The Relationship of Micropublics and Encounters in Diverse Cities: A Case Study of the 7hills Park in Amman, Jordan

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A Case Study of the 7hills Park in Amman, Jordan

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Disclaimer

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Berlin, 16/11/2020

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Abstract

With growing migration and the diversification of particularly urban societies, stereotyping and practices of 'othering' have increased and impacted communities and social life across the globe. The public space in cities is ascribed central importance for the social life of city dwellers. It is the setting where strangers pass each other, co-exist, and encounter people of different backgrounds. Some of those encounters lead to convivial interactions, while others re-enforce aversive attitudes against the 'others.' The thesis is concerned with social encounters in a diverse city's public realm and therefore examines the public neighborhood park 7hills in Amman, Jordan – a city home to large refugee populations. Recent societal tensions and growing discrimination against minorities on the one hand, and the neoliberal urban development and privatization of many public spaces on the other highlight the need for inclusive and accessible public spaces in Amman as a scene for mingling to reduce fears and hostility against strangers. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining semi-structured interviews, surveys, observations, and mappings, this study explores the togetherness of the diverse park users and traces the park's characteristics that foster convivial encounters and interactions. Through a particularly democratic governance model, the park's spatiality, and cultural diversity, but first and foremost through micropublics, the park facilitates the mingling of different parts of the society. Micropublics therein provoke people to form new common grounds on the base of activities that are carried out together, or aims that are pursued together. These encounters shift differences and barriers between individuals in the background.

Zusammenfassung

Vor dem Hintergrund zunehmender Migrationsbewegungen und Diversifizierung von insbesondere urbanen Gesellschaften bedrohen Stereotypen und Praktiken des ‚Othering' vielerorts gesellschaftliches Leben und sozialen Zusammenhalt. Dem öffentlichen Raum in Städten wird eine zentrale Bedeutung für das soziale Miteinander diverser Stadtbewohner*Innen zugeschrieben. Hier leben Fremde Seite an Seite und begegnen einander. Einige dieser Begegnungen führen zu positiv gestimmten Interaktionen, während andere Begegnungen abweisende Haltungen gegenüber den ‚Fremden' verstärken. Die vorliegende Masterarbeit befasst sich mit sozialen Zusammenkünften im öffentlichen Raum multikultureller Städte und untersucht dafür den öffentlichen Nachbarschaftspark 7hills in Jordaniens Hauptstadt Amman. Die sich in Jordanien abzeichnenden gesellschaftlichen Spannungen und die Diskriminierung von Minderheiten einerseits und die neoliberale Stadtentwicklung und einhergehende Privatisierung öffentlicher Räume in Amman andererseits verdeutlichen die Notwendigkeit integrativer und zugänglicher öffentlicher Räume. Für die empirische Studie wurde ein Mixed Methods Ansatz gewählt, der semi-strukturierte Interviews, Fragebögen, Beobachtungen und Kartierungen kombiniert, um die Potentiale der Begegnungen zwischen Fremden im Park, sowie die Merkmale des Parks, die das gesellige Miteinander und freundliche Interaktionen fördern, zu untersuchen. Durch ein partizipatives Governance-Modell, die räumlichen Charakteristika des Parks und die kulturelle Vielfalt, vor allem aber durch die zahlreichen Aktivitäten erzeugt der Park eine soziale Vermischung und die Bildung von Communities über verschiedene Teile der Gesellschaft hinweg. Die Micropublics, die sich um gemeinsame Aktivitäten und Ziele herum bilden, bieten den Parkbesucher*Innen die Chance, auf dieser Grundlage neue Gemeinsamkeiten zu bilden. Dadurch werden Begegnungen geschaffen, die die vorherrschenden Differenzen zwischen Individuen in den Hintergrund rücken.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

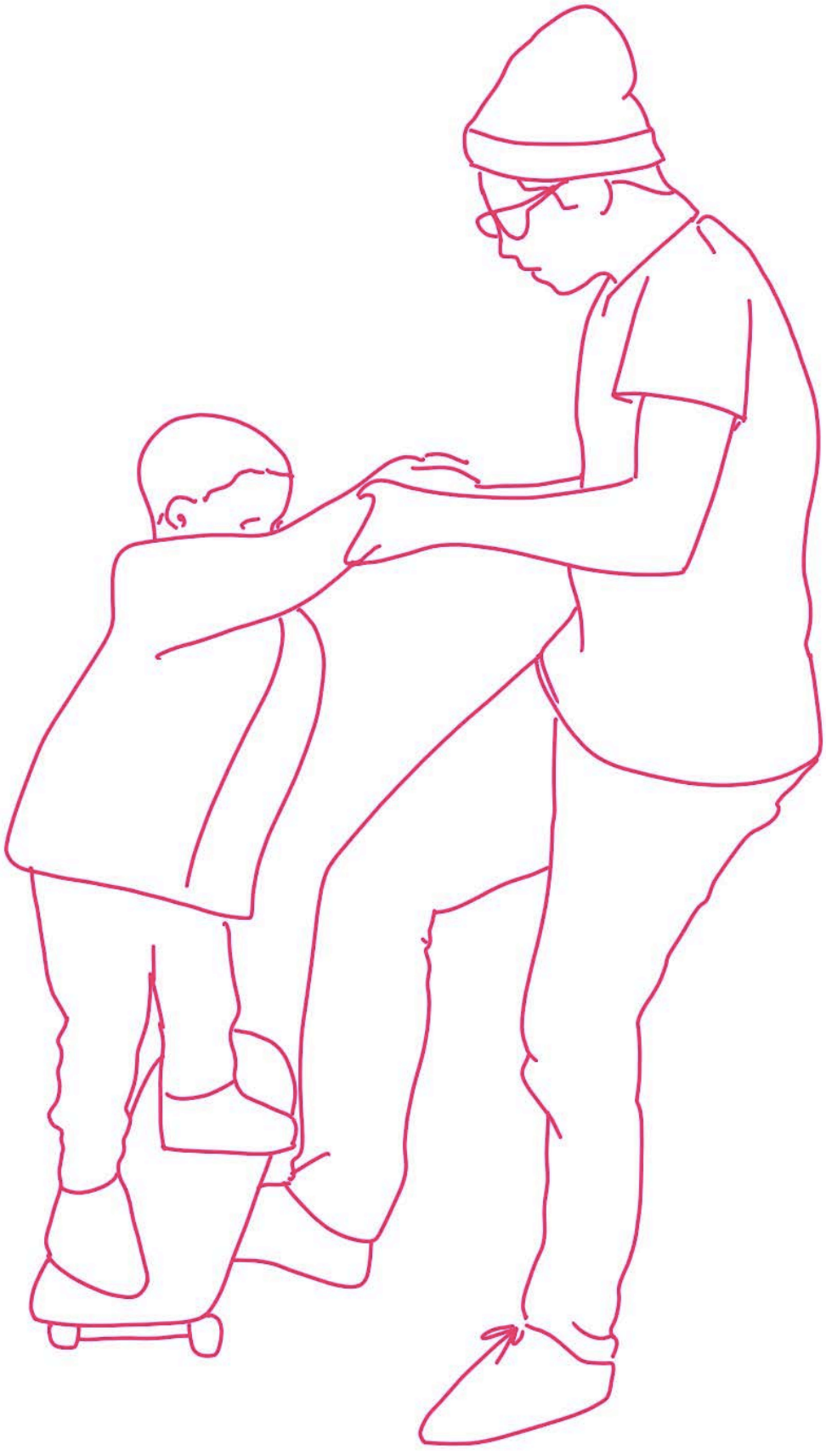
Organizations:

GAM	Greater Amman Municipality
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Services
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISOCARP	International Society of City and Regional Planners
JRC	Jordan Red Crescent
MLSL	Make Life Skate Life
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Others:

BID	Business Improvement District
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
GTM	Grounded Theory Method
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

People are strange when you're a stranger. (Jim Morrison)



1
Introduction

Urban public spaces around the world have always shaped the social life of urban residents and generated encounters between strangers. This interplay has raised the attention of famous scholars for a long time and led them to study human life and interaction in urban settings, particularly ever since the Chicago School of Sociology founded the new discipline of urban sociology during the early decades of the 20th century. For instance, in 1961, Jane Jacobs highlighted the importance of sidewalks for contact between different individuals and social groups. According to Jacobs, sidewalks enable possible casual contacts which serve to enhance trust and tolerance among the people (Jacobs 1961, 72). Jacob's mentor, William H. Whyte (1980) has fundamentally influenced the approach of simultaneously thinking about the reciprocity of public environment and social life. His observations the social behavior of people in the public space were profound. Also, Lyn Lofland (e.g. 1973, 1989) widely studied human behaviors and interaction between strangers in the "public realm." By the public realm she refers to the social region of the urban public landscape which tends to be populated by diverse and anonymous social actors.

The 20th century's scholarship on the relevance of public space for the social life of a neighborhood had a revival in its last decade. This was particularly after the Spatial Turn had taken place which reintroduced space as a central category in social sciences and humanities. Therein, a broad range of authors agrees that public spaces provide room for the inclusion of people in a society. However, the strong presence of liberal and neoliberal urban development threatens the accessibility and potential for inclusion. Simultaneously, typologies of public space are diversified through privatization or the appropriation for special purposes or social classes, e.g. shopping malls (Goss 1993; Oldenburg 1991; Putnam 2001; Daher 2013). This recent trend raised concerns in the civil society and led to large urban protests to reclaim public space. This critical movement is well illustrated in Don Mitchell's (2003) "The right to the city: social justice and the fight for public space", or David Harvey's (2013) "Rebel Cities: from the right to the city to the urban revolution".

The debate of the right to public space is still active. As urbanization rates are increasing rapidly and housing scarcity once again becomes a pressing issue, urban undeveloped land, oftentimes public space, becomes the center of negotiation. In addition to the growing economic interest in developing cities to maximize their usage rate, public spaces today are highly contested and oftentimes spatial manifestations of power relations. This is not only in regard to their creation but also concerns their existence, due to dominant groups claiming and thereby shaping the space and excluding others (Dikeç 2005; Iveson 2007; Staeheli and Mitchell 2008).

