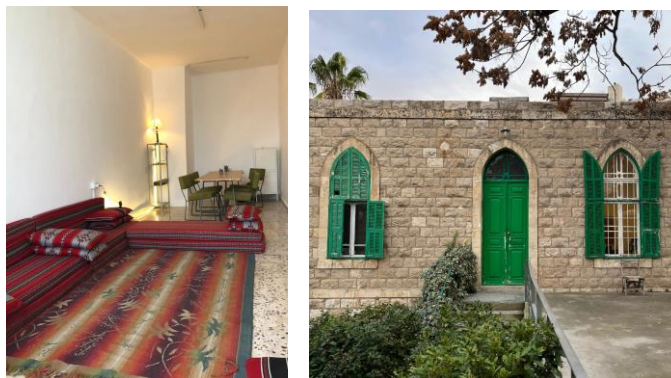


Figure 9.6: *makāna*'s space at MMAG Foundation. Source: co-researchers at *makāna*, 2023

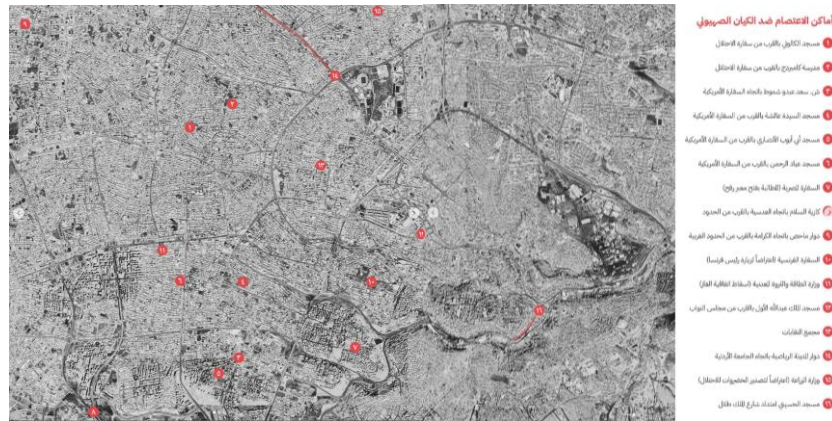


Figure 9.7: A map crafted by co-researchers at *makāna* for one of our recent projects, which focuses on mapping the public spaces in Jordan of protests²¹⁶ during the Gaza war in 2024. (Author)

In its essence, *makāna* exemplifies a shift towards a more inclusive, socially just and participatory approach to citymaking. Its journey reflects a commitment to collective grassroots action, horizontal networking and the creation of alternative practices that challenge the dominant narratives of urban planning. As a space of dialogue and imagination, *makāna* aspires to be a catalyst for real systemic change, offering a vision of urban development rooted in solidarity, social empowerment and the right to shape one's city. Moreover, *makāna* is learning from the productive diversity of knowledge and practices existing in communities and grassroots organisations, such as their tactics and ways of working and doing. In this context, we aim to further influence the policies of citymaking in Jordan. This is envisioned through the accumulation of people's knowledge and the generation of empowered dialogues and actors capable of tactically challenging existing policies.

²¹⁶ This project explores the strategies employed by the state and police to disrupt the collective power of civil society in street protests. It also investigates the tactics developed by grassroots movements to reclaim these spaces as their legitimate rights for expression. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, grassroots movements utilise both 'tactical' participation and confrontational activism. This particular project focuses on the latter, given the heightened political fervor in the country, influenced by the recent war in Gaza, aligning with global movements.



Figure 9.8: Collaborative mapping with children to reimagine public spaces and play areas in their *hara*. Source: *makāna*, 2023

In this light, this research along with the practices of *makāna* is ‘retracing’ by describing and making visible interdependencies that have been ignored so far. I borrow here the term ‘retracing’ from Huybrechts et al., (2022), where it refers to the “ways in which we surface knowledge about human and non-human ways of doing and caring for socioenvironmental challenges” (p.5). This underlines a feminist decolonial living archive of citymaking, that engages with multiple worlds.

9.7 Conclusion

This discussion chapter engaged with the findings and interpretation of the case studies to arrive at the aims of the research regarding public participation in the authoritarian context of Amman. Guided by the sixth (and last) research question, ‘How can Other moments be imagined between the grassroots and the institutional formats to better support a more just approach to participation in the authoritarian contexts of the Global South?’, this chapter critically revisited existing concepts and practices of public participation in Amman and proposed new ways of thinking and doing.

The chapter began by interpreting the challenges and complexities surrounding ‘invited’ participation in Amman. It emphasised the need to critically assess the impact of foreign funding, which revealed tensions and conflicts as INGOs shaped the structure of participation processes to align with donor preferences. The vertical organisational structure adopted by INGOs limits the autonomy of local actors and exacerbates divisions, eroding trust in local civic organisations. On the one hand, this research highlights the potentially detrimental role of external funding in

bureaucratising civil society organisations and hindering grassroots initiatives. On the other hand, non-state actors, particularly social mobilisers in this research, play a key role in cultivating – when possible – moments of negotiations with state actors and INGOs to push for more meaningful participation in urban settings marked by authoritarian governance. However, while GAM claims citizen-centred governance (Khirfan & Momani, 2019), the ‘invited’ spaces frequently failed to challenge broader political structures, leaving planning detached from citizens’ needs.

Nevertheless, these spaces of participation were not the only mode of encounter between citizens and the state; this chapter argued for the concept of ‘tactical participation’ as a mode that goes beyond confrontational resistance within ‘invented’ spaces of participation or passive subversion. Born out of the aftermath of the Arab Spring, grassroots organisations in Amman engaged in a dynamic and messy process of creation of spaces that provincialise hegemonic spatial narratives. Unlike ‘invited’ spaces, these initiatives emerged organically from citizens’ concerns, rooted in their lifeworlds, culture and history. The transformative capacity of these grassroots initiatives lies in their ability to reclaim agency and challenge the urban status quo through a dynamic and contested process. Nevertheless, ‘tactical participation’ does not replace hegemonic narratives but actively inhabits the spaces in between, navigating a middle ground between the status quo and transformative potential. This nuanced approach does not wish – at least for the time being – to replace the powerful authorities but to coexist with the centralised governance.

The notion of coexistence emerges as a central theme, signalling a departure from binary categorisations of participatory spaces. Coexisting participatory practices occupy a liminal space, neither wholly oppositional nor completely aligned with dominant structures. This mode of governance reflects a dynamic set of practices strategically positioned within specific temporal and spatial dimensions, adapting to political openings and opportunities. In the restrictive context of authoritarian governance, this coexistence becomes a web of agile and reactive practices that create heterogeneous nodes of change woven into the fabric of everyday life (re)existence. These concepts of ‘tactical participation’ and ‘coexistence of governance’ emerged from the Southern approach adopted throughout this research to unfold and understand participation in the authoritarian contexts of the Global South. It called for a recalibration of urban vocabulary, acknowledging the diversity of languages and experiences that shape the urban landscape. Consequently, it sought to break free from the confines of dominant linguistic and epistemological frameworks, fostering a more inclusive, dialogic and equitable understanding of public

participation in citymaking. In this quest to capture participation from a grassroots perspective, the research highlights the importance of recognising and appropriating differences through languages. Grounded in specific cultural and contextual nuances, terms like ‘*hara*’ and ‘*al-barakeh*’ resist easy translation and offer rich conceptualisations that transcend Western-centric notions of public participation. These concepts challenge mainstream onto-epistemological values and underscore the danger of homogenising local conditions into simple translations disregarding global diversities. They become performative and influence the everyday imaginary, a lesson that I took further when co-founding *makāna*.

Finally, I align myself and my research with the structures and messy environments investigated, lived and experienced throughout this project. In this sense, and in adopting a Southern decolonial approach fuelled by feminist ethics of care, this research goes beyond criticising existing participation approaches to actively explore alternative forms of participation. The emergence of *makāna* encapsulates this shift, aiming to activate Southern urbanism in Amman. More broadly, it seeks to enact the modes of coexistence by bridging diverse grassroots efforts and involving researchers, activists and grassroots organisations and collectives, endeavouring to empower communities to co-create reflective urban spaces. Against restrictive control on civil society, *makāna* forms alliances for active advocacy, expressions of solidarity and progressive social change. It aims to serve as a catalyst for systemic change, through the performative dimensions of horizontal alliances and repositories of mappings, documentations and resources for participatory planning.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

In this dissertation, I sought to critically examine the understanding of the various processes of public participation in citymaking in Amman after the Arab Spring uprisings and highlight the role of emerging grassroots participatory approaches in forming new modes of engagement and existence in a restrictive political environment. In detail, this has meant addressing the following overarching questions: *How and under what conditions can grassroots activism based on everyday spatial practices foster more inclusive participation in citymaking? How does this counter the top-down authoritarian space production and change the networks of power in post-Arab Spring Amman?*

To answer the research questions, I collaboratively examined the creation and process of participation within what Cornwall (2002) and Miraftab (2004) call ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ spaces of participation. I worked on two case studies of ‘invited’ spaces, consisting of four different projects in two organisations (two projects each), followed by five case studies of ‘invented’ spaces concerning particular grassroots initiatives participating in citymaking processes. This research’s concern with both practices and spaces of participation is twofold. First, within the field of urban development and planning studies, no research or publication examines together ‘invited’ and ‘invented’ or grassroots informal participation in the Jordanian context, particularly after the Arab Spring. Second, to address and respond to participation in citymaking, it is crucial to fully capture the multiple processes, approaches, positions, networks, relations, politics, languages and understandings of participation in the city from the perspectives of the governing and the governed. When confronted with these stances, it is essential to foster disruptive, relational and radical ethics of engagement that disrupt the dominant perspectives of planning. In this dissertation, I proposed a feminist decolonial, Southern theoretical approach that counters the hegemonic narratives of citymaking and contributes to foregrounding the lived experiences of the grassroots, which have not been documented until now in the context of Jordan.

10.1 Shifting the ‘Master’ Narratives of Public Participation

In the opening of this dissertation, I set my main aim for this project, supported by a set of objectives to realise it. In this section, I first discuss these objectives and their thematic contributions before delving into the rich research contributions to theory and practice. However, the objective of this chapter is not to make generalisations about public participation in the authoritarian contexts of the Global South but to contribute to ‘minor theory’ (Watson, 2022), which uncovers small variations that make a significant difference. As discussed in Chapter 2, this stems from working from the inside out regarding emerging practices to question and unsettle major theories. This is reflected at the end of this section.

To understand the ‘invited’ spaces of participation in the authoritarian context of Amman, the actors involved and how the state legitimises its intervention in the making of the city.

In this dissertation, I aimed to build a more compelling understanding of ‘public participation’ in authoritarian contexts in the Global South, specifically in the case of Amman, Jordan. To do so, I engaged first with the state-led participation processes taking place in Amman after the Arab Spring, which were introduced to the public by the government as part of a decentralisation project to involve popular participation of the citizens in local decisions (Elliott et al., 2018) in the aftermath of the uprisings. However, as argued in the previous chapters, the Jordanian government employed numerous survival strategies to quell the civil unrest in the country. Thus, the ‘awakening’ in Amman was more about the political economy of wealth and power than about civil disobedience and an outcry for equality by citizens (Abu-Hamdi, 2015). The ‘public participation’ project in the decentralisation perspective was another mechanism for regime survival, delivered and initiated in urban development practices with the funds of Western aid (e.g. UN-Habitat and GIZ). However, this did not prevent GAM –the entity responsible for planning and developing Amman– from claiming that it already employed a participatory approach via online social media platforms, websites and phone applications or formal announcements of changes to land zoning and regulations (see Chapter 5). Thus, part of the problem seems to be the understanding of ‘participation’ within GAM as merely ‘informing’ citizens, which sits very low on the scale of participation according to Arnstein (1969).