At the same time, numerous scholars (Healey 2010; Low 2006; Monno and Serreli 2020; Watson 2006; Shaftoe 2008) argue that public space can play an important role for the forming and stabilizing of community and democracy, as well as for social cohesion, in contexts in which the urban society is threatened by divisions. For instance, many places across the globe are currently experiencing a disruption of the society due to the rise of extremist right-wing parties who especially stir up openly public opinion against their governments' immigration policies (Quillian 1995; Davis and Deole 2017; Becker and Fetzer 2016). As not only a cause, but also a result of the political discourse, their voters and other people have developed prejudices against 'strangers' – in this case immigrants. Developing prejudice is a common response by members of the dominant group to the perception and the fear that their group is threatened by newcomers (Quillian 1995). This fear has different dimensions, for example an economic one: "When dominant group members perceive their economic circumstances as precarious, they fear they will lose their economic advantages over the subordinate group" (Quillian 1995, 590).

Jordan, a country in the Middle East, has for 70 years openly welcomed refugees[1], mostly from neighboring countries. Recently, it has experienced social tensions as well. The tensions are said to have resulted from the large numbers of arrivals of Syrian refugees since around 2011 (e.g. Achilli 2015). Prior to the Syrian refugee influx, the country had been struggling with its economy, infrastructure, and public services (Centre for International Governance Innovation 2018). The newcomers strained the country's resources furthermore, as for instance, in 2015, 18% of Jordan's Gross Domestic Product was planned to be spent on impacts of the Syrian crisis (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation 2015, 4). In some places, especially in host communities in the north of the country, Syrians have been faced with aversion and prejudice by the Jordanians (UN Habitat employee, female; Mercy Corps 2012). Moreover, members of certain underrepresented refugee groups[2] like Somalis and Sudanese experience racist behavior and discrimination (Davis et al. 2016; 7hills founder, male; NGO 2 employee, male).

Gordon Allport's contact hypothesis suggests that people of different social groups have to get in contact with each other in order to "destroy stereotypes and develop friendly attitudes" (Allport 1954, 261). In "The Fall of Public Man", Richard Sennett (1977, 295) adds that people "grow only by the

[1] In this study, the term "refugee" does not exclusively refer to those who are formerly registered with UNHCR as "refugees", but also includes those who are not registered; therewith, refugees are all those leaving their country due to persecution, war and violence, environmental threats, economic instability or other individual motives that force them to leave their country. The people fleeing those threats without crossing an international border are referred to as "Internally Displaced Persons" (IDP).

[2] The term "underrepresented refugee groups" refers to the numerically smallest refugee populations in Jordan, i.e. Yemenis, Sudanese and Somalis

processes of encountering the unknown", while cities are in his eyes "human settlements in which strangers are likely to meet" (ibid., 39). The public space plays a key role here, as it provides an open and unconstrained setting for those groups and individuals to encounter each other. Within those encounters lies the potential for them to reduce prejudices against strangers. As Shaftoe (2008, 5) argues, public spaces are one of the few remaining settings in which the encounters with difference can lead to tolerance and empathy for the strangers. However, Allport's positivistic claim is today considered as too short-sighted, as contact alone does not guarantee a reduction of stereotypes, but can in fact be dismissive and rejective.

The aim of this thesis is to discuss in which way, and under which circumstances public space provides opportunities for convivial interaction between strangers – or people of different ethnicities[3], genders, and ages – and to unravel its potential in dissolving tensions and othering. I therefore review the different theories around the public realm as sensitizing concepts, before refuting the generalizing idea that public space by itself inevitably leads to the particular contact that reduces prejudices and fears against strangers. I follow Ash Amin's concept of micropublics. Amin argues, that in order for "meaningful" contact to occur between strangers and different groups of people, publics spaces need to be filled with certain performances and practices such as organized group activity (Amin 2002). That sort of contact holds the potential to reduce prejudices against one another, "and to disrupt racial and ethnic stereotypes" (Amin 2002, 970). This thesis examines the 7hills park in Amman, Jordan as an empirical case study. The park can be considered a space containing a multitude of micropublics, as people there engage in a range of activities. Amin's theory is discussed on the base of the empirical findings from 7hills park.

1.1 Relevance and Research Gap

As mentioned above, numerous countries facing large-scale immigration are also confronted by the increasing right-wing populism (Davis and Deole 2017), while socially, different forms of xenophobia and racism have become acceptable. As migration and refugee numbers are globally on the rise and causes of migration like climate threats are likely to increase in the future, there is a need to meet the growing resentment with strategies that fight hate and anger, and the prejudice caused by the lack of knowledge regarding the 'stranger' – often personified by the immigrant. Thereby, further societal fragmentation can be prevented. In addition, as urbanization rates are globally increasing, while urban

[3] The term ethnicity is used to distinguish between groups by the means of their culturally acquired characteristics, such as language, practices and values, religion, or nationality (Turner 2006, 490).

development largely follows logics of profit-maximization, public spaces are under threat and there is a need to highlight their multi-dimensional relevance, particularly their social values.

For that reason, looking closer at "meaningful contact" (Valentine 2008) and the mingling between ethnically, or otherwise, distinctive groups in public space promises to generate valuable outcomes for the future of planning public space that fosters convivial contact. In those encounters, people can get to know each other and dissolve potential reservations. There are many studies who have examined questions of social life in public space in the European context, for instance in Great Britain (Hickman 2013) or Italy (Monno and Serreli 2020). About New York, Setha Low (2006, 47) has examined the transformation and shrinking of the public realm through privatization, increased surveillance practices and restrictive management, that altogether have led to an "inhospitable environment for immigrants, local ethnic groups and culturally diverse behaviors," threatening places where people of manifold classes, genders, cultures, nationalities and ethnicities intermingle. Amongst further studies, there are opposing views on the social effects of public space, in which many scholars call for differentiated considerations on public space. This study shall contribute to the discourse by providing empirical data in that regard. Also, the region of the Middle East has been covered by only a few studies[4], most of which call for more attention towards the social dimensions of space in general.

Many actors in the field of refugee-related work in Amman and other cities of arrival attempt to bring together the newcomers and the long-established residents in rather closed settings such as community centers. Those centers are run by either local or professional international NGOs, who regularly evaluate their work and the situation of urban refugees in general in reports (e.g. UNHCR 2019a; te Lintelo et al. 2018). However, many of these places exclusively aim at helping refugees and therefore do not results in encounters between host communities and refugees. Filling the gap, my research examines if and how refugees are met by members of the host communities in the open public space, namely parks, which have a small degree of institutionalization, moderation and 'curation.' In Amman, public space has not been used as a common means to intentionally foster (the sense of) community among its residents. However, socially cohesive strategies have been excessively formulated, for instance in Amman's 100 Resilient Cities program (Rockefeller Foundation 2017). The topic of "Public Space for Social Cohesion" is furthermore on the agenda of planning actors and UN-Habitat Jordan (UN Habitat employee, female).

[4] For instance, Nazzal and Chinder (2018) critically reflect on the decrease in public spaces as scenes of social interaction in Lebanon, while Marzbani, Awad, and Rezaei (2020) contextualized walkability with the development of a sense of place in Dubai's public space.

A rather unplanned, bottom-up approach in that regard is the 7hills park in the center of Amman. The park was initiated by a local skateboarder, together with the German Skate for Development NGO called Make Life Skate Life (MLSL) in 2014 (7hills founder, male). The park was originally not determined to be an 'inclusive refugee project' or a public space that would lead to social benefits, but rather intended to simply provide skateboarders with a place to practice their tricks. Before the skate park in 7hills was opened, the community of skateboarders in Amman had mostly skated in the few public or semi-public spaces like plazas and around shopping malls, where skating is frown upon. Here, security guards would regularly chase the skateboarders off. After the park had been built and a skate program had started, documentary films (Locke 2020; Lippert and Samnick 2019; Wijgmann 2020), international blog entries (Ritzmann 2017; Dlewati 2015) or newspaper articles (Westcott 2015; Novotný 2014; Mustefa and Reznick 2015; Dupire 2017) popped up, presenting the park as a successful inclusion project for refugees and locals. They altogether drew widespread attention to the park and furthermore attracted a range of people.

However, only few scientific studies have light on the park in general or its oftentimes praised inclusive features. For instance, Jakub Novotný (2020) examined Amman's skateboarding scene under the focus of transnationalism and social inclusion. He found that with the foundation of the park in 2014, the constitution of the skate community shifted from westernized Ammani youth towards a more mixed and heterogenous group of people, including more parts of the Jordanian society. In their study about children and Amman's cityscapes, Abdel-Aziz and Shuqair (2018) mention the 7hills park as a successful project of participatory planning, particularly as it included children in the process. However, their examination of the park's characteristics remains superficial. In contrast, this thesis contributes by setting the sole focus on the skatepark and therein aiming at providing profound, empirically based findings about the park and its potentials for the social life of its users.

Lastly, I identify a research gap in the examination of neighborhood parks in Amman – maybe not least to their limited existence. While many studies criticize recent neoliberal developments in public space policy in Amman and the emergence of pseudo-public, non-inclusive spaces or the restriction of their access to certain groups of the society (Daher 2009; Khawaja 2015; Daher 2012; Butros 2015), the few existent alternatives are barely introduced. I argue, however, that in order to achieve rethinking in municipal urban planning policies towards the widely-called for provision of more parks, one has to recognize how, and through which 'mechanisms,' these neighborhood parks become popular places of encounter by Ammanis.

1.2 Case Study: Jordan / Amman / 7hills Park

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently over 79.5 million displaced persons worldwide, of which more than half are Internally Displaced People (IDP) and around 30 million are refugees or asylum seekers (UNHCR 2020b). Jordan, located in the midst of countries that have suffered unstable political situations on the one hand and the gruesome attacks by terror organizations like ISIS or Al-Qaeda on the other hand, is and has been for decades, a country of refugee arrival. In fact, Jordan is the country with the second highest share of refugees per capita worldwide, following Lebanon (UNHRC 2019, 1). However, Jordan is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention of Geneva. The Jordanian government has instead signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNHCR in 1998, which bases on the customary international non-refoulement policy. The people who have fled to Jordan are to the largest share Palestinian refugees, who migrated in the aftermath of the 1948 Palestine war. In the past decade, Jordan has especially received large numbers of Syrian refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war, which started as a result of the Arab spring in 2011. As of November 2019, 745,192 refugees[5] were officially registered with the UNHCR in Jordan, of which 654,681 are from Syria (UNHRC 2019). 83,5% of them live in urban areas, while the remaining 16,5% live in one of the large refugee camps like Zaatari, which is hosting around 70,000 Syrian refugees. UNHCR has been given the mandate by the Jordanian government to offer humanitarian services to these Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2019b).

Other refugee populations in Jordan are for instance from Iraq, Yemen, Sudan or Somalia. Among all the people seeking refuge in Jordan, a hierarchization by the government can be identified. Within the (previous) asylum policies of the Jordanian government and the provision of and access to basic services for refugees through UNHCR, a distinction between Syrian and non-Syrian refugees exists. Sudanese and Somali refugees for example were for a long time not eligible to receive Food Vouchers issued by UN's World Food Programme (WFP) (Baslan and Leghtas 2018). They also have limited access to education, health services and the labor market. According to a study by Davis et al. (2016), many of the non-Syrian refugees therefore work in the informal job sector, where they are forced to accept exploitive conditions (ibid., 7-8). Not only economically, but also socially, many non-Syrian refugees face challenges living in Jordan. Somalis and Sudanese people report to be harassed with racist behavior in the public (ibid., 8). This hierarchization in fact led to the "one refugee approach" that is now implemented in some humanitarian programs, meaning that all refugees should be treated equal.

[5] In those refugee statistics, Palestinian refugees are not included. Most of the over 2.2 million registered Palestinian refugees have full citizenship in Jordan (UNRWA 2020). See Chapter 3.2 for further explanations and figures.

For instance, UNHCR among other humanitarian NGOs “strongly advocates for” this approach (Dunmore and Hariri 2018). Having this hierarchization in mind, tension between different groups of refugees are likely to appear. But also Syrians face discrimination and resentment in Jordan, mostly regarding economic assets. There is an increasing competition over jobs and aid programs between the Jordanian host communities and their Syrian neighbors (JRC and IFRC 2012, 43; Mercy Corps 2013). This is also recognized by UN-Habitat Jordan, that implemented the program “Safe, Inclusive and Accessible Public Spaces for Social Cohesion” in the country, which for instance included building a neighborhood park in the northern city of Zarqa in 2019 (UN-Habitat 2020). All this can be summarized under the general observation that Jordan’s society shows signs of social fragmentation, fueled by fear, xenophobia and racism.

The city of Amman makes an interesting case for two different reasons. Firstly, the city generally has an increasingly diverse population mostly through the large influx of refugees that settle here – 27% of Syrian refugees in the country live in its capital (Errighi and Griesse 2016, 13) – but also due to the large number of international humanitarian organizations in Amman, whose employees often come from abroad (Hawkins, Assad, and Sullivan 2019, 6). The city is therefore home to Jordanians, including sedentary Bedouins, Palestinians, and refugees from Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia and Sudan, migrant workers from Egypt and South Asia (ILO 2017, 17), but also expats from European countries that (temporarily) migrate here to work or study. In 2015, about a third of the population in Jordan consisted of non-Jordanians, of which 55% claimed to have come because of war and insecurity in the country of origin and 18% came to work (Momani 2018). Amman’s population is furthermore diverse in parameters like socio-economic status, education, or religious beliefs. Secondly, the situation of public space is exceptional in Amman. Over the years, many new forms of public space have come up in Amman; so-called semi-public space, as for instance implemented around shopping malls. These spaces seem public at first sight, but are actually on private ground and can therefore be exclusionary and undemocratic. In addition, the city generally has an extreme lack of public parks, as Tomah, Abed, and Saleh (2017) among others have found out. Besides, Amman is traffic contested and offers pedestrians little space for interaction. All of those contextual aspects emphasize the role and uniqueness of a neighborhood park like 7hills as a micro-case study. The park is located in downtown Amman (Fig. 1) and has been widely praised to be a successful neighborhood park that moreover serves as an inclusive refugee project, as its users seem to mirror Jordan’s heterogenous population composition. The intensity and amount of activities taking place in 7hills reflect Amin’s concept of micropublics. All of that makes it an interesting scene for observing social encounters and meaningful contact between diverse groups and individuals in a public park.

Fig. 1: Localization of 7hills in Greater Amman Municipality

1.3 Research Design

This sub-chapter presents the questions and overall objectives of the research. Also, a detailed description of the methods used for the fieldwork, the triangulation of data and methods for their analysis are given. Finally, the methodology that was used is briefly reflected upon, before more general considerations and limitations of the study are presented in Chapter 5.

1.3.1 Research Questions

Considering the research gap and the aim to identify the socio-spatial potentials that neighborhood parks hold for encounter between 'strangers' in ethnically diverse cities like Amman, my research answers the research question: How does the 7hills Park in Amman foster meaningful[6] encounter among different social groups and individuals? To answer the question, the following sub-questions were formulated:

- Who are the different people and social groups using the park? Do they reflect the composition of Jordan's heterogenous population? (Objective: to understand how inclusive 7hills is and examine if certain parts of the society are not represented in 7hills)
- Which specific characteristics of the 7hills park – spatially, culturally, socially and in regard to governance – promote "meaningful" social encounters? Between whom do they occur, and why? (Objective: to formulate recommendations for neighborhood parks in areas where conviviality is wished for and to be able to learn from lessons made at 7hills)
- What are the different activities taking place in 7hills park? Where exactly do they take place and why? In what way are micropublics constituted around them? (Objective: to link the spatial dimension of the park with the diversity of uses and "activities", following Ash Amin's concept of micropublics; to evaluate in what forms micropublics appear in the park)
- What kinds of contacts and relationships can be observed in 7hills? How continuous and sustainable are the relationships? (Objective: to see how "meaningful" or fleeting the contact between strangers is)
- Are there certain power relations or hierarchies expressed in the park? How accessible and inclusive is the park to both members of underrepresented groups, but also the dominant groups (Jordanian population)? (Objective: to uncover weaknesses and imbalances that threaten the inclusivity of the park)

[6] I stick to Gill Valentine's (2008, 325) notion of "meaningful" contact/encounter (see Chapter 2.3)

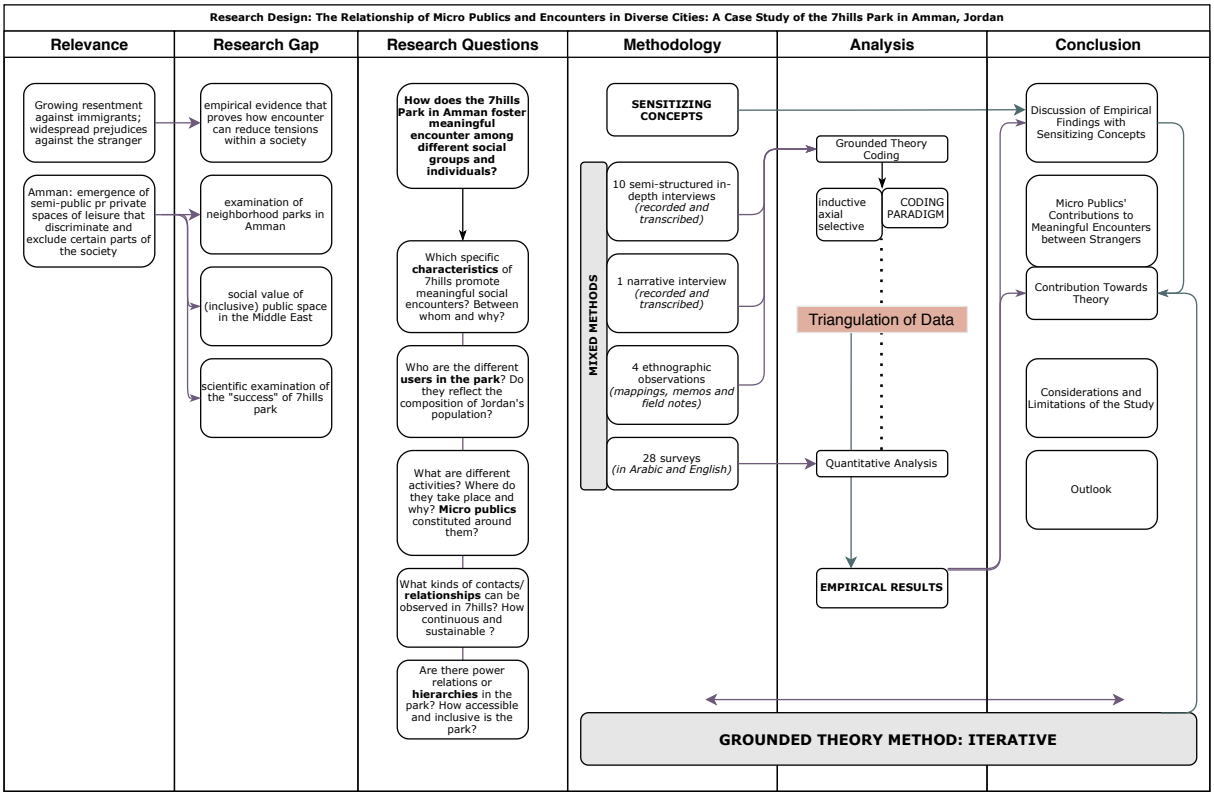


Fig. 2: Research Design

1.3.2 Research Approach

Prior to this research, I have gathered experiences in the field of refugee migration and urban development within the framework of the research project “Architectures of Asylum” (embedded in the Collaborative Research Center 1265 “Re-Figuration of Spaces” funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), which comparatively examines the spatial appropriation practices of refugees in shelters and camps in Jordan and Germany. Through this project, I have conducted fieldwork in Amman twice. The thereby gained knowledge of the Jordanian response to large numbers of refugees, of the city of Amman, and of refugee camps as secluded typologies that prevent their residents from encountering Jordanian host communities, has shaped my interest in encounters between refugees and locals in urban contexts. This background knowledge furthermore influenced the approach chosen for entering the field.

The study applied an inductive research approach and followed the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) by Strauss and Corbin (1996). With merely little prior knowledge about the park and its particular context, the empirical data was collected in an open and explorative manner. Simultaneously and afterwards, through the process of coding, patterns could be identified. With them, I constantly returned to the field and included new aspects in the further collection of data, as Fig. 3 illustrates. By this iterative way of researching, the elements in the research process (data collection, inductive

analysis and theory generation) did not follow each other linearly but took place simultaneously and influenced each other reciprocally (Lampert 2005, 518). The fieldwork was conducted in a relatively open-ended nature, not aiming at a specific result, but rather keeping a certain theme in mind, namely the social life occurring in a neighborhood park.