Nevertheless, the process of participation in the four projects by the two international NGOs presented in Chapter 6 did not seek to challenge the broader national processes that bind people into a state of exclusion from decision-making in the first place but functions within an ‘anti-politics machine’ that maintains elite interests, in this case, those of the government represented by GAM (Hulme & Edwards, 1997; Mohan & Stokke, 2004; Swidler & Watkins, 2009). This manifested in the participation matrix analysed in Chapters 6 and 9. Briefly, in the previous projects, the ‘needs’ of the people were significantly shaped by perceptions of what INGOs were able to deliver based on the existing funds. Moreover, the INGOs wielding the power to organise and mediate the process of participation among different actors worked to limit the roles of the social mobilisers and architects to those of ‘employees’ based on a fixed contract defining a set of responsibilities. Besides de-politicising their roles and controlling their activities, the INGOs perceived participation as an end product, not a process. This affected the selection of people, the outcomes of the process and the INGOs approach in sustaining their goals.

However, local members of the INGOs who had been activists or leaders and members of local organisations advocating for social and spatial justice were recruited by the INGOs as ‘experts’ and ‘participatory consultants’ (refer to Chapter 5 on elite circulation) and played a vital role in the process. As they tried to steer the process to benefit the participants due to their deep understanding of the context, some attempted to recruit more activist social mobilisers instead of local NGOs that work with a very de-politicised mindset. Others challenged the ‘foreign’ activities suggested by the INGOs. In the end, the complex relations between the actors did not continually cultivate promising outcomes. To put it differently, neither the INGOs nor the state, the local NGOs or the professional architects and planners viewed participation as based on people’s knowledge, needs and aspirations; instead, the process was seen as planning knowledge. The local ‘elites’ – activists, social mobilisers or local participation experts at the INGOs – negotiated alternatives to effectively engage the participants.

To critically examine the ‘invented’ spaces of participation and the actors involved in the process with a focus on grassroots organisations and activities.

This dissertation critically questioned the modes of grassroots, bottom-up participation and called for looking beyond the concept of ‘invented’ participation, known for confronting the authorities and challenging the status quo (Miraftab, 2004) within a more organised form of massive and

strong civic organisations or social movements. The research highlighted a new type of activism in Amman initiated by two types of entities: new grassroots organisations and urban grassroots collectives. Both emerged actively after the Arab Spring, representing a new mode of practice in Jordan. They do not conceive of their work as purely confronting and challenging the state nor see themselves as passive or silent recipients. At the same time, the main difference between them is their structure and organisation. Grassroots organisations are more structured and are formally registered with the Ministry of Social Development or the Ministry of Industry and Trades. In contrast, urban grassroots collectives are more project oriented, that is, driven by a specific goal, project or need at a particular time. However, both share a type of self-organised system that endeavours to create new possibilities in the city by focusing on small-scale social enterprise rather than relying entirely on significant international funding. Moreover, they aim to build and defend shared commons resources, practices and collective organisation by fostering collaborative initiatives that promote community engagement and participatory decision-making within a flexible, non-hierarchical structure. In doing so, they seek to foster the well-being and improve the living conditions of the communities.

This dissertation attempts to understand a ubiquitous urban problem, namely, the grassroots' engagement in planning, which has been extensively studied in numerous research projects and publications. Several approaches address the issue under various umbrella terms, including 'DIY urbanism' (Iveson, 2013), 'everyday resistance' (Scott, 1985, 1990), 'everyday urbanism' (Crawford & Kaliski, 1999), 'familiarising space' (Perera, 2016) and 'non-movement movement' (Bayat, 2013b). The underlying theme in these writings is the recognition of the spaces created and the associated actions resulting from an 'everyday' approach of 'action to citymaking'. Moreover, as Frediani and Cociña (2019) argue, participation is a form of planning in itself and not merely a tool. Melding these concepts of 'resistance', 'action' and 'tactics' (Certeau, 1984) and drawing on their relation with the everyday (Lefebvre, 1971), I contend that these new emergent grassroots organisations and collectives tactically confound the state by establishing an alternative mode of practice in citymaking that is concerned with a way of life-making as participation. Their situatedness within local values, relations and practices (e.g. practising *hara* and *al-barakeh*) is what defines these unique practices of public participation in citymaking.

However, those spaces and practices are opportunistic, manipulative, agile, self-organised and indefinite and are not confined to organised formal 'invited' spaces or confrontational 'invented' spaces. Although they are part of 'resistance' and 'activism', they do not represent a silent, long,

collective ‘quiet encroachment’ of the urban poor or the ‘resistance’ of the political intentions behind the everyday covert practices of the subordinates. Their ‘tacticality’ functions within relational, dynamic, mobile agencies by embodying resistance but also, in many instances, showing mundane acknowledgement or even *support* to the state in an ongoing process of ‘intervening’, ‘negotiating’ and ‘sustaining’, thereby offering a novel understanding of public participation in authoritarian contexts of the Global South.

To implement a Southern decolonial research praxis that unsettles concepts of participation and imagines new ways of thinking and doing.

In this research project, I sought to apply a decolonial Southern feminist praxis to open new spaces of knowledge production and practice. This included acknowledging and working with situated knowledge and Southern theorising. To achieve this, I worked collaboratively with grassroots organisations and initiatives within a relational and ethical framework of ‘care’ guided by feminist and PAR considerations. This ‘ongoing’ iterative process of ‘fieldwork’ allowed me to immerse myself in a lifelong process of doing ‘fieldwork’ as an activist researcher. This immersion opened new ethical questions regarding the language and concepts of ‘public participation’, as elaborated on in the methodology chapter. This process enabled the development of a new vocabulary that speaks back to the context, demonstrating the rich empirical lessons that emerge when we begin from the local conceptions of the residents and how they understand their own worlds as the foundation and orientation for scholarly discourse. While engaging in translation across different experiences and localities, a broader interpretation of public participation emerged, contributing to a more diverse and translocal language around participation, ultimately shaping how we think, speak and act. This strongly resonates with the efforts of indigenous scholars to shape indigenous and anti-colonial research methodologies (Smith, 1999; Chilisa, 2012).

In this sense, I understood that ‘*al-barakeh*’ is not only about cultivating wheat in empty lands planned as residential or services. It is a system of living stemming from the concept of ‘*al-barakeh*’, which delves into ways of ‘care’ and sharing that include non-human aspects and stands in contrast to colonial, capital-centric approaches to citymaking. Similarly, ‘*hara*’ extends beyond the conceptualisation and definition of ‘participation’ in the Western anglophone context. It includes local, situated values in the life-making process. These practices (among others) exist in the city, contingent on certain political conditions. However, the actors and creators of these

practices intend to perform tactically to practice their way of doing and living. Thus, ‘tactical participation’ is a mode of existing between rebel resistance and acquiescence, which emerges from the situated concepts and practices of a local anti-capitalist way of living in the city. They cannot directly challenge the state due to histories of oppression, as discussed in Chapter 4, nor do they want to remain silent; consequently, they tactically use their own ways and values of engagement and citymaking. To speak of a rigid, straightforward distinction between spaces of state-led participation and claimed confrontational spaces of participation would neglect the very ongoing relations, networks and tactics that envelop the governmental frameworks and analytical dichotomies attempting to delineate them. Instead, these practices represent a new type of participation, offering the possibility of re-imaging the co-existence of diverse power systems and governance structures that foster public participation in radical and diverse ways that deviate from the norm (Kamal, 2023). This self-organised democratic governance of the grassroots and collectives does not necessarily disrupt powerful hegemonic frameworks. Instead, it attempts to construct and implement autonomy in resisting while coexisting and re-existing²¹⁷ to make life despite oppression.

To summarise, this research makes significant contributions to theory and practice. In terms of the former, the research is part of the call²¹⁸ to build on the political-intellectual Southern theorising project. It informs the theorising work by expanding the knowledge on situated Southern urban modes of practices and lived experiences of ‘public participation’, specifically in authoritarian contexts like Jordan. The theoretical implications of this attempt contribute to conceptualising narratives of participation and citymaking in a way that transcends the dualistic understanding of participation as ‘invited’ or ‘invented’ or activism in the Arab world specifically as ‘resistance’ or ‘coping mechanisms’. Moreover, this project has the potential to construct a new vocabulary (from place) of ‘public participation’, which expands the analysis of the engagement process in restrictive political contexts of the Global South. As argued by Bhan (2022), this new production of knowledge and vocabulary helps researchers and practitioners from the Global South understand how to move forward and informs their practice.

Thus, this research may further inform and support the practices of ‘public participation’ in Amman. On the one hand, the narratives, analysis and documentation of the grassroots practices

²¹⁷ See Chapter 9.

²¹⁸ See, for example, Bhan (2019) and Yiftachel and Mammon (2022).

can inspire other initiatives with similar trajectories; they could also transfer this knowledge to other localities. Recognising these practices as valid ways of acting in the city could create a wider, systematic and sustainable understanding of public participation by delving into the particularities of place, people, politics and perspectives, which could challenge the single narrative of formal mechanisms of citymaking. This may also mobilise a wide range of actors in more engaging roles in participation as a process of social change, such as academics, architects and public planners, among others. On the other hand, insights derived from the cases of ‘invited’ participation may equip policymakers with valuable perspectives on how to amend participatory procedures and policies. These cases have produced crucial empirical data from four distinct projects run by two international organisations, each featuring diverse participation processes. Given the lack of comprehensive studies on practices and processes of ‘invited’ participation, the findings of this research are a valuable resource for covering genuine needs and identifiable shortcomings in current policies.

10.2 Learning Otherwise Through a Decolonial Southern Approach

The present study focused on the many forms of doing and acting in the city, advocating for the multiplicity of worldviews and counter-capitalist projects that embrace pluriversality (Escobar, 2012). By situating public participation in citymaking within the pluriverse, this project recognises the wide range of perspectives, meanings and concepts concerning public participation. Through different narratives of tactically ‘resisting’, ‘(re)existing’, ‘being or living’ in the ‘*hara*’ or through ‘*al-barakeh*’, these perspectives provide compelling alternatives for participating in citymaking. However, this research emerges from a local call to give a collective voice to local grassroots initiatives that can empower them further to create new capacities and social change in the city (AlNasser, 2016; Khirfan, 2018). Thus, I hope that this research, along with its findings and contributions, will open up exciting avenues for future research on public participation in citymaking and the different modes of governance that sustain and constitute spaces of public participation, extending beyond the present project.

Based on the above discussion, I suggest that future research priorities should include a continued emphasis on situated practices of ‘participation’ in Amman. Additionally, there is a need to delve further into the various ‘tactics’ and modes of negotiation, subversion and compromise that constitute their daily involvement in citymaking practices. Although time and resource limitations

prevented a longitudinal study, adopting such an approach would introduce another layer to future research²¹⁹. Furthermore, expanding beyond the confines of Amman to unravel grassroots practices in diverse economic and socio-political settings²²⁰ is imperative. Understanding how these participation dynamics evolve in different urban environments, societies and governance systems would make a significant contribution to knowledge.

A further strand of future research might expand on the notions of coexistence of governance to operate in contested and authoritarian cities (see Chapter 9, section 9.4). It could use speculative fiction²²¹ as a critical tool for imagining the forms of this new governance and how it may be sustained on a politically changing ground. This opens a wealth of opportunities that could arise from instituting self-organised practices to exist, challenge, resist and re-exist in the contested boundaries between the public and the state. This may also be done by engaging with the potential power and autonomy of local and translocal alliances of urban collectives, grassroots organisations and other urban struggles, which have been one of the objectives and dimensions of *makāna*.

Moreover, this research could be extended to other authoritarian contexts in the Global South, particularly in the SWANA, where similar colonial histories and ongoing neoliberalisation processes are at play. Doing so would allow us to better draw on meso-theorisations that acknowledge generalisation in different urban settings and localities but still consider the micropolitics of everyday life in these settings (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.1 and Chapter 3, section 3.2.3). This would offer a productive debate involving multiple publics and places within contested contexts and shifting power dynamics – taking into account the specificities of every city – which could embrace and further develop the idea of ‘tactical participation’.

²¹⁹ It is worth noting that at *makāna*, we have already started looking for and working with other grassroots organisations and urban collectives.

²²⁰ As explained in Chapter 4, Amman is very different from other Jordanian cities in terms of the governance of the city and its direct connection and collaboration with national and international schemes of planning and management.

²²¹ Speculative fiction refers here to the use of imaginative storytelling, often within science fiction, fantasy or speculative literature, to explore and envision future urban landscapes, communities and technologies. Rather than strictly adhering to current realities or historical precedents, speculative fiction enables creative speculation about potential futures, addressing emerging challenges and opportunities in citymaking. By imagining worlds that do not yet exist, practitioners, researchers and activists, among other actors, can engage with complex social, environmental and technological issues, prompting discussions about potential futures and the paths that lead to them.

The work co-produced by the *makāna* collective (see Chapter 9) tries to build on the abovementioned aspects. However, beyond looking at emerging participatory and citymaking practices, *makāna* tries to stand up, archive and document the narratives and practices from our engaged positions as it captures a significant moment in the city that would otherwise be forgotten. It does so by providing this recognition, both within the community and in a broader societal context, validating the significance of grassroots efforts and enabling the sharing of their knowledge with others. Furthermore, *makāna*'s work builds towards the development of alternative guidelines and planning policies.

10.3 Final Reflections

In a context that did not change dramatically as expected after the uprisings of 2011, the state has successfully evaded revolution by turning to its old system of 'surviving strategies'. At the time of presenting this dissertation, the politics of governance in Amman has not changed for decades. Instead, entrenched systems of power and wealth have persisted throughout the monarchs' reign until today. Still, the Arab Spring allowed the public to recognise the need to find possibilities for opposing hegemonic political practices other than protests and mass demonstrations. Throughout this research project, I looked at these new emerging practices and the people involved based on their own experimentation knowledge, which is not only attached to academic knowledge. These practices are emerging in uncertain socio-political terrains of power relations and, therefore, need to be understood and supported with their own particularities, places, realities, values and lived experiences. To do so, I drew on Southern theorising as an approach that illuminates the diverse ways in which we can read how cities are shaping anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal and anti-racist endeavours, foregrounding the role of the spatial process.

In this dissertation, I relied on a broad spectrum of ideas and concepts to explore how people devise their own subversive tactics, set in the everyday, to resist and re-exist in regimes of oppression. From this experience, I learned from these people and their practices in a way that affected my methodological approach, the writing of this dissertation, my positionality and how to move forward (how to act). Thus, these grassroots actors offered me a new space for learning and doing – learning ways of 'caring', 'acting', 'coming together', 'imagining' new futures and 'becoming'. In short, throughout this process, I learned how to tactically perform this project and dissertation to re-exist in different instantiations of power (be it academia, the context, practice

or the profession) without aspiring to universality to move forward from what Nabeela²²² calls ‘the unacknowledged heroism of ordinary women and men’. When conducting such research, the goal is to strive for a consistent critical, situated, and empirically driven perspective in researching and working with socio-urban practices in different lifeworlds.

²²² One of the individuals I worked with at the Hara Initiative.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Information Sheet



Information Sheet

Dear Invitee,

My name is Jakleen Al-Dalal'a. I am a doctoral student at The University of Sheffield. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting titled: Rethinking public participation in planning in Amman. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

1. What is the purpose of this study?

The aim of this study is to better understand the processes and practices of public participation in planning in the city of Amman, whilst highlighting the significant role of community-based organisations in creating new opportunities for the most marginalised communities to engage and participate in planning and making of the city in the period after the Arab spring (2011). In this

study I will collect information on different organisations' roles, experiences and practices in creating different spaces of participation, as well as, the experiences of citizens in participating in these spaces. I aim to collect video, audio and written interviews/notes/observations, which will be used in several ways. All the information collected will contribute to research dissemination, articles and papers.

2. Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been contacted because we want to interview who have had experience in participating in invited spaces for participation (spaces created by Amman's municipality and/or with other official actors and ministries in the city; like the Ministry of Environment). I will be interviewing a range of people who have had such experience.

3. Do I have to take part?

No. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a 'consent form'. If you decide to take part, you are still free to stop at any time without giving a reason. No questions will be asked if you stop.

4. What will happen if I take part? What do I have to do?

If you decided to take part in this research, I will contact you to arrange an interview at a safe time and place that suits you (a public safe place). I will answer any questions you may have about the interview or the project before the meeting.

However, you will be asked about your experience in participating in one of the public participation events created by The Greater Amman Municipality in the past years.

What would the interview be like?

You will be given the 'consent form'. You only sign this form if you agree to take part in the interview. You will be given a copy of the consent form to keep and ask for your permission to audio tape the interview.

The interview will be a little like a conversation, in which I will help you talk about your experience in your own words. I will ask questions about your role in the events of participation, how you were introduced to these events, who did take part in these events, what were the opportunities in taking part, and the disadvantaged. Have you been to several events and

workshops, or if you were trained before engaging in these events, how did you perceived the role of the government and the state officials. For the same project, how many times have you participated, and if many, how did you see your role and the actor's role changing. At the end of the project were you satisfied with the outcomes/or at the end of your role in participation. Have you participated in a feedback workshops or events and if yes, can you share your experience in this sort of meetings.

How long would the interview take?

The time it takes for an interview varies, depending on how much you have to say, but most interviews last at least an hour. If you would prefer, I can interview you on two different occasions. Remember, if you want to stop the interview at any time, you can do so without giving any reason at all.

What if I decide to withdraw after the interview has taken place?

If you decide to leave after an interview has taken place, all recordings, transcripts and typing of your interview would be destroyed.

What would happen after the interviews?

I will transcript the interview, and destroy the recording, where the transcripts are kept in a secure place. If you wish I will send a copy of the interview transcript to a pre-arranged safe address. This will help you decide whether you want your interview to be made available to use for our research. You would be asked to read the interview and consider if there was anything you would like to change or remove. I can remove any sections that you do not want us to use.

5. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There is no physical or direct psychological harm in taking part in this research. However, if any unexpected discomforts during the meeting; either from the questions asked or anything else, you can immediately ask the researcher to halt the meeting or to change the questions.

6. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no benefits for those people participating in the project.

7. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to the researcher and her supervisors. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you have given your explicit consent for this. Your personal details will not be included unless you explicitly request this. The researcher will be collecting only personal information that is absolutely essential to the research activity.

8. What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

9. What will happen to the data collected, and the results of the research project?

Due to the nature of this research it is very likely that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future research questions. We will ask for your explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way.

10. Who is organising and funding the research?

The Yarmouk University in Irbid/Jordan.

11. Who is the Data Controller?

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University of Sheffield is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

12. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the School of Architecture.

13. What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?

If you have any complaints regarding the treatment of the researcher, please contact the supervisors of this research. In case you still feel that your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, please contact the head of department.

Note the detailed contacts for both the supervisors and the head of department are listed at the end of the form.

If the complaint relates to how the participants' personal data has been handled, please note that the rights of objection and restriction are complicated and each instance will be assessed individually. If you wish to exercise either of these rights, please contact Information Commissioner's Office: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

You will be given a copy of the information sheet, and if appropriate, a signed consent form to keep.

I appreciate your involvement and thank you for sparing your valuable time.

Name of participant [printed]

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher: Jakleen Al-Dalal'a

Signature

Date

Researcher Contact

Email: jaal-dalala1@sheffield.ac.uk

Telephone: 0790348749

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

Doina Petrescu - Professor of Architecture and Design Activism

School of Architecture/ The University of Sheffield, Arts Tower, Sheffield S10 2TN

Email: d.petrescu@sheffield.ac.uk

Melanie Lombard - Lecturer

Department of Urban Studies and Planning/ The University of Sheffield, Western Bank,
Sheffield S10 2TN

Email: m.b.lombard@sheffield.ac.uk

Appendix B. Consent Form/ Face to Face Participation



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Please tick the boxes if agreed (**PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY**)

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. ☐
- I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated..... for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
- I understand and agree that taking part in this project will include participating in an interview. ☐
- I agree that whilst I am participating in this interview audio recordings will be made. I agree to being audio recorded and for transcripts of these anonymised audio recordings to be used in the research. ☐
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw. ☐
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. ☐
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research. ☐
- I understand that by choosing to participate as a volunteer in this research, this does not create a legally binding agreement nor is it intended to create an employment relationship with the University of Sheffield. ☐
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded. ☐

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially. ☐
- I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. ☐
- I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this. ☐
- Any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations. ☐
- I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. ☐
- I understand that I am free to contact the researcher or any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information. ☐

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher.

Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.

Name of participant	Signature	Date
Name of Researcher: Jakleen Al-Dalal'a	Signature Jakleen Al-Dalal'	Date

Researcher Contact

Email: jaal-dalala1@sheffield.ac.uk

Mobile Phone: +062 79 0348 749

WhatsApp Number: +44 7535 702501

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

Doina Petrescu - Professor of Architecture and Design Activism

School of Architecture/ The University of Sheffield, Arts Tower, Sheffield S10 2TN

Email: d.petrescu@sheffield.ac.uk

Melanie Lombard - Lecturer

Department of Urban Studies and Planning/ The University of Sheffield, Western Bank,

Sheffield S10 2TN

Email: m.b.lombard@sheffield.ac.uk

Appendix C. Ethics Application Approval



Downloaded: 07/02/2024
Approved: 13/04/2021

Jakleen Al-Dalafa
Registration number: 190256539
School of Architecture
Programme: PhD. in Architecture

Dear Jakleen

PROJECT TITLE: Re-thinking Public Participation in Amman
APPLICATION: Reference Number 037705

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 13/04/2021 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review

- University research ethics application form 037705 (form submission date: 12/04/2021); (expected project end date: 25/08/2021).
- Participant information sheet 1088225 version 1 (01/03/2021).
- Participant consent form 1088234 version 2 (05/04/2021).
- Participant consent form 1088233 version 2 (05/04/2021).
- Participant consent form 1088232 version 2 (05/04/2021).
- Participant consent form 1088231 version 2 (05/04/2021).

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Your responsibilities in delivering this research project are set out at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Parag Wate
Ethics Administrator
School of Architecture

Please note the following responsibilities of the researcher in delivering the research project:

- The project must abide by the University's Research Ethics Policy: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/research-services/ethics-integrity/policy>
- The project must abide by the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices Policy: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.6710661/file/GRIPPpolicy.pdf
- The researcher must inform their supervisor (in the case of a student) or Ethics Administrator (in the case of a member of staff) of any significant changes to the project or the approved documentation.
- The researcher must comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
- The researcher is responsible for effectively managing the data collected both during and after the end of the project in line with best practice, and any relevant legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements.