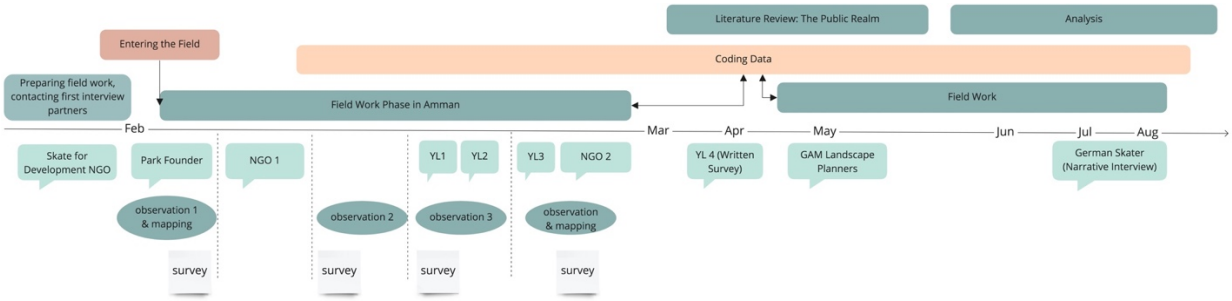


Fig. 3: Research Process

Thereby, themes such as the general situation of public space in Amman, the structural discrimination of so-called "minority refugees"[7], or widespread gender separation among children gradually sharpened my focus and could be included in the subsequent interviews. Through this kind of research approach, certain shifts in focus are likely to occur. In fact, I prepared the fieldwork with literature research on skateboarding and its connection to skaters' perception of space, however, when entering the field, it became obvious that the park is more than a skate park and a range of other activities takes place here.

1.3.3 Fieldwork and Methods of Data Collection

The fieldwork took place over a time span of three weeks in February, when the weather was warm and sunny, so that a representative degree of activity was taking place in the park. The study contains several methods typically used in ethnographic research (Knoblauch and Vollmer 2019). This is because its focus is on a particular group of people (the park users) who were studied in their real-life environment, and because much time was spent examining and observing the groups' everyday practices, namely their activities taking place in the park. As explained by John and Lyn Lofland (1984, 3–4), ethnography has a range of competing or partly overlapping labels such as "fieldwork, qualitative methods, qualitative social research", or – as they themselves prefer – "naturalism". The term naturalism refers to the natural setting that the studied group of people is researched in its natural

[7] This term is widely used in Jordan, also by the research participants, but I decided to use "underrepresented" instead of "minority" to avoid suggesting that members of those groups are in any way deficient in comparison with the majority.

state with ideally no influence or disturbance by the researcher. The principle of not disturbing the natural setting was implemented by me as far as possible during the observations. However, the term naturalism, or ethnography, is invalid for this study, as the formal interviews I conducted count as an artificial and "set up" research situation.

A mixed-methods design was used, as both qualitative (observations, mappings, semi-structured interviews) and quantitative (survey) methods of social research were applied. This allowed an examination of park from different angles. Through a methodological triangulation, the validity of the results could be increased. In particular, the between method (e.g. Denzin 1970) was chosen, which defines the combination of different research methods all focusing on the same phenomenon. For instance, the in-depth interviews with the youth leaders were required to receive deep insights in the skate program, its role for the leaders' individual development and the relationships they have formed, but those personal reflections do not represent the views of all the park users. In order to get an encompassing image of the park and the broad user community, a quantitative approach was required.

The triangulation also helps to decrease the weighting of weaknesses in singular methods that were used. For example, language barriers certainly had an impact on the data generated in the semi-structured interviews (see Chapter 5.3), which a triangulation with visual material and surveys in Arabic could balance out. Therefore, a holistic picture could be drawn on the base of the heterogenous data set.

Sampling

The initial interview partners were purposefully chosen on the basis of their degree of insight on the field, measured by frequency of their park visits, the duration since their first time in the park, their role in the park and the skate program, and the related amount of people that the person is acquainted with. During the fieldwork, snowballing (Heckathorn 1997; Baur 2019, 1290), specifically exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling, was used. It is a sampling method, where one interview partner would lead me to two or more others. For instance, an initial interview partner brought up the names of refugee NGOs[8] and also of engaged youth leaders in the skate program, whom were then contacted and interviewed. They furthermore referred to other colleagues or park users, whom I then approached. This method carries the risk that people apart from this specific network that is spun are neglected.

[8] For convenient readability, the term "refugee NGO" was chosen for this study. It refers to NGOs who direct their services particularly to refugees. According to the 70-30 rule in Jordan, most of these NGOs also have to serve vulnerable Jordanians; see Chapter 3.2.1.

For the first survey participants, snowballing and my sole presence as a foreigner combined with the initial curiosity by the park users towards me as a stranger made an active acquisition unnecessary. Towards the end of the fieldwork, quota sampling was used. I therefore actively approached certain people in order to achieve a good reflection of gender, activity carried out by the person, age and language spoken amongst the sample. The survey asked about the frequency in which the participant visits the park, in order to be able to contextualize the participants' degree of insight, which naturally would be limited if it was only their first or second time being at the park. However, as Fig. 4 shows, the participants of the survey all come to the park on a regular basis, so that no sorting-out was required.

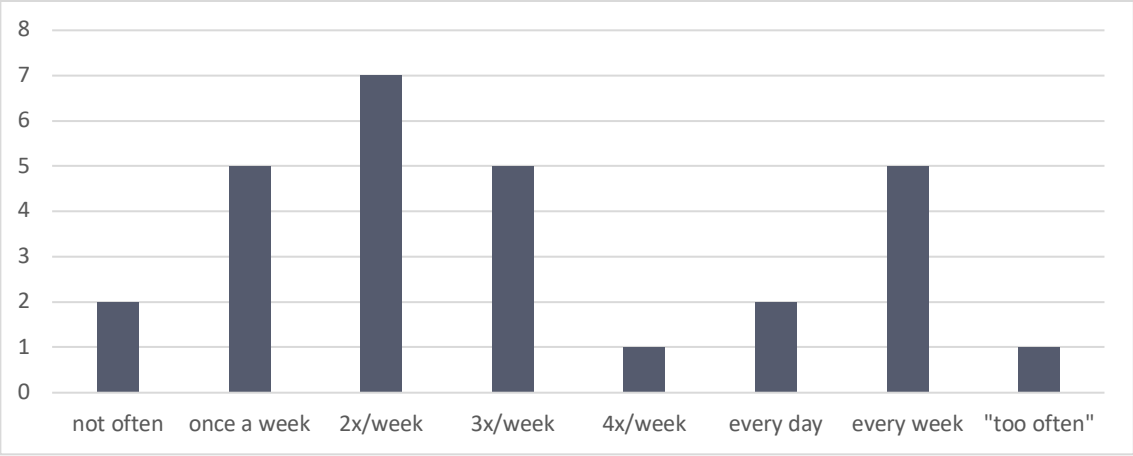


Fig. 4: Frequency of Survey Participants' Visits to 7hills

Semi-structured in-depth interviews

The ten in-depth interviews were semi-structured, which means that a list of topics and questions was prepared prior to the interview (see Annex), however, the conversation was not limited to them. In fact, further topics were expected to come up. Consequently, most of the questions were intentionally phrased quite open and general. Due to this explorative style of researching, many issues were brought up and discussed by the interviewees, that I had not been aware of prior to the interview. The interviews were between 20 and 90 minutes long and were all, in consent with the interviewees, recorded and transcribed using the transcription software *f5*. The participants were included in the process of choosing venue and time for the interview, so that a comfortable setting for them could be provided. One of the interviews took place via Skype, as the contact was only established after I had left Amman, while the others were face-to-face interactions. An anonymization was done for all names of interviewees. Also, the names of non-governmental organizations are disclosed and therefore called

NGO 1 and 2. The youth leaders are abbreviated with YL 1, 2, 3 and 4, their age and country of origin are shown in Fig. 5. An overview of interview partners can also be found in the annex.

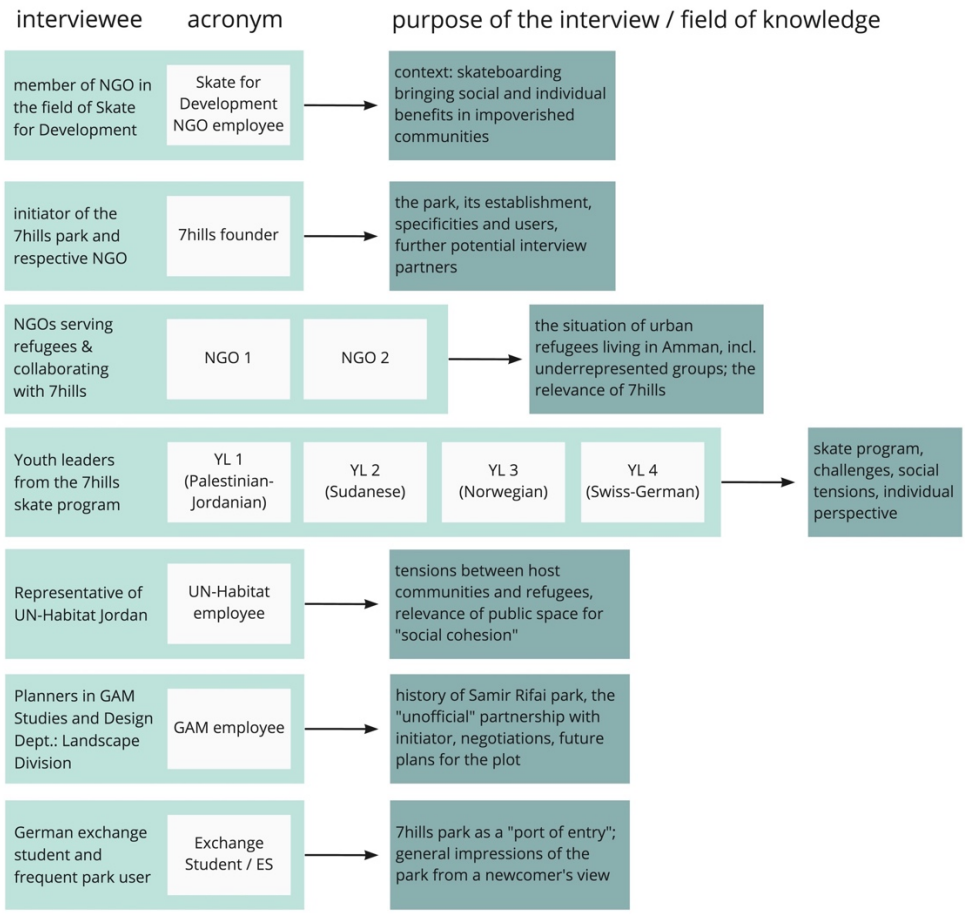


Fig. 5: Overview of Semi-structured and Narrative Interviews (in order)

Narrative Interview

One narrative interview was conducted. Before the interview, I had a casual, off-the-record conversation with one of the park users. After having come to study for one semester in Amman, the interviewee spent much time in the skate park for a period of six months; he went to the park several times a week. His insights were therefore quite deep, as he himself was a foreigner and had a particular perspective on the park. This specific method was chosen for a concluding conversation, that enabled the interviewee to explore themes and recall certain experiences in his narration, which I would not bring up.