Appendix D. General Interview Questions

Questions for Professionals/ Experts

- A brief introduction about (x) participatory project.
- What is the participatory strategy/plan conducted for Amman through your projects?
How did you make sure that it suits the Ammani local context?
- What is the role of GAM, private sectors and other stakeholders in the participatory processes?
- Before conducting the participatory activities, did you consider reviewing any local participatory project conducted by GAM or any other part? If existed.
- Generally speaking, what is your understanding of (public participation)?
- What communications channels did you use for reaching out people in their communities?
- Were the participants involved in any participatory activities before your project?
- In your project, what were people participating in? priority settings, information gathering, decision-making or implementations?
- What are the barriers that you have faced while carrying out the participatory project from the local communities, GAM and other stakeholders?
- Did you consider inclusiveness? by addressing the underrepresented locals in the participatory process? How?
- Were some people excluded or even self-excluded? Who? and why?
- Do you think people are willing to participate? Or do they prefer the public servants and policy makers to make decisions and provide for them?
- Have you changed your methods/tools of participation during the project? If yes, why?
- Do you think the methods used can be more generalised to the wider context in Amman? if no, why?
- What hinders participation in planning in general? What are the constraints of participation in Amman?
- Did you consider building capacities for the local communities? If yes, how?
- Do you feel that people are aware to their roles? Or the significance of their local knowledge?

- In general, how were design decisions made? Who made them? What has been taken into account?
- In your projects, do you think there should be greater participation? By whom? Politicians? Local initiatives? Individuals? Local civic organisations?
- Does participation always lead to action? Why?
- Did you have any negative feedback after finishing the design proposals? If yes, how did you consider dealing with it?
- In your opinion, do you think that the participatory planning approach or even the communicative planning work effectively for Amman context? If not, what do you recommend?

Questions for Initiatives/Grassroots Organisations

- How did the initiative started? What was the motivation?
 - Did you have to take approvals from GAM for the lands? How did they react?
 - How risky is it? On a political side?
 - Did you consider partnering with the public institutions? Would it make it easier? Do you think the project will succeed if you do not partner with the authorities?
 - What are the communications channels of approaching the people?
 - Were some people excluded or even self-excluded? Who? and why?
 - Have you faced some barriers with the locals? What kind?
 - Did you have any negative feedback from the locals?
 - Where do you see this project going?
 - In your opinion, do you think that the participatory planning approach work effectively for Amman context? If not, what do you recommend?
 - In your projects, do you think there should be greater participation? By whom? Politicians? Local initiatives? Individuals? Local civic organisations?
 - General speaking, what hinders participation? What are the constraints of participation in Amman?
 - Do you feel that the people are more aware of their roles? Or their significance of their local knowledge?
 - Has the process changed with GAM in terms of getting the approvals easily since you have already conducted before in a similar project?

Questions for GAM/ Experts

- in your opinion and vision for planning, what is your general concept of effective community engagement? And how is it achieved?
- Currently, the municipality is undertaking several collaborative projects with the local community through partnerships with international or local organisations, but there are no laws, regulations, or institutions for collaboration. Do you think this step is important now? Is the municipality striving for it? What steps might you need to take to institutionalise the process?
- Are there key administrative and legal steps that must be taken to ensure effective community participation?
- In your opinion, what are the major obstacles you face in collaborative projects? What are the factors that affect community participation in practical terms?
- After the experience in these projects, is community participation successful as an idea for use and development as a fundamental approach in planning? Why?
- Several discussions have recently arisen through communication channels and social media about a type of delay and procrastination from the municipality towards local non-profit institutions and organisations aiming to work on urban projects or public spaces to serve the community, often involving collaboration with local individuals, due to the abundance of municipality laws and procedures that could delay or lose funding opportunities for such organisations and institutions. What is your perspective on this issue?
- Since the beginning of community participation in 2007, we heard about public hearings in Amman, but after a while, these meetings disappeared! What is the reason? And did it have a positive impact?
- In your opinion, if these projects were internally funded, would people's acceptance of them be greater? And their participation more significant?
- Do the residents of Amman prefer to participate in matters concerning their city, or do they prefer experts to make decisions and provide them?
- Are there key administrative and legal steps that must be taken to ensure effective community participation?
- How can the concept of effective community participation be further promoted among citizens?

- What factors affect the interaction of citizens, associations, and organizations in the participation process? The nature of the project? Their knowledge and familiarity with the project?
- After the experience in these projects, is community participation successful as an idea for use and development as a fundamental approach in planning? Why?
- If an organisation has an idea, how do they communicate with the municipality? If they already use participatory methods and want to propose a project that serves a specific area?
- Are there other examples in the municipality of such participatory approaches and methodologies? Is it possible for the municipality to adopt such a role without the intervention of any agency? Any internal funding?

Appendix E. Report Submitted for USAID

This report formed part of my duties while volunteering with the Hara Initiative for the Al Ashrafiyah Heritage Trail project.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



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1 Introduction

1.1 Al Ashrafieh Background

Jordan is ranked one of the 50 most urbanized countries in the world. As of 2018, 90.3% of Jordan's population, an estimated 8,800,000 inhabitants, live in urban areas. This ratio has increased from 78.2% and approximately 3,580,000 people in 1995. This tremendous increase is a consequence of both; natural urban growth and continuous influxes of refugees due to ongoing conflicts and political instability in the region. Amman metropolitan area accounts for more than 50% of Jordan's population, contains about 80% of the country's industrial sector, and provides jobs for more than half of the country's population. This rapid urban population growth and uncontrolled urban expansion, besides the lack of economic opportunity for young generations, causes poverty and commercial decline. It, therefore, threatens the traditional roots and the rich local heritage that results in the loss of the popular traditions, urban cultures, and national characteristics of the place. Unfortunately, many areas in Jordan have been facing the risk of losing their heritage value, as their local communities do not value and preserve their cultural capital.

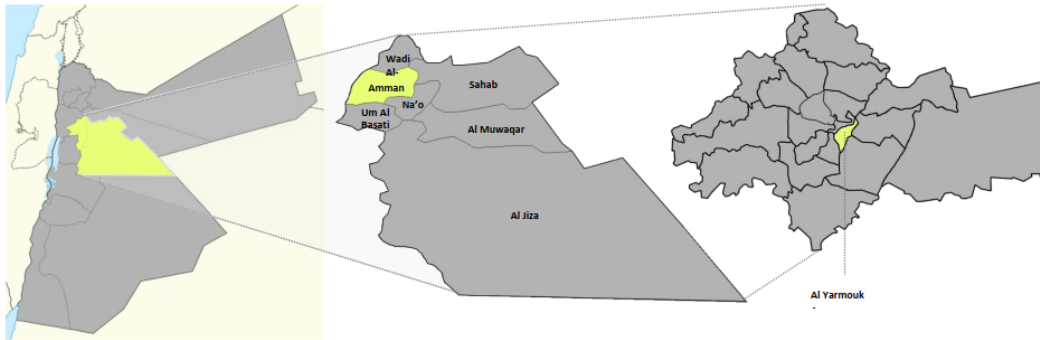


Figure 1: Location map of Jordan, Amman Governorate Districts, and Amman Centre District's areas

Jabal Al Ashrafieh is sited within Al-Yarmouk area – one of Amman center district's areas at the eastern part of the capital Amman. Jabal Al Ashrafieh is one of the seven hills of Amman that has a cultural heritage that tells the story of the Ammani people and the revolution of the capital. Jabal Al Ashrafieh captures a picturesque panoramic lookout of the whole parts of the city while overlooks Amman Stream (Sail Amman) while its magnificent historical buildings cascade down the mountain. Surrounded by Ras Al Ain, Jabal Al Nathif, Jabal Al Taj, Wadi Al Srou, and Al Wihdat, Jabal Al Ashrafieh accommodates prominent religious landmarks that make it famous for its diverse ethnical groups who settled to shape its multi-cultural identity. Armenians, Syrians, in addition to elite Jordanian families, have settled in Al Ashrafieh during the 40s - 60s.

Jabal Al-Ashrafyyah is one of many sites in the city of Amman that has been suffering from neglect. Consequently, its immense heritage has been lost and disappeared due to vandalism and negligence. Its steep serpentine streets are well-known for its old neighbourhoods like (the Armenian neighbourhood) accompanied by its beautiful churches, where Armenians lived upon arriving in Jordan after their diaspora back in the early twentieth century. Traditionally, Armenians build a church, cultural club, and school respectively upon their settling. Accordingly, they constructed their churches, clubs, and schools upon their arrival to Al-Ashrafieh.

Near the Armenian neighbourhood lives the Syriac community (Al-Asseriayn). Today, more than 30 families live in the area. Similar to the Armenians, Syrians built their first church in 1957, where it gathered for many years the Syriac community in Amman.

In addition to the old churches, Al Ashrafyyah is known for one of Amman's most prominent mosques, Abu Darweesh Mosque, located on top of a hill at the area and built by "Hasan Mustafa Sharkas" know as (Abu Darwish) in 1962 and has been known by his name since then. It is distinguished by its alternating black and white stone courses and combines both Mamluk and Ottoman architectural features. The Greater Amman Municipality carried out a project in 2007 to upgrade the public areas and buildings surrounding the mosque, covering an area of 4,500 sqm.

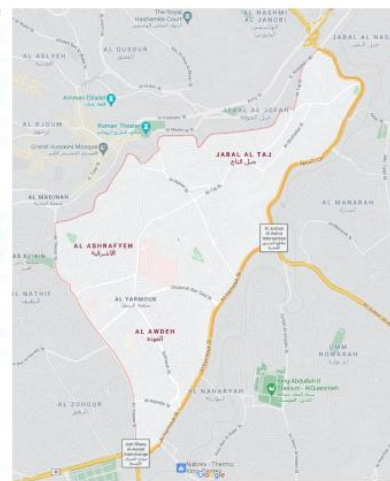


Figure 2: Al Yarmouk Area

Coupled with the distinguished mosque and old churches, Al-Ashrafieh is known for its narrow alleys and streets. The urban pattern has characterized by a pedestrian network of long and narrow stairs climbing up the mountain. These steps run down for hundreds of meters and in a perpendicular direction to the city centre.

Most of the old houses were built in the 50s from stone, where Palestinian and Syrian typological influences can be clearly seen. Issa Bakhit Qamo House (Bustan Bakhit) was built in 1936, also Samir Jweinat House from the 40s, beside Zuhair Qamo House from the 30s, and many others. Al-Ashrafieh has remained a closely linked community over the years where most everyone knows one another.

The existing diversity in the area contributed to creating one unique community where people from different backgrounds coexisted in harmony. Presently, the tourism sector has no significant activity in Al-Ashrafieh. Although, the residents are aware of its distinctive heritage and character and quoting Yousef Al-Jaber (one of the men we spoke to), who is working in his small Dry/Clean shop for more than fifty years:

'Tourists and Ammanis used to come to Al-Ashrafieh in the '80s due to its beautiful weather while enjoying the panoramic views. This place used to attract tourists for its culture and its rich heritage. Unfortunately, today you rarely see anyone visiting Al-Ashrafieh only to appreciate its beauty.'

Nowadays, this area has to face several issues affecting its social and economic stability. These critical issues can be summarised as follows:

1. Threats to cultural heritage.
2. Unethical practices at public spaces.
3. Economic decline.
4. Loss of commercial centrality.
5. Exclusion of the Ashrafiehh from the economic benefits of tourism compared to its neighbouring areas; for example, Al-Weibdeh and Jabal Amman.
6. Safety and security issues.
7. Deterioration of the built environment.

1.2 Project Background

This project would address the story of Al-Ashrafieh through the creation of a tourist trail experience of the oldest yet neglected neighbourhoods of Amman. This trail narrates the tale of Jabal Al Ashrafieh and its cultural heritage, ethnic and religious diversity, and social cohesion that unfortunate has been losing its legacy and heritage during the past 20 years as a result of relocation (displacement) of its original families to new districts or migration to other countries. The study sheds light on Al-Ashrafieh's tangible and intangible assets while introducing potential tourist attractions based on the narration of stories throughout the trail.

This trail manifests in the Al Harra experience (live the locals' life) while emphasizing the cultural heritage through physical and non-physical interventions.

The project strives to revive Al-Ashrafieh heritage by creating suitable conditions for a long-term process of sustainable tourism and development. through improving the local economy and social cohesion in Al-Ashrafieh

This project also aims to:

- Raise awareness among community members about the importance of sustainable tourism.
- Support local people and empower the community (especially marginalized groups such as women and youth) through different small businesses as a catalyst to improve livelihood and lift the local economy.
- Revive heritage assets and community human and physical resources to revive the identity of Amman neighbourhoods.
- Promote ownership and accountability
- Conserve local heritage that comprises tangible and intangible culture.

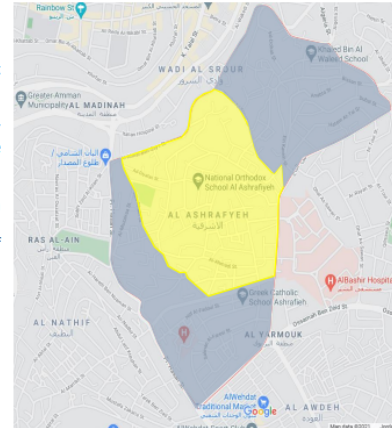


Figure 3: Scope of Study

Harra is a non-profit organisation that supports marginalised communities in co-designing a more equitable city. Most of Harra work is carried by volunteers who are passionate about social justice. Hara works with a wide range of organisations from small groups to major professional bodies and research institutions. Hara's approach starts from its name (Harra) which is an Arabic term referring to the core unit of community in Arab and Islamic culture. The old *Harra* was characterised by its social coherence and a collective moral, such that its components (children, women, men, families and neighbours) formed a functionally cooperative segment of society. Since its establishment, the Harra Initiative has sought to weave together the various fragmented communities living within Amman's most underrepresented communities. Throughout reviving the spirit of collaboration while encouraging community self-expression. Hara looks at the full engagement of all stakeholders and residents as the key element for fostering the people's collective ownership and social accountability towards their small *Harra* then to the whole city. Harra's participatory approach targets many levels that affect the structure of the community manifests in the physical, social, economic, environmental, and educational aspects that contribute directly to enhancing the living conditions of any community.

Hara initiative believes in Lefebvre's argument. Space is a social product or a complex social construction (based on values and the social production of meanings) which affects spatial practices and perception.

From this perspective, the initiative believes in co-creating and co-designing at all levels that enhance ownership, accountability, and social cohesion. Hence, all voices at the end matter in creating a space. Additionally, Hara admits that change stems from the local participatory engagement that can open new horizons for people to embrace their pioneering role - yet neglected- in rebuilding and reviving their neighborhood identity as an active, influential, and interactive social unit with its surroundings.

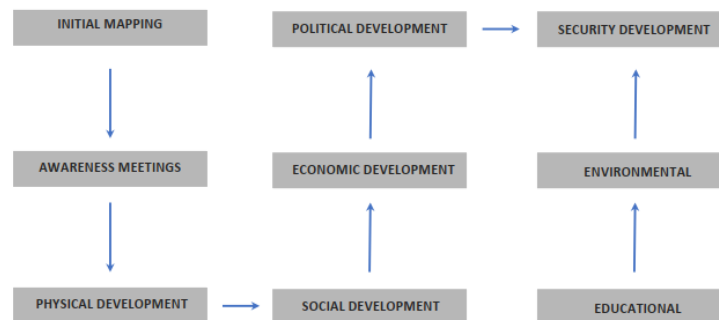
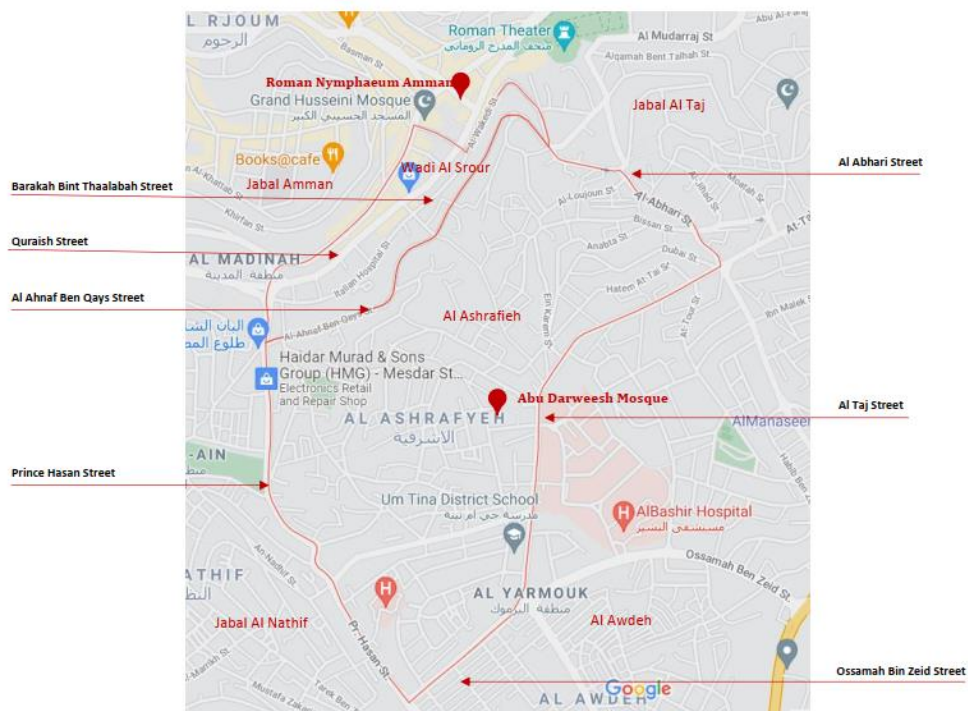