The method of the narrative interview is very open, and the “distribution of speech” is asymmetrical. The researcher poses an initial question, to which the interviewee is able to answer in full detail without being interrupted and without a direction of the researcher towards other, allegedly more relevant subjects. Only when the interviewee signals that his narration is finished with a so-called

“coda”, the interviewer should react verbally. Then the phase of immanent questions that potentially have come up during the narration starts. Once, all of those uncertainties are cleared out, the exmanent questions which were prepared prior to the interview are posed by the researcher. Exmanent questions do not directly connect to the narration, but are for other reasons important for the subject of the study. This phase of the narrative interview is quite similar to semi-structured interviewing techniques. (Küsters 2019)

The less structured the interview is by the researcher, the more focal points can be freely set by the interviewee that reflect his personal experience and own prioritizations. The influence and potential interferences by the researcher are therewith limited. The narration was recorded, transcribed and elaborately analyzed.

Observations and Mappings

Following the approach of numerous studies in the field of urban ethnography and in particular about behavior and interaction in public space, see for instance Whyte (1980) or Lofland and Lofland (1984), the data used in the thesis largely consists of the results of direct observations.

The observations were done from different locations in the park and documented by field notes and mappings to locate certain actions or park facilities, both during and after the observations. Also, audio memos were recorded, whenever writing down notes was inconvenient. As some of the observations occurred during the skate classes, which meant that there were around 50 people in the park, photos and videos helped to grasp certain details in the follow up, i.e. behaviors, places of actions and interaction between different ages and genders can be read through these photographs. However, photographs as a two-dimensional medium can merely attempt to display the reality and therefore bear the risk that the researcher assumes certain things based on brief snapshots. That is why they were “read” and interpreted with high caution and are considered only as an accompanying data source.

The observations can be considered as qualitative observations, through their explorative character and the specific data form. As I aimed to fully get to know and grasp the space for myself during the first observation, I chose to go in the morning, when the activities in the park are limited and of a calm nature. This first observation was unfocussed, the ones that followed were still quite open for newly arising themes but focused a bit more on social interactions, use of space and activities. Simultaneously to the first observation, the access strategy of “hanging around” (e.g. Geertz 1998) was used: me as a researcher in the park, sketching and precisely looking at the space quickly raised the few present park

users' attention. A group of young boys approached me, asking what I was doing and who I was. I explained and gained their interest, but also got to know them. This first contact led to them filling out the survey and a casual conversation.

In opposition to the first observation, interviewing equipment (surveys, pens, audio recorder, interview guide) was taken to the park on the day of my second observation, on a busy afternoon during skate classes. According Lofland and Lofland (1984, 13), a classic participant observation involves the interweaving "of looking and listening, of watching and asking," so that a clear distinction of interviewing and observations cannot be made. I experienced the same in the field, especially during the observations on busy days.

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Weather	Sunny	Sunny	Cloudy	Sunny
Day	Weekday	Weekday	Weekend	Weekend
Time of the day	Morning	Afternoon	Afternoon	Afternoon
Point of observation	Moving through entire park area	During skate class at the skating area	Basketball court	Skating area
Approx. number of people present	12	50	25	15

Table 1: Overview of Observations in 7hills Park

I acted as an overt researcher, openly sharing information about my research and holding camera, sketchbook and surveys to be clearly visible to the park users. The degree of my own participation in the parks' activities remained limited, as I did not participate in the most dominant and visible activities that people do in the park, i.e. playing basketball and skateboarding. Instead, I 'hung around' and read, sketched, observed the skateboarders and had casual conversations beyond my research interest with other users of the park, about common interests and topics.

Written Interview

During the fieldwork in Amman, I noticed that people who were active in the construction of the park had to a large share left Amman and could therefore not be questioned in the personal interviews. In fact, only five of the 28 survey participants were involved in the construction. I therefore contacted one of the key figures in constructing the skate park and setting up the skate program in the park's early days. A written survey (Schiek 2014) containing 15 open questions about his role, the involvement of locals in the construction and the relationships he had formed in the park was sent to him. Thematically, it was closely oriented on the interview guide prepared for the youth leaders. The questions were formulated in a way that should provoke elaborative, narrative responses. The answers

were given in a written form and analyzed in a similar manner as the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews.

Surveys

Surveys were used, firstly, to include the insights by the people who only speak Arabic and secondly, to serve as a base for demographic information about the users of the park. The survey (see Annex) is two-paged, with the first page containing personal information and open questions, for instance about the personal use of the park or the frequency of visiting. The second page contained closed questions to be answered on a four-point Likert scale on the back page that aimed mostly at the degree of identification with the park, the types of relationships the respondent has to the other park users and the general attitude towards the park. The four-point scale was chosen to avoid the participants' overuse of the neutral option and get specific answers. The yes-no questions could be answered with "very much", "mostly yes", "mostly no" and "not at all". Prior to the fieldwork, a pretest was carried out with a person who regularly helps in construction of skate parks and is a skateboarder himself. In total, 28 surveys were filled out, none of them were invalid.

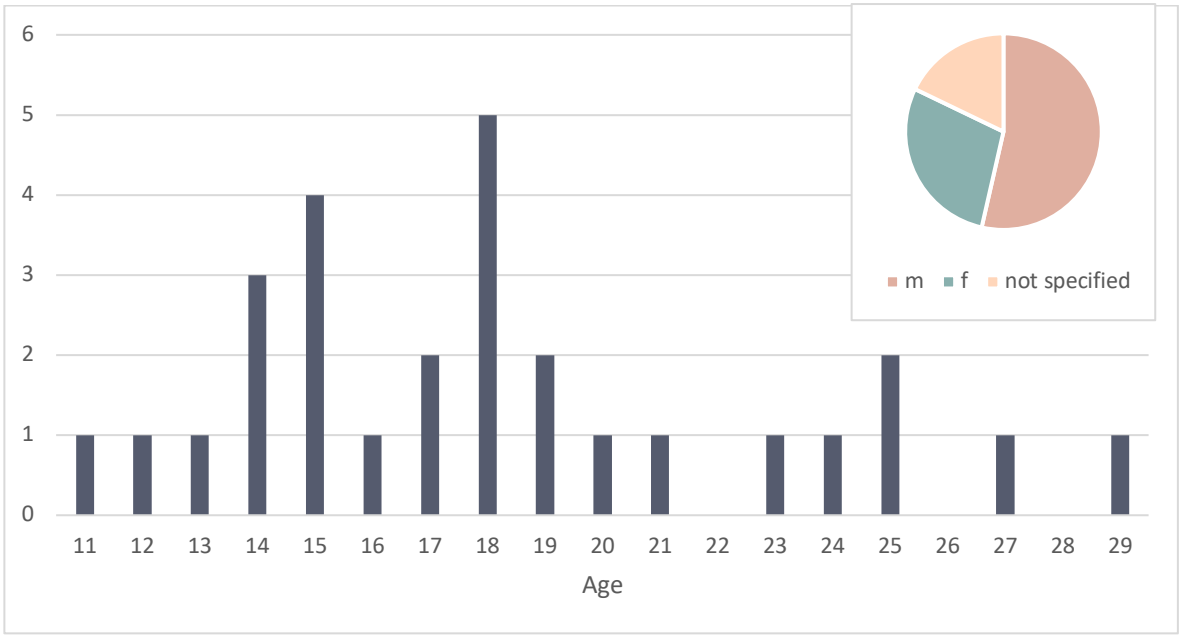


Fig. 6: Age structure and gender of the survey sample

While the size of the sample (n=28 out of 50 park users at its most frequented state) could be considered large enough to be representative, the age structure is not a good reflection of the park users, as unfortunately, older people or parents declined to participate, and the very young kids were partly considered too young for a participation. Therefore, the results of this particular data source by

themselves, as highlighted already, do not provide a theoretical saturation and only serve as a support for the other data.

1.3.4 Analysis: Grounded Theory Coding

The methods described above generated data such as interview transcriptions, unfocused memos (field notes and audio memos), hand-drawn maps and photographs. Following the principles of the Grounded Theory Method, the coding of the interviews was inductive and unfocused. The three steps suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1996) contribute to the analysis and help to sort out patterns and connections, as it is explained in the following.

The coding of the interview transcripts and field notes from the observations was done with the computer software atlas.ti, which is considered to be closely connected to GTM regarding its structure and functions (Zaynel 2018). Coding in Grounded Theory includes the creation of concepts and categories during the coding process through the following three steps (Strauss and Corbin 1996), i.e. (1) the inductive coding, (2) the axial coding and (3) the selective coding. In the first step, open and inductive coding, relevant statements from the interviews are identified and given codes in the order the material was generated, to analyze the entirety of the data material. In this step, the interviews and field notes were given 68 codes in total, which were partly oriented close to the wording used in the interviews (“in vivo coding”, Strauss 1991, 64). Then, some codes were merged as they appeared the same, while some other codes were split up into several other, more specific codes. Most of the codes were structured into main and sub-codes from the beginning. The main codes included “7hills”, “Jordan”, “Amman”, “Refugees”, “Skateboarding.” They all contained a range of sub-codes, the main code “Jordan” for instance was differentiated into “weak economy”, “governmental refugee policies”, “tensions between host communities and refugees”.

In the second step, the axial coding, an intense analysis of a certain concept or phenomenon takes place by confronting, connecting, discussing the codes with each other. The coding paradigm which was developed by Strauss (1994) helps to contextualize and foster the understanding for the interconnectedness of the previously developed codes. The coding paradigm puts this certain phenomenon in the context of its causes, the context and conditions and action strategies, but also its consequences, as Fig. 7 demonstrates. In the analysis, the 68 codes were firstly categorized into large groups or categories, i.e. general Info about 7hills, the social, cultural and spatial dimension of the park, the governance structure and context information, in order to organize the multitude of codes. The groups later helped shaping the structure of the chapter that presents the findings. Secondly, the coding paradigm was applied in an altered version, as connections of codes went beyond the four

typical ones named above and also for instance included “associations” or “contradictions”. In this step, code networks were created around different themes like actors, spatial features or community. Examples for the application of the adapted coding paradigm are illustrated in Chapters 4.1 and 4.4

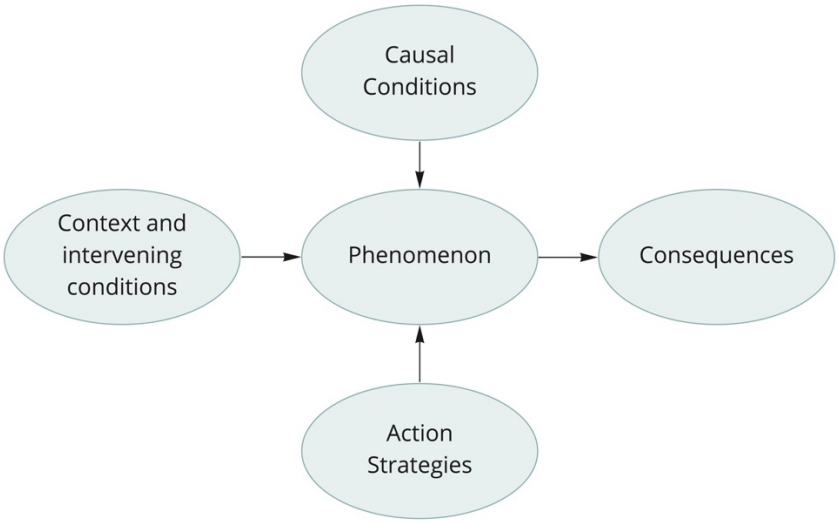


Fig. 7: The Coding Paradigm

The third step, the selective coding requires that the key categories from the two previous steps are re-visited and new codes are developed accordingly, so that the analysis produced a final total of 76 codes. This step means identifying the main concept around which codes were developed and to systematically code through the lens of that particular concept. In this case, the selective coding partly took place during the axial coding already., the steps were not done in a strictly linear matter, a constant ‘going back’ was required to adapt codes based on newly collected data material. This is a fundamental characteristic of the GTM (Strauss and Corbin 1996).

1.3.5 Methodological Reflections

Generally, the open-ended nature of the research method made it difficult to consider the data collection as finished. In fact, several moments occurred when I assumed that the research was finalized. However, during the analysis of existent data, it became clear that more data to a certain theme, i.e. through another interview, was required. Other considerations lie in the nature of the research that examines people’s everyday practices, but also my role as a researcher.

Ethical Considerations

Ethnographic studies have been criticized because they study people’s everyday practices (Lofland and Lofland 1984, 18) and therewith intervene in those people’s routines, albeit subtly. Thus, I put effort in making the setting for the research participants as transparent and comforting as possible.

When entering the field, I informed some of the gate keepers, i.e. individuals who had influence over my access to participants (Baur 2019, 1290), about the research and politely asked their opinion on me intruding into the park. The gate keepers are well-connected to the other individuals in the field, in this case, this was firstly the founder of the park, and secondly the youth leaders teaching other children how to skate. The main gate keeper, namely the founder of the park, approved the fieldwork and offered to introduce me to the other people in the park. However, I decided against it, as I felt this introduction might cause a pressure situation for the potential participants in which it would be hard for them to refuse their participation in the research.

The subjects studied in the observations were – to a large extent, children and teenagers. I found it relevant to also include their perceptions and insights of the park in the research, as they generally constitute the largest share of park users. Hence, I consciously decided not to shy away from that and treat them in a 'normal way' to include them also in the findings, following suggestions by Nachtsheim and König (2019, 927–28) and James (2014, 246–47). Notwithstanding, I took note of the fact that cognitive and communicative skills of very young children would not have been sufficient for the participation in the research; the youngest research participant was eleven years old. That is also why I decided against doing semi-structured in-depth interviews with younger individuals, not to mention the language barrier.

Privacy concerns were thought through wisely and discussed with the research participants. The interviewees and participants were informed about the purpose of the study and of the respective development stage that it had at the time. I answered questions about the research in all honesty. For the interviewees of semi-structured interviews, consent forms (see Annex) were handed out and returned to me. Regarding privacy matters, I anonymized the interviewees, naming only their age, gender and, broadly, their relation to the park. Only when relevant to the study, their ethnic background is named. This information cannot lead to a potential identification of the person.

Role as a researcher

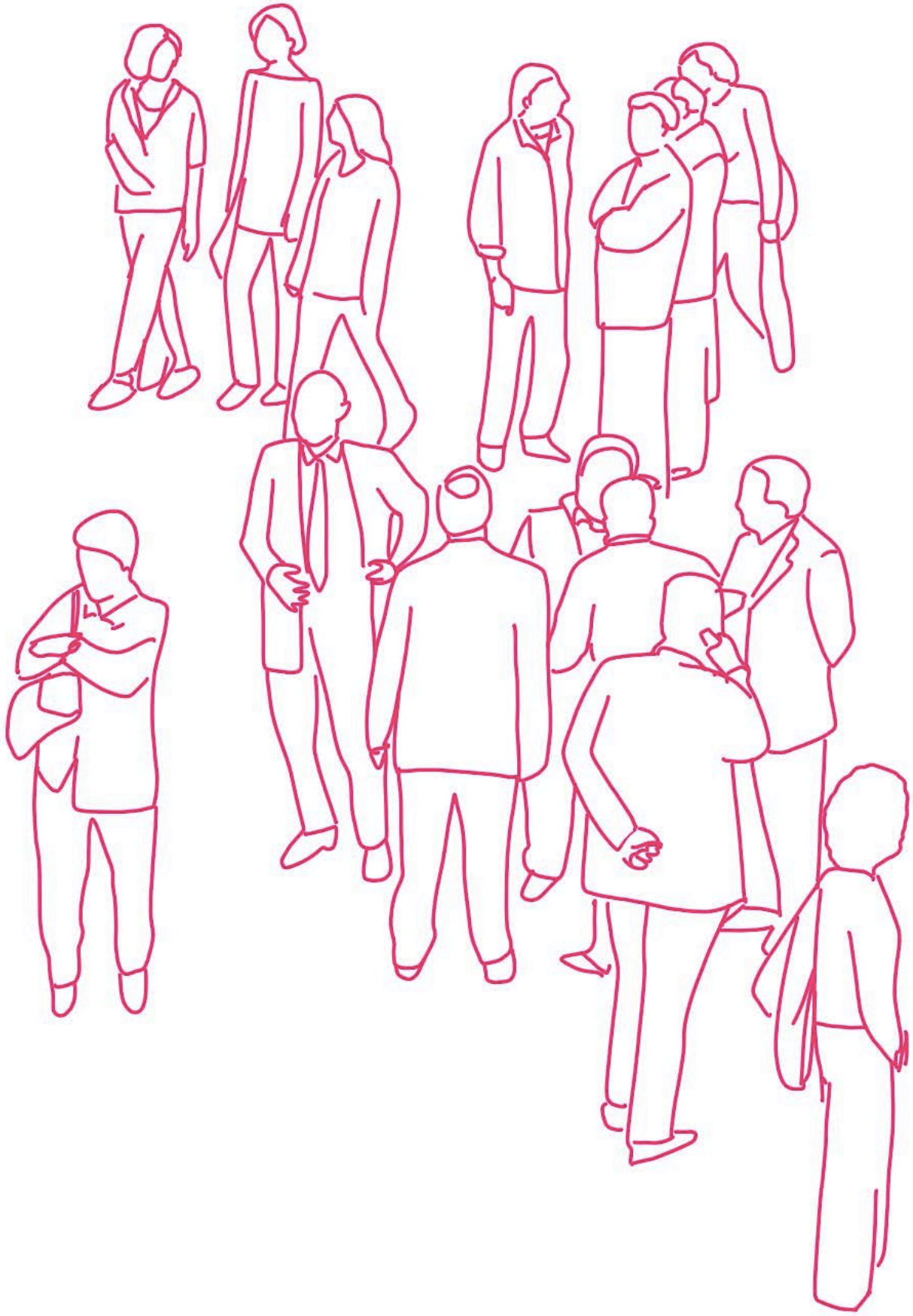
My sole identity with all my attributes possibly had an influence on the research participants' way of interacting with me, for instance through my Caucasian appearance or my presence in Jordan which implied my privileged socio-economic status that enabled me to travel and speak foreign languages. It is hard to say to which extent that might have promoted or hindered people's openness towards me. Notwithstanding, as mentioned, almost all people I approached were willing to speak to me or even

approached me by themselves out of curiosity. My gender, however, seemed to have intimidated certain boys and men to speak with me.

In the park and the activities taking place here, I was perceived as an outsider (Lofland and Lofland 1995, 41), not least because of carrying “researcher equipment” such as a notebook, pens, surveys. During the time of the fieldwork, I had gotten to know most of the park users and felt more as a part of the group. Towards the end of the fieldwork, the park users knew my name, greeted me friendly, and conversations aside the research topic had increased. The risk of ‘going native’ however was not present, because I did not participate in any of the group activities like basketball or skateboarding. This is, because the entering of micropublics as the main focus of the study could have threatened my researcher role and objectivity.

1.4 Structure

The thesis is structured as follows. The second chapter contains sensitizing concepts regarding the “Constitution of the Public Realm” and people’s interaction behavior. It discusses different approaches and theories of the public realm and its function for the urban dwellers’ social life, i.e. encounters between strangers. Having built the theoretical framework, the thesis moves on to the third chapter, which gives an overview of the spatial and societal context in which the case study is embedded. The fourth chapter presents findings from the empirical study of the 7hills park in Amman, Jordan. This descriptive chapter is divided into four dimensions, i.e. spatial, governance, cultural and social dimension. Towards the end, those findings from the four dimensions are re-arranged and clustered in four main themes. The fifth and last chapter of the thesis then embeds and confronts the empirical findings with fitting concepts from the preliminary literature review and attempts to draw overall conclusions. A critical reflection of the study and an outlook are also provided here.