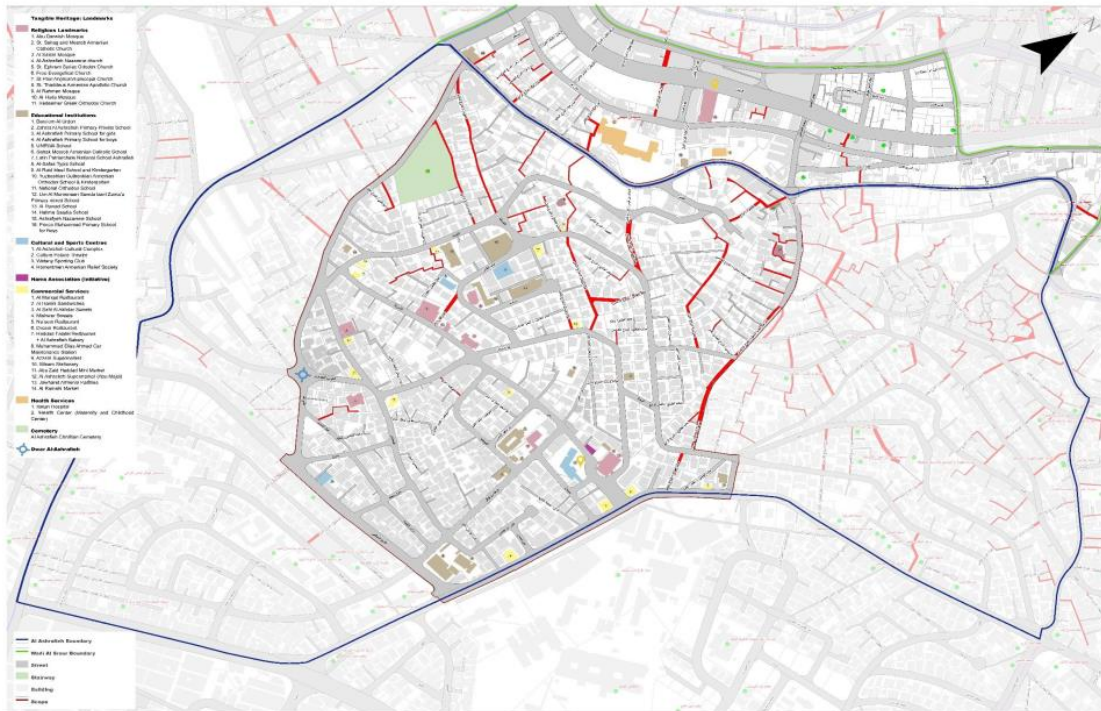
Figure 4: Al Harra Model

2 Spatial Study

2.1 Accessibility and Surroundings



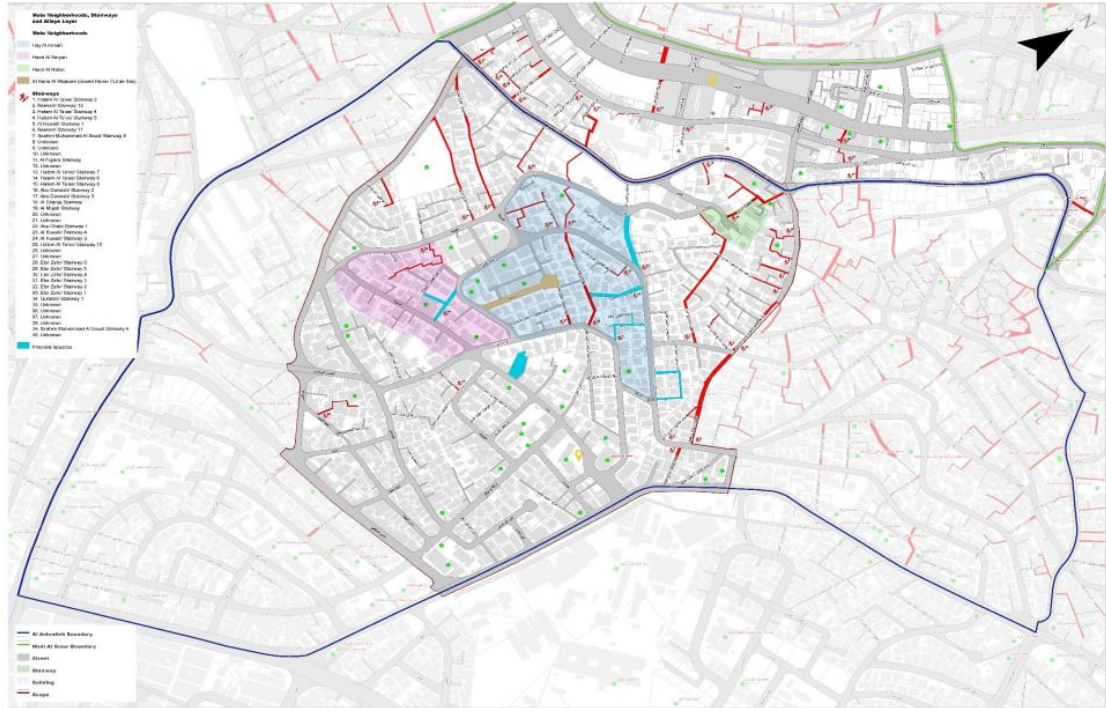
2.2 Tangible Heritage: Landmarks



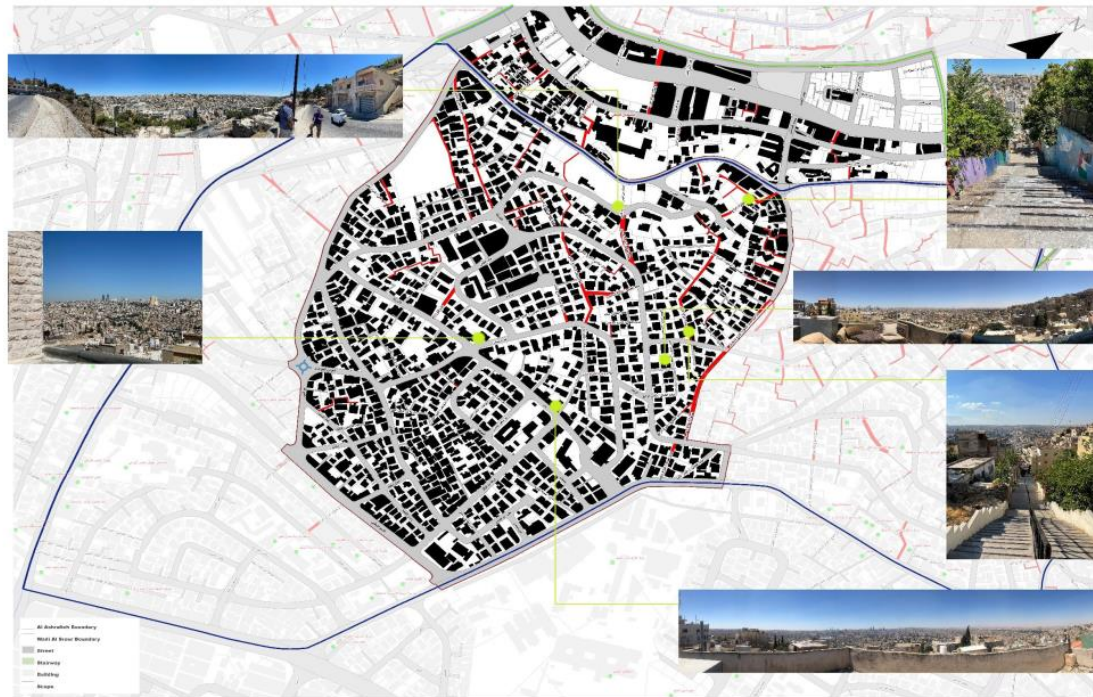
2.3 Tangible Heritage: Architectural Identity



2.4 Main Neighbourhoods Stairways and Alleys



2.5 Solid and Void: Urban Density



3 Proposed Heritage Trails: Four Scenarios

The visitor/tourist will experience Al Ashrafieh's heritage throughout the trail by exploring main attractions and interactive activities with the locals. Al Ashrafieh cultural complex is the assembly point where public toilets are available. Restrooms are also available at the end of the trail at Quraish street in Redeemer Greek Orthodox Church. The trail will introduce the ethnic and socio-cultural diversity of Al Ashrafieh. Starting from Abu Darwish Mosque while ending at Quraish street will let the visitor identify Al-Ashrafieh attractions and live a unique experience through interactive activities with the citizens. After analyzing and assessing the cultural, economic, and spatial aspects of the study area. Four different scenarios have been determined, in line with potential spaces that can be developed through Al Harra methodology.

Following are the four scenarios and some proposed activities alongside the trail:

Scenario 1:

- Activity 1 (Starting point): Tour inside Abu Darwish Mosque – the story of Abu Darwish Mosque
- Activity 2: Falafel Pocket at panoramic view 1 – History of Al-Ashrafieh
- Activity 3: Tour inside 3 churches
- Activity 4: Introducing the Syriac community (a glimpse of the Syriac culture)
- Activity 5: Live Al Harra Experience
- Activity 6: Introducing the Armenian community (a glimpse of the Armenian culture)
- Activity 7: Stop at the panoramic view

Scenario 2:

- Activity 1 (Starting point): Abu Darwish Mosque – the story of Abu Darwish Mosque
- Activity 2: Live Al Harra Experience – Fruit Pocket
- Activity 3: Highlighting historical buildings throughout Abu Darwish Street
- Activity 4: Tour inside 3 churches
- Activity 5: Introducing the Syriac community (a glimpse of the Syriac culture)
- Activity 6: Introducing the Armenian community (a glimpse of the Armenian culture)
- Activity 7: Stop at the panoramic view

Scenario 3:

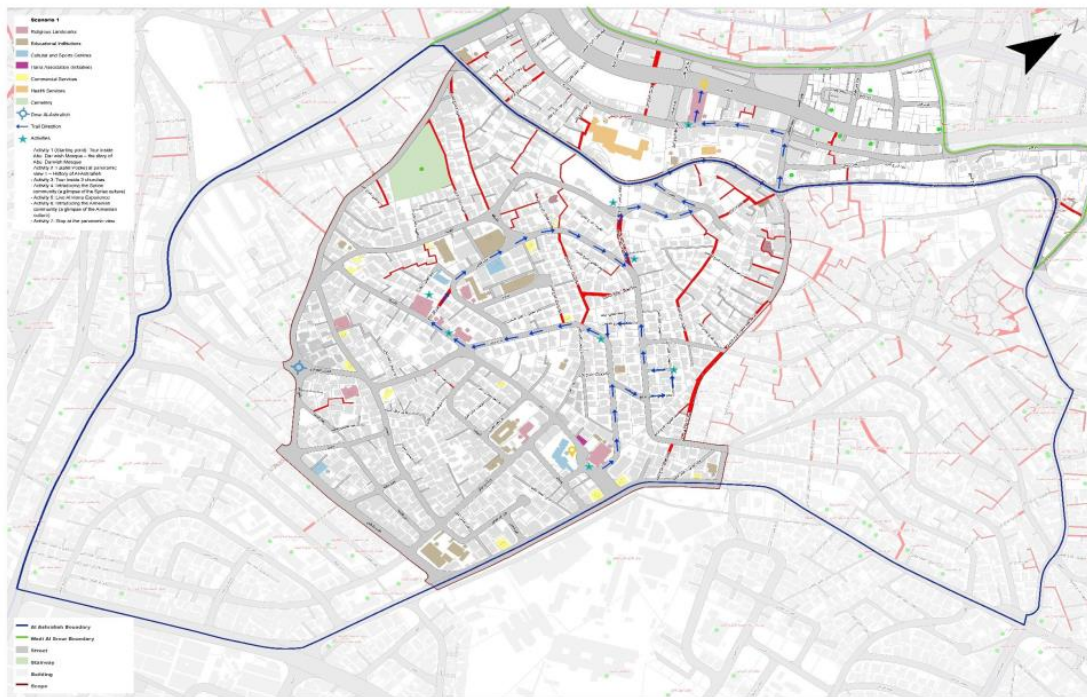
- Activity 1 (Starting point): Abu Darwish Mosque – the story of Abu Darwish Mosque
- Activity 2: Live Al Harra Experience – Fruit Pocket
- Activity 3: Highlighting historical buildings throughout Abu Darwish Street
- Activity 4: Tour inside 3 churches
- Activity 5: Introducing the Syriac community (a glimpse of the Syriac culture)

Activity 6: Introducing the Armenian community (a glimpse of the Armenian culture)
 Activity 7: Stop at the panoramic view

Scenario 4:

Activity 1 (Starting point): Abu Darwish Mosque – the story of Abu Darwish Mosque
 Activity 2: Live Al Harra Experience – Fruit Pocket
 Activity 3: Highlighting historical buildings throughout Abu Darwish Street
 Activity 4: Tour inside 3 churches
 Activity 5: Introducing the Syriac community (a glimpse of the Syriac culture)
 Activity 6: Introducing the Armenian community (a glimpse of the Armenian culture)
 Activity 7: Stop at the panoramic view

3.1 Scenario 1



Legend:

- Education Institutions
- Cultural and Sports Centres
- Health Services
- Police Stations
- Fire Stations
- Water Supply
- Electricity
- Telecommunications
- Transportation
- Other
- Al-Jubail Municipality Boundary
- Neighboring Municipality Boundary
- Highway
- Arterial
- Collector
- Local
- Other

[illegible]

Appendix F. List of Interviewees and Selection Criteria for Phase 1 of the Research

Table F.1: List of Interviewees and Selection Criteria for Phase 1 of the Research

Interviewee Typology	Gender		Age Group				Status of Activity		Nationality		Organisation/structure						Background study			
	F	M	18-30	30-45	45-60	>60	Not active	Active	Jordanian	other	Governmental	INGO	Private	Civic Organisations	University	Individual	Architecture/planning	Engineering	Social Studies	Others
Activists																				
Practitioners																				

Current/Former Official Planners at GAM																				
Students							N/A	N/A												
							N/A	N/A												
Academics and Researchers																				

Appendix G. List of GAM Interviewees

Table G.1: List of GAM Interviewees

No	Interviewee Occupation	Gender		Age	Interview Location		Interview Date
		F	M		Online	Face to Face	
1	Deputy Mayor			>60s			
2	Deputy City Director for Community Development Affairs			50s			
3	Director of the Directorate of Social Affairs			40s			
4	Director of Queen Rania Community Parks			40s			
5	Director of the Directorate of Cultural Affairs			40s			
6	Deputy City Director for Planning and Economic Development Affairs			50s			
7	Director of Planning			50s			
8	Director of Comprehensive Planning Unit			50s			
9	Director of Sustainable Development and Amman Resilience Plan			60s			
10	Director of Sustainable Studies Department			50s			
11	Director of Parks and Desertification Department			40s			
12	Director of the Agricultural Department			40s			
13	Director of the Handicapped Unit			50s			
14	Director of the Communication and Information Directorate			50s			
15	Director of the Media Department			40s			
16	Director of the Public Relation Department			40s			
17	Director of Special Projects Building License			40s			
18	Director of Leadership and Business Intelligence			40s			
19	Official at the Planning Comprehensive Planning Department			30s			
20	Official at the Department of Studies and Designs			30s			
21	Official at the Directorate of Social Affairs			40s			
22	Official at the Directorate of Cultural Affairs			30s			

Appendix H. Reflexive Fieldnotes

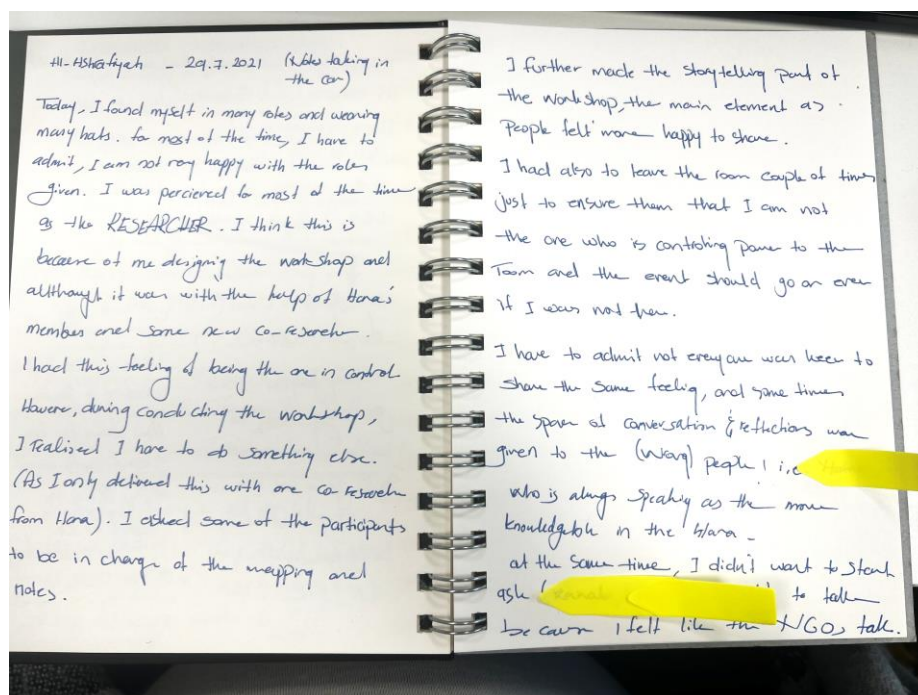


Figure H.1: Reflexive fieldnote from Al-Ashrafiyah workshop. (Author)