2

The Constitution of the Public Realm and its Relation to Social Encounter

The following chapter lays down the theoretical dimensions of the public realm, by giving an overview of different scholars' approaches in examining and highlighting the social value of public space. Those theoretical approaches serve as sensitizing concepts for the empirical part of the study, which in turn aims to examine the social life and convivial encounters[9] between different (groups of) people, occurring in a public neighborhood park. The term "sensitizing concepts" was firstly used by Herbert Blumer (1954, 7), who contrasts them with definite concepts: "Whereas definite concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look." Sensitizing concepts therewith serve as an important element of the Grounded Theory research method.

Throughout the last century, a number of different, partly opposing or by now outdated views on the subject of social life in public spaces have been expressed. Many of them were provoked by the functional separation within cities during and after the industrialization, which resulted in the loss of spaces for communal gathering in favor of the emergence of both industrial sites as well as homogeneous residential quarters (Lofland 1998, 16–18). The concept of the public realm was chosen to introduce the study, as it is mainly concerned with the park's social life rather than merely its physical features. The public realm is defined as "not geographically or physically rooted pieces of space" (Lofland 1998, 11), but rather the social territory within.

Scholars have generally criticized urban planners' view on the public space as too narrow and one-dimensional, while neglecting its non-physical context. Stephen Carr (1992, 87) argues that the design and management of public space lacks the human perspective, while Kristine Miller (2007, xi) criticizes in "Designs on the Public," that the focus on the physical and the concrete oftentimes overshadows "nonphysical qualities – legal, economic, political, aesthetic – all of which affect a public space." She adds that public spaces are not "static physical entities but are constellations of ideas, actions, and environments."

Notwithstanding, in order to grasp the physical setting of the public realm and to locate the case study, it is necessary to clarify what is understood as "public space". Public space is the space that is open and accessible to the general public, no matter the individuals' gender, ethnicity or socio-economic background (UNESCO 2020; Hajer and Reijndorp 2001, 11). It is ideal-typically owned and maintained by public stakeholders, such as the municipality, or by semi-public actors. Public space stands in opposition to the semi-public or private space, from which certain, 'undesired' people can be excluded

[9] I refer to "encounter" as contact or occasion, in which two or more people meet either on coincidence or in a pre-arranged meeting. The encounter can be of short or longer duration – it lasts as long as the people are together and "maintain a single focus of mutual involvement" (Lofland and Lofland 1984, 87).

through restrictive managements (Low 2006). Hence, it carries democratic elements[10] (Carr 1992). Public space is filled with individual negotiations and sociality by the people. It can appear in various forms, i.e. city squares, parks and plazas, but also as transit space such as streets and sidewalks. Public gathering space enhances social mixing, civic participation, recreation, and a sense of belonging (UNESCO 2020). Most events and actions in the public space are rather spontaneous than thoroughly planned (Lynch 1965, 396). According to Carr (1992, 45), "public places afford casual encounters in the course of daily life that can bind people together and give their lives meaning and power." Many definitions of the public space and aspects named above already highlight the humans enlivening the space as an important element of it.

The sensitizing concepts in this chapter are divided into four parts. The first sub-chapter sheds light on the characteristics of the concepts of spaces and spheres that are central for sociality and community, and briefly introduces the concepts of the "third place" (Oldenburg 1991) and Edward Soja's Thirdspace (1996) as key sites for communal gathering. It goes on by illustrating the Public Realm, as it is defined by Lyn Lofland (1989). Lofland particularly focuses her writings on urban spaces filled with social life and social differences. Her thoughts are therefore considered adequate as a theoretical construct for this study, of which the empirical case study is set in the socially and ethnically diverse city of Amman.

While the first sub-chapter looks rather at the sphere and the places themselves, the second sub-chapter focusses on the individuals invigorating the public realm, approximating the practice and action-focused perspectives on the public realm and encounters within. Different approaches aiming to explain the human behavior and performances in the public sphere are presented here, in order to contextualize the behavior and interactions observed during the fieldwork – and to classify them with caution. The third and following sub-chapter deals specifically with encounters of individuals coming from different ethnic backgrounds, within the public sphere. This is relevant for the case study, as the park receives much praise for bringing together people who reflect a large variety of ethnicities, but also ages and socio-economic backgrounds. Diving deeper into the factors, or rather the essential prerequisites for these encounters of difference, the fourth chapter explains the concept of "micropublics", developed by Ash Amin (2002). This sensitizing concept is central for this study, as the case study is a park that comprises several offers for activities in which people of different ethnic

[10] However, their democratic features are not as large as the extent of democracy that these places used to hold for instance in the form of the Greek agora or the forum in classical Rome, where they were key sites of political participation and cultural formation (Amin 2008, 5).

backgrounds find a shared interest and therein constitute a common ground that serves as a base for intercultural interaction.

2.1 The Setting: Third Place, Thirdspace and the Public Realm

For a long time, there has been large attention among scholars, but also practitioners in the field of urban planning, given towards the spatial characteristics of neighborhoods and its influence on the residents' social life, which also has an impact on the residents' quality of life in general (e.g. Sennett 1992). When looking at the question where social interaction as the main element of the urban social life occurs, one has to turn away from the private, domestic space, where the interaction to friends, colleagues and strangers is limited.

In truth, when looking at those places of interaction in the city or neighborhood, Ray Oldenburg's (1991) concept of the "third place" becomes apparent as being central for the urban dwellers' social life. While Oldenburg defines the first place as the home, and second place as the workplace, third places are environments such as churches, cafés, clubs, bars and beer gardens, theaters and cinemas, general stores, public libraries and bookstores, hair salons – or parks. The third place, especially in opposition to the other two categories, is important for community-building and uniting the neighborhood socially. Even though the notion of community is quite contested, Kusenbach (2006, 280–81) summarizes three constituents of community that most scholars agree on, i.e. a shared territory, significant social ties, and the presence of meaningful social interaction. Oldenburg defines the third place as follows:

> *A third place is a public setting accessible to its inhabitants and appropriated by them as their own. The dominant activity is not 'special' in the eyes of its inhabitants, it is a taken-for-granted part of their social existence. It is not a place outsiders find necessarily interesting or notable. It is a forum of association which is beneficial only to the degree that it is well-integrated into daily life. (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982, 271)*

Oldenburg has furthermore identified eight characteristics of the third place that contribute to community-building effects. They shall be briefly exemplified by the means of the case study, which, based on the empirical research, fulfills all of them. 7hills is a (1) "leveling place" where social or economic status does not matter, and where the people are furthermore on (2) "neutral ground" meaning they do not have the obligation to be in the park and are free to leave at any time. As literature research has shown, the status which may potentially matter are class, skin color and citizenship status – as they are generally play a role in Jordan in exclusionary ways. Also, the park has proven to be (3) "open and accessible" for all (see Chapters 4.1.1 and 4.4). In fact, the park is more open than some of Oldenburg's examples. For instance, bars are oftentimes only accessible to adults,

while most restaurants oblige the visitors to consume something. Another characteristic Oldenburg lists is the (4) “low profile” of the place that leads to a homely feel, meaning that no extravagancy or pretentiousness are apparent, and that the physical structure is “typically plain.” This is also the case for 7hills, where no visually impressive and costly facilities can be found, so that a municipal planner even perceives the park as “empty” (GAM employee, female). In 7hills, the mood is furthermore (5) “playful,“ even experimental at times (see Chapter 4.5.2), while conversations that take place are usually (6) “light-hearted” and humorous (see Chapter 4.5.3); as the study has shown, conflict appears only seldomly. Oldenburg furthermore argues that conversation is the main activity in third places. This is actually not the case in 7hills, where other activities are in the foreground and conversations only happen as a ‘by-product.’ Oldenburg calls Third Places (7) “ports of entry”, meaning that they constitute a setting in which newcomers are welcomed by “fixed regulars” and feel accommodated. This is also the case for 7hills, as many interview statements have revealed. From refugee to expat, many park users who were new to Amman came to the park and found a community that they feel to be a part of (see Chapter 4.5.3). What is maybe most fitting from Oldenburg’s eight characteristics and can be seen as an overall result of the characteristics named above, is that the Third Place becomes (8) “a home away from home,“ since many respondents both in the semi-structured interviews but also in the surveys described 7hills as a second home, providing them with a sense of belonging and comforting feel. Through these features, a third place becomes a significant place of social interaction in a neighborhood, as it is the case with 7hills.

However, Oldenburg’s concept is unsatisfactory, for instance in regard to the fourth characteristic “openness”. In fact, most of exemplary places that he names contain barriers – a door, a fence, or simply the obligation to consume something here, as it is the reality for most bars or cafés. So, if a person wants to spend time and socialize in a third place, he or she has to be, firstly, able and willing to spend a certain amount of money here and, secondly, be courageous enough to pass through the physical barrier – which can be especially hard for newcomers. Oldenburg’s given examples also threaten to undermine the second characteristic “leveling place”, because in fact, the economic status matters when somebody is pressured to consume something in order to be allowed to stay in a third place. This jeopardizes also the characteristic of accessibility and openness, which is additionally threatened by the fact that most of those third places are in private instead of public ownership. Nevertheless, Oldenburg’s thoughts and characteristics put a strong focus on encounters between strangers and community-building, and are therefore a general base for studying parks as places of encounter.

Unlike Oldenburg's precise explanations and examples, Edward Soja's (1996) concept of the Thirdspace is more abstract, but should briefly be mentioned here as well, as it relates to places that differentiate from their surroundings by attempting to dissolve the dichotomy between real and imagined spaces. Soja suggests that the Thirdspace is,

> *A knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotional events, and political choices that is existentially shaped by the generative and problematic interplay between centers and peripheries, the abstract and concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and the lived, marked out materially and metaphorically in spatial praxis, the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in the field of unevenly developed (spatial) power. (Soja 1996, 31) […] Everything comes together… subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (Soja 1996, 56–57) […] It is disorderly, unruly, constantly evolving, unfixed, never presentable, in permanent constructions. (Soja 1996, 70)*

Soja bases the concept on "other" spaces that challenge the "normality" and continuity around them. Something that has been revealed several times throughout the results is that 7hills is 'unique' and starkly differentiates from its surroundings in a way that social tensions or stereotypes between different ethnic groups, age groups or gender are not apparent here, by its openness and inclusivity that prevents certain members of the society from being excluded, by the naturalness that lies in the cross-gender interaction here (see Chapter 4.4). All this does not exist outside of 7hills. The park forms its own logics and rules.