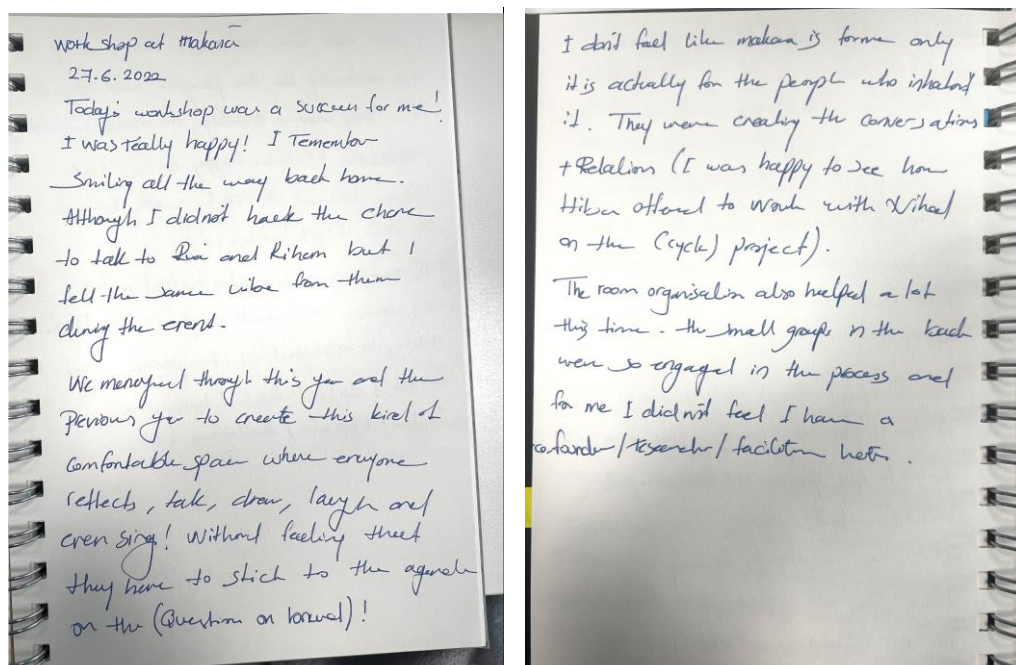


Figure H.2: Reflexive fieldnote from makāna workshop. (Author)

Group meeting at Fatima Al-Zahrani Park (UN-H)
2.7.21

I was very disappointed today that [redacted] and she didn't show up in person and instead asked for a google meet link. She was busy (not opening her camera) and barely replying to my questions or the participants' concerns and questions! However, what happened turned to be somehow good for me as I have noticed the participants felt more free and confident to talk to me individually - they were keen to share about their negative experience with UN-Habitat.

I was happy to be more close to them. I think the way I presented myself and the previous WhatsApp message with them created some sort of trust and connection.

Figure H.3: Reflexive fieldnote from meeting with participants at UN-Habitat project: Block-by-Block workshop.
(Author)

Appendix I. GAM's Formal Documents for Park's Rehabilitation Projects

These documents elucidate the interdepartmental communication concerning the rehabilitation of a park in Amman, employing a predominantly top-down approach reliant solely on the vision of architects and officials at GAM. The documents indicate that communication between departments relies solely on written exchanges and signatures between department heads and officials, with no regard for public opinions or demands.

٥٣٢٩

امانة عمان الكبرى

١٠٤٤
١٧
٨

مذكره داخليه الى مدير دائرة الدراسات التاريخ التوقيع ١١/٤

الرقم من م-٦ خربة السوق وجاوا ا. ح.

تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

اشارة الي توجيهات أمين عمان بالانابه بخصوص الشكوى المقدمه من اهالي منطقة وادي الطي حول حديقة [وادي الطي].
ارجو التلطف باتخاذ الاجراءات اللازمه بخصوص البنود رقم (٨-٣) والمبينه بالشكوي المرفق صورته عنها.

واقبلوا الاحترام

مدير منطقة خربة السوق وجاوا والياوده المهندس / زياد ختاته

نسخة الى:
• عطوفة النائب للمناطق والبيئة .
• عطوفه النائب للشؤون الزراعيه .
• مدير دائرة البرامج والمرافق الرياضيه / لطفاً "لمحتبة يتبع كون الحديقہ تابعة لدائرة تكم
• مدير دائرة تكنولوجيا المعلومات .
التداول .

م. بيسان ابو لبن للاعداد لطفى

c.v/v/cv c.v/v/cv

www.amman.jo cityofamman ammannacitytube CAN App عمانيون CCL PRO

جری

١٣٠٠ م. ١٤٠٠ هـ

مذكرة داخلية

من	إلى	التوقيع	التاريخ
١	٢٠٠٢	١٩/١١/١٩	١٩/١١/١٩
٢	٢٠٠٢	١٩/١١/١٩	١٩/١١/١٩
٣	٢٠٠٢	١٩/١١/١٩	١٩/١١/١٩
٤	٢٠٠٢	١٩/١١/١٩	١٩/١١/١٩
٥	٢٠٠٢	١٩/١١/١٩	١٩/١١/١٩

الموضوع: إعداد تقارير الخرائط من لقطع المساحات المأهولة
الكبرى من منطقة عذب منى وأم السعفة

استدركت المحضرين المذكورين في المحضرات المذكورة بالخصوص، من أعمال المراكز
معرضاً في عكسها من المخطط ومما قد صادف في الاستمارة بهذا الخصوص (ج)
(إعداد المخطط وتقسيمه إلى مناطق ومناطق)

نسخة ٢٠٠٣ من المخطط لإدارة (إدارة) (١٨٨٥٠٠)

أرجو جازاً بأنكم الصالحين

١٩/١١/١٩

للمراجعين المذكورين في المحضر المذكورين بالخصوص، من أعمال المراكز
معرضاً في عكسها من المخطط ومما قد صادف في الاستمارة بهذا الخصوص (ج)

١٩/١١/١٩

للمراجعين المذكورين في المحضر المذكورين بالخصوص، من أعمال المراكز
معرضاً في عكسها من المخطط ومما قد صادف في الاستمارة بهذا الخصوص (ج)

١٩/١١/١٩

3

التوقيع

3

من

الرقم

م.م خريبة السوق وجاوا

5.

تحية طيبة وبعد...

اشاره الى توجيهات أمين عمان بالانابه بخصوص الشكوى المقدمة من اهالي منطقة وادي الطي حول حديقة(وادي الطي).

ارجو التلطف باتخاذ الاجراءات اللازمه بخصوص البنود رقم (٣-٨) والمبينه بالشكوى المرفق صورته.

واقبلوا الاحترام

مدير منطقة
خربة السوق وجاوا واليادوده
المهندس / زياد ختاتنه

۳۔ شہزاد انور
رولڈ مار رولڈا ریاستیں مع سیمپل ہار / بیسیان
سلفی، لکھنؤ و امداد ستیرینہ ریائی بالخصوص
ع، امداد

نسخه الى:

- ١/٢٧
- عصوفة النائب للمناطق والبيئة
عصوفة النائب للشؤون الزراعية
مدير دائرة البرامج والمرافق الرياضية / لطفاً المحترم بفتح كـون الحديقة تابعه لدائرة تكم
مدير دائرة تكنولوجيا المعلومات
التداول

۳. بیباک ابولین

للأفراد رطفاً

 $c_{12} h_1 / c_{22}$

مذكرة داخلية

الرقم	من	إلى	التوقيع	التاريخ
١.	ر. م. مهديان كبريت	م. د. الزراة		١٤/٤/٢٠١٧
٢.	ر. م. الزراة	م. د. الزراة		١٤/٤/٢٠١٧
٣.	م. د. الزراة	ع. م. د. الزراة		١٤/٤/٢٠١٧
٤.		العميد د. الزراة		١٤/٤/٢٠١٧
٥.				

أرسلوا إعلامكم بأمره ورعيه الهلال مع الحداثة الفدية جدا
تم استأذنها عام ١٩٨٩م وهي بحاجة ماسة لإعادة تأهيل كمال
فرصها خاصة دائرة الدراسات والتقييم مع أجل عمل التقييم
اللائم لها وتحويلها لدائرة الاشراف ليتم تأهيلها عبر طريق
مقابل لأنها بحاجة الى أسوار ومعدات جلسات وعرضه طارئة
رعاية أطفال رضيع كرم.

ع. م. د. الزراة

وهي الصور الزينة

ع. م. د. الزراة

مع العلم أن الحد ليقم بالحاجة ماسة تأهيل زراعي
لا يوجد بالحديقة إلا عدد بسيط من الأشجار حولها
وتختلف الأشجار الزاوية حوالي «١٠٠٠» ستة آلاف دينار

ر. م. الزراة

م. د. الزراة

ع. م. د. الزراة

أهمل الكلفة بالافانج لطفاً وتوفيقاً

ع. م. د. الزراة

Appendix J. Social Mobiliser's Agenda for One of the Participatory Meetings at UML Project

Agenda for the meeting with the local community (Manara site) 19.6.2021 Tue

- Invite attendees to participate in phone calls with them, or actual meetings

The event will take a place from 5:30-7:30

5:00-5:30	• “Come together” and registration
5:30-6:00	• Ice Braking ◦ Brief welcoming everybody ◦ Ice breaking questions
6:00-6:15	• GAM opening words
6:15-7:15	• Open discussions with attendees
7:15-7:30	• Summarizing the dialogue, agreeing on the results, and thanking the attendances.

Detailed Outline

Ice breaking Session:

Objective: The goal is to remind the audience of the project's importance

Method: Questions are asked to the audience and answers are distributed in folded cards. The person with the closest answer will receive a gift.

Questions on Cards

1. When was the last time you were in a completely green place? What is the percentage of forest area in Jordan?? (The closest answer will win a gift)
2. Question on native species
3. Do you think you have ever inhaled any of the most toxic gases? (Write the types of poisonous gases on colored paper and give them to the audience. After they answer, they turn the paper over to see what type of gas they may have been exposed to) → Explain that green spaces help reduce toxic gases in urban areas.
4. What is the link between water scarcity and green places in Jordan?
- 5.

Questions on the Manara plaza (Persons will get yes and no cards)

1. Do you think the Manara plaza is safer now?
2. Do we need other green spaces in the same area?
3. Do you feel that you benefit from this place?
4. Could the place have been better than it is now?
5. Do you think that improving the place helps to change the behavior of children

Discussion points.

- What is your assessment of the current situation out of 10? And why?
- Taking all the circumstances into consideration, consider yourself have the authority, what decisions you would Implement?
- Talking about the upcoming Eid
- Talking about how to create a permanent communication system between the community, and GAM.

Appendix K. Fieldnotes Comments Following Site/Event Visit Completion

Question 1: When was the last time you were in a completely green place? What is the percentage of forest area in Jordan?

Answer: most of the gathered participants have not been in an open green space (in any part in Jordan) for a long time. One participant expressed that the last time he has been to green space was before the COVID-19 situation.

Question 2: About native species in Jordan?

Answer: most participants showed a considerable knowledge about the trees and plants living in Jordan. Hala emphasised the native trees and plants that have been planted in the area.

Question 3: Do you think you have ever inhaled any of the most toxic gases?

Answer: In general, participants were aware of the dangerous emissions produced by cars.

Question 4: Do you think you have ever inhaled any of the most toxic gases?

Answer: In general, participants were aware of the dangerous emissions produced by cars and traffic pollution in general.

Question 5: What is the link between water scarcity and green places in Jordan?

Answer: There was a general agreement on when there is a shortage of water, the plants may slow down the process of growth or even stop it.

Question focusing on the Manara Plaza. YES or NO questions.

Question 1: Do you think the Manara plaza is safer now?

Answer: All participants answered YES collectively regarding the Plaza only, however, the participant showed a negative reaction to the safety issue in the whole Al-Manara area. One of the participants claimed that crime and fight rates are increasing dramatically recently.

Question 2: Do we need other green spaces in the same area?

Answer: All participants answered YES collectively.

The participants demanded that they need **similar to Queen Rania Park**. Also, they claimed that **Aden Park** is an **abandoned site** in the present time. Although it has a great potential to be an active site for the local community, one of the participants said.

Moreover, the participant started to mention some of the basic demands for the parks, such as CCTV Cameras, **additional sitting areas** and **guards for security issues**. More importantly, there was a consensus on GAM's lack sense of duty regarding the irrigation system for the parks in the local area of Al-Manara.

Question 3: Do you feel that you benefit from this place?

Answer: The three participants who said No were mostly concerned about the **safety** of the site for children, as they said it is **close to the main street**. Another participant said that there should be **more seats** so everyone can have a fair opportunity to use the site.

Question 4: Could the place have been better than it is now?

Answer: All participants answered Yes.

Question 5: Do you think that improving the place helps to change the behaviour of children?

Answer: All participants answered Yes.

Discussion Points.

What is your assessment of the current situation out of 10? And why?

Answer: The highest score was 9.5 out of 10, the participant positively sees a better enhancement of the site and assured the importance of the aesthetic element in improving the site. "I can give a full score, but I want to keep it on 9 so you can **improve it repeatedly**," the participant said. Another participant also giving a 9.5 out of 10 scores claimed that the children around the site are not fully aware of the importance and the significance of the site, that's why several incidents happened before. So, in his opinion, there should be more **awareness campaigns** targeting the children and youth, as well as for all the parents settled in the area.

Another participant with a 7 out of 10 scores said that his relatively high score is to keep the team **enthusiastic to work** more on their needs and wants for the site. However, Hala assured that most of the local's demands were met by GAM, such as more seats and benches, planting trees and fences. The lowest score, which was 6 out of 10, expressed the lack of **security and safety** made her give this score.

Open discussion.

In general, people showed their need for **more seats** for the plaza. They say if there were more sitting areas people would definitely use them, as they lack public areas around.

Regarding the **guard situation**, GAM representative assures that there was a consideration to use a guard, nevertheless, there are no close services for him to use.

EID conditions:

How to overcome the EID celebration incidents, as local people used to bring their wooden swings and have them hammered in the existing trees. Suggestions are as below:

- GAM should **contact the people responsible** for such activities and ban them from implementing any sort of structure on the site.

GAM representative responds:

The greater municipality had some initial **entertaining plans** for the area for the EID period, so, the locals would have other options to consider instead of playing and using the traditional temporary swings.

People commented that if they are going to do so, they should be **implementing their plan several days before the EID**.

- Another participant suggested if GAM would plant **more trees on the site**, they would not have the ability to use their structures on the site. But as Hala questions the participants (what if they uprooted the newly planted trees?)

As the participants are thinking of new solutions.

Another GAM representatives respond:

If any of the locals complains at GAM during the EID, he would come and **dismantle their structures**.

- One of the participants suggests finding an **alternative site**.
- Another participant suggests that GAM should **invest in larger open areas** and transform them into public open spaces for the people.

However, there is a collective feeling that:

- There are **no appropriate public parks** around the area where people can have a real benefit and use during the EID or any other kind of celebration.
- Most of the local parks are considered **waste dump** areas and are no longer in good condition to be considered a public park.
- All the EID temporary entertaining wooden structures are considered to be **unsafe and dangerous**.
- The **new urban development agendas** are contributing to destroying the social and cultural layers in areas like Al-Manara.
- GAM should **focus on all the parks and open spaces** in the area not only this small spot.

Communication Channel with GAM and the local community:

- There should always be an **officer from Al-Manara** in direct connection with GAM.
- GAM should hire a **guard** for the site, to keep it safe and check all the updates from the locals.
- To have **direct contact** with GAM from the local representatives, by having Eng. Ahmad Al-Ajouri contact details, like his phone number.
- A **local committee** to be responsible and in direct connection with GAM about what is the condition of the site and how it could be improved, or if the locals have specific needs to be asked from GAM.

GAM responds:

Installing a **suggestions box**, where people would submit written letters to GAM about their needs.

People's reaction:

None of the participants agreed on what GAM had suggested.

Appendix L. Social Mobiliser's Questions for Residents at ILCA Project

This is a sample questionnaire sent out by the social mobilisers involved in the ILCA project. It contains straightforward questions that the mobilisers argue serve as a way to engage with the community.

The questions are translated as the following.

Q1. In your opinion, how can the presence of a security centre reduce acts of sabotage inside the park?

Q2. According to you, what are the best times to visit the park?? (Given 4 options, 10-12 AM, 12-3 PM, 4-8 PM, 8-10 PM)

Q3. Do you prefer an opening and closing time for the park?

Q4. Do special activities for girls in the morning encourage families to send their daughters to the park?

Q5. How does forming a committee of senior officials contribute to maintaining the continuity and sustainability of the park?

Q6. Does having a presence on social media platforms help with taking care of the park?

Q7. Are you a member in a (Local society association, Mukhtar, Youth club, neighbourhood association, sport club)?

Q8. Would you like to be a member of a local committee and receive special training? If yes, what do you expect your role to be and responsibilities?

النوع الاجتماعي ☐
 ذكر ☐
 الفئة العمرية / العمر ☐
 مكان السكن ☐
 الحديقة الرئيسية ☐
 الحديقة الصغيرة ☐
 الدرج السابع ☐

انثى

1. براكم كيف يقلل وجود المركز الامني من الاعمال التخريبية داخل الحديقة

2. براكم ما هي انسب الاوقات لكم لارتياح الحديقة؟
 - 10 - 12 ظهرا
 - 12 - 3 ظهرا
 - 4 - 8 مساء
 - 8 - 10 مساء

3. هل تفضلون وقت لإغلاق وفتح الحديقة يوميا
 نعم الساعة -----
 لا / لماذا -----

4. هل وجود أنشطة خاصة للفتيات صباحا يشجع العائلات على ارسال بناتهم
 - نعم
 - لا

5. كيف يساعد تشكيل لجنة من الاهالي في المحافظة على استمرار واستدامة الحديقة؟

6- هل وجود وجود صفحة خاصة للحديقة على منصة التواصل الاجتماعي يساعدكم في معرفة
 - نعم
 - لا

Figure L.1: Photo of the questions asked by the social mobilisers at ILCA project for the public. Source: Social mobilisers (2021)

7- هل انت عضو في ؟

- جمعية محلية
- مختار
- لجنة شبابية
- رابطته اهالي
- نادي رياضي

8- هل ترغب في ان تكون عضوا في لجنة المجتمع المحلي وتتلقي تدريبا في اساليب العمل في هذه اللجان المشرفة .

نعم / ماذا تتوقعون ان يكون دوركم ومسؤولياتكم .

لا / لماذا

التهت الأسئلة ----- مشاهدات الباحث /ة

تاريخ المقابلة

اسم الباحث /ة

Figure L.2: Photo of the questions asked by the social mobilisers at ILCA project for the public. Source: Social mobilisers (2021)

Appendix M. Workshop at Hara Initiative

This is an example of one of the workshops carried by Hara members and myself along with volunteers co-researchers. The goal was to re-design the rooftops of residences into tourist destinations, aimed at acquainting visitors with the indigenous culture and traditions of Al-Ashrafiyah. (See Figure M1 and M2). This underscored a collaborative effort to utilise locally sourced materials and communal assistance from residents of Hara, fostering the generation of supplemental income opportunities within the community. The idea of turning the rooftops to attractions for tourists have been discussed with the participants and many residents of the Hara before I started volunteering at the Hara, where they expressed a positive intention towards the idea.

Place:

Hara office in Al-Ashrafiyah.

Participants:

The residents of the blocks, besides anyone living those blocks and interested to be involved. For this workshop we went door-to-door to invite the participants. Total number: 22

Items needed:

- Computers/laptops with Design Software programmes
- Pens/sheets/notebooks
- Light snacks and Coffee
- Prayer zone for the female participants

Time:

4 days' workshop

Workshop objectives:

- To explore and imagine different activities that would help create a sustainable income for the residents involved.
- To think collaboratively how to preserve the traditions and local knowledge from the people of the Hara and how to utilise it.
- Create more relations and networks between the people interested in the project and others.
- To build more relationships between the members of Hara and the participants

- To co-share knowledge and co-generate one form the local residents of the Hara

Workshop Activities and Agenda

Day 1 16th July 2021

Time	Activity
10-10:30	Breakfast in the site from a local well known Falafel shop
10:30-12:00	Walk around Al-Armen Hara (the site of the rooftops)
12:00-12:15	Head to the office
12:15-12:45	Coffee/Prayer Break
12:45-1:15	Map the ideas around sustainable income activities related to the idea of re-designing the rooftops that capture one of the best panoramic views in Amman as an attraction to the tourists (on sheets/papers)
1:15-1:45	Discuss the ideas and brainstorm together
1:45-2:30	In small groups discuss these ideas in relation to the whole Heritage Trail Project
2:30-3:00	In the big group draw/write collaboratively the activities to be implemented in the rooftops that reflect the ethos of the Hara and its traditions
3:00	End

Day 2 17th July 2021

Time	Activity
1:00-1:15	Ice breaking activity
1:15-1:30	Brief on the collective mapping from Day 1
1:30- 2:00	Discuss in big group ideas, concerns or simply reflections on the activities and how they relate to the Trail Project
2:00-3:00	In smaller groups translate these into designs either drawing them freehand or using digital tools with the help with the co-researchers
3:00- 3:15	Coffee and snack break (Prayer break)
3:15- 3:45	Discuss the ideas from the designs in bigger groups
3:45- 4:30	Continue working in smaller groups
4:30	End

Day 3 24th July 2024

The site visit will last for one and a half hours. Participants are requested to bring maps, photos, and drawings from the previous two days, and to use this time to explore the rooftops, engage in brainstorming sessions, and envision potential designs. However, the members of Hara including the volunteers' co-researchers and myself, continued working on the designs before conducting this site visit and we have also brought them to the site.

Day 4 28th July 2024

Time	Activity
1:00-1:15	Welcome and checking on each other
1:15-1:45	Discuss the designs in the big group
1:45- 2:30	In small groups discuss and work on any modifications or ideas
2:30- 2:45	Coffee Break
2:45-3:30	Reflect on the designs collaboratively with the big group
3:30	End



Figure M.1: A photo of a rooftop proposal designed collaboratively with members of the hara for one of their sustainable tourism interventions. Source: Hara Initiative (2021)



Figure M.2: A photo of a rooftop proposal designed collaboratively with members of the hara for one of their sustainable tourism interventions. Source: Hara Initiative (2021)



Figure M.3: Meetings with different residents at Hara to collaboratively think about the rooftops. (Author)



Figure M.4: The view from one of the roofs at Al-Ashrafiyah Hara. (Author)



Figure M.5: Meetings with different residents at Hara to collaboratively think about the rooftops. (Author)