Especially Soja's idea about spatial knowledge coming into spatial action in fields of unevenly developed spatial power reflects 7hills' governance model (see Chapter 4.2). Here, a few skateboarders and locals, ranging from children to adults and from Jordanian citizens to discriminated immigrants (see Chapter 3.2), all command a large amount of "spatial knowledge" – of the neighborhood and of skate park facilities. These people are allowed to design and construct – and transform this knowledge into "spatial action". This all happens in the context of Amman's urban development, which has for a long time been steered by neoliberal governance models, giving agency only to those who invest large amounts of money, or municipal actors (see Chapter 3.1). This unevenly developed spatial power is tackled with the development of 7hills. Furthermore, the park's management includes the children in maintaining and managing the park, actors whom are oftentimes not involved in participatory planning, and their partly utopian and seemingly naïve imaginations and visions for the park.

Soja's remarks are highly influenced by Henri Lefebvre's (1974) "Production of Space," in which Lefebvre suggests a division into "perceived space," "conceived space" and "lived spaces of

representation"; and besides noted that spaces are produced by *Gesellschaft* and the social relations within. Soja took this idea up and renamed the three categories into Firstspace (perceived space), Secondspace (conceived space) – and the Thirdspace as the lived space, filled with everyday life and experiences. The experiences made in 7hills go beyond the park and impact some of its users' everyday life, for example by providing first opportunities for boys and girls to interact with one another. Soja sees the Thirdspace as the result of the Firstspace and the Secondspace combined. However, and on the basis of that, Soja strongly criticizes the standardized and modern urban design of the 20th century, which, according to him, leaves little opportunities for an emergence of the Thirdspace. Soja's Thirdspace is furthermore based on Michel Foucault's Heterotopias (1992)[11], as "other" spaces that embody realized and spatially manifested utopias, beyond the perceived and conceived space. Dehaene and De Cauter (2008, 3–4) define Foucault's Heterotopia as "various institutions and places that interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of ordinary everyday space." Both, Soja's Thirdspace but also Foucault's Heterotopia remain undeveloped and vague concepts. Little empirical research has applied or tested those theories, and until today that leaves a broad range of possible examples.

In a similar vein to those authors' "triple dialectic" (Soja 1996, 7), Lyn Lofland (1998) has developed a tripartite categorization. However, she does not refer to terms space or place, as they imply a certain rigidity, but prefers the term "realm." Lofland's realms go beyond the classical dichotomy of public and private, and include a third category, i.e. the parochial realm. With realm, Lofland refers to the social, not the physical territory. All three of Lofland's realms could theoretically appear in any place. However, certain environments have empirically shown to typically anchor certain realms, so that the private realm is often in the household, while the public realm is oftentimes found in public space.

Lofland also notes that "space that is legally and culturally designated as public, may – sociologically speaking – be parochial" (1998: 12). Lofland therewith makes the concept more abstract than Ray Oldenburg's third places, but also allows it to be more dynamic and flexible. For instance, different realms can overlap, co-exist, grow, shrink or even disappear. Since the park subject to this study demonstrates a public space that combines different centers of social interaction within and has over time undergone several spatial changes, Lofland's concept helps to understand the park's fluidity. The different realms rely on the (invisible) social relationships filling the space. Therefore, outsiders might not be able to assign them to one of her three categories. Lofland clarifies that "an empty public park

[11] However, Soja has criticized Foucault's Heterotopias as "frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent" (Soja 1996, 162). In fact, Foucault himself has only used the term once in all of his authorized written works, in the preface of "The Order of Things" (Foucault 1966).

has no realm" (1998: 12), while Setha Low (2006, 43) aligns, stating that without social encounters, the public realm "contracts." Social relationships are formed when "two parties interact with some regularity over a relatively extended period of time" and where a sense of connection between the two exists (Lofland and Lofland 1984, 83). The three types of realms are defined as follows:

1. private realm: ties of intimacy among primary group[12] members (members of the same family, household and personal networks); intimate relationships; the world of "domestic intimacy"
2. parochial realm: sense of commonality among acquaintances or neighbors who are involved in interpersonal networks (located in communities); communal relationships; the world of community
3. public realm: constituted of those areas of urban settlements in which individuals in copresence tend to be personally unknown or only categorically known to one another; strangers and categorical; "the world of urbanity" (Lofland 1998, 11–14; 1989b, 455)

So, the differences between Lofland's categories lie in the "relational forms" and the amount of knowledge a person or group has about the another one. The public realm is made up of public places and other spaces within a city that tend to be inhabited by persons who are strangers[13] to one another or who think of each other only in terms of occupational or other non-personal identity categories (Lofland 1989a, 19). Generally, Lofland is particularly interested in "the stranger", whom she sees as a central figure in the urban context and therefore in the public realm. She defines "the stranger" as "a person with whom one has had no personal acquaintance" (Lofland 1998, 7). Her focus on this figure is perceived as fitting for this study, because before the park was opened, the children from the neighboring quarters had no central place to spend their free time at, but were rather dispersed across different locations. Furthermore, due to the fact that schools are gender-separated in Jordan, girls and boys are not familiar to each other, unless they are from the same family. That is why, when the park and then again when the skate classes were introduced, all those people who had not met before due to the prior lack of places of encounter, came together as strangers and suddenly engaged in interactions.

[12] Primary groups are formed by people with close, enduring and personal relationships, for example as it is the case for families or close friendships. The concept was first introduced by Charles Cooley (1909), member of the Chicago School of Sociology. In opposition, secondary groups involve rather weak emotional ties and are impersonal and goal-oriented. Examples are a university class, a group of co-workers or a sports team.

[13] The sociological category of the stranger was introduced by Georg Simmel (1908). He ascribes a simultaneity of the stranger's nearness and social distance to a certain group or system in which lives, while the latter is more highlighted by the other group members. Simmel states, "Distance means that he, who is close by, is far, and strangeness means that he, who also is far, is actually near" (1908, 509)

Lofland notes the subjective and fluid character of those categories. She mentions the possibility of "bubbles" of a certain realm to form on another realm: "[a public park] in which a portion has been 'reserved' for a wedding or family reunion contains a private realm 'bubble' within it" (Lofland 1998, 12). In fact, this is exactly the case in the 7hills park, where I have identified parochial bubbles (like the Sudanese public, see Chapter 4.3.2) and communities (see Chapter 4.5.3) within a public park. The park remains located in the public realm, as it is permeable also for newcomers or strangers or those, who do not want to engage in social interactions, rather than being territorialized by a certain group or community. Lofland adds that the parochial realm of one person may as well be another person's public realm.

Certain activities can only take place in the rather intimate private realm. In turn, the public realm also allows certain activities which are restricted in the private or parochial realm. For instance, as Richard Sennett comments, people can both access unfamiliar knowledge but also discuss and debate with people holding opposing opinions in the public realm. Furthermore, it "[…] offers people a chance to lighten the pressures for conformity, of fitting into a fixed role in the social order; anonymity and impersonality provide a milieu for more individual development" (Sennett 2013). According to him, this is one of the pull factors of cities for migrants.

The sociality in the public realm covers a broad range. Lofland generally differentiates into three different types of relationships that exist between individuals (Lofland 1989b, 466–70):

- fleeting: encounters of brief duration (seconds or minutes), between people unknown to each other, "like ships that pass in the night"
- segmented: rather unstable primary (*Gemeinschaft*; sharing of personal, biographical, emotional, idiosyncratic aspects of oneself) and secondary (*Gesellschaft*, limited segments of self, like occupational role or identity are brought into conversation) relationships
- unpersonal/bounded: simultaneously characterized by social distance and closeness; little to no personal/intimate information about oneself is shared, "friendly, sociable, warm" atmosphere; they do not leak over into the parochial or private realm

In 7hills, segmented relationships could also be identified, especially within larger cliques or communities (see Chapter 4.5.3). For example, I witnessed small talk about the workplace of a member of the basketball community, after another basketballer had specifically asked about that. In other situations, bounded relationships were apparent. When I referred to people in the park by their place of residence or place of origin instead of their names, my interlocutor would not know. This was because this is precisely the knowledge which they lack about many of the other park users, as it is not

relevant to the activities and shared interests that connect them. Fleeting relationships are rare in the park, but could also be found. As the majority engages in conversations in the park, those relationships exist only amongst people who go to the park and execute activities on their own, like reading, relaxing or sitting in their car. In that case, short gestures or looks are exchanged, but not more than that. Interestingly, Lofland notes both that fleeting relationships are the most representative within the public realm (Lofland 1989b, 466), and that almost all people in the public realm are strangers to each other. Therefore, the 7hills park cannot be considered as fully located in the public realm.

At the same time, relationships that are typically located in the parochial realm were found in the case study, together with statements that reflect the people's sense of community. The relationships in the parochial realm are generally not as focused on an external stimulus, but in fact reach interactions about personal characteristics, the sharing of emotions, and so forth, to a more detailed extent than segmented relationships in the public realm. According to Lofland, a parochial realm is apparent, "when the dominating relational form found in some physical space is communal" (Lofland 1998, 14). In "A World of Strangers", Lofland (1973) furthermore has found that people tend to transform public environments in which they appear as strangers to one another into more 'homey' environments, in which they are personally-known to each other, in order to "maximize personal comfort and benefits" (Kusenbach 2006, 280). In 7hills, a community emerged that park users feel connected to and identify with (see Chapter 4.5.3). Through exchange with each other, that is in part required to execute the same activity or share equipment in the park, a large share of people in the park have found to have the same goals and interests with others in the park. Therein, they have developed and sustained communal relationships, while some have even formed friendships. This gradual process – from strangers to members of the same (newly emerged) community to acquaintances or even friends – fulfills Lofland's characteristics of a parochialization in a public space. Simultaneously to the parochialization, certain elements of the public realm remain. Whoever does not want to join either the 7hills community or smaller communities within the park is able to constitute his or her own public realm in the park as well, meaning that nobody is forced to engage in closer and personal relationships and newcomers can remain strangers, if they wish to.

Uprooted from a particular physical public space like described above, Lofland has observed a general "privatism" throughout history, which she calls the "parochialization" of the public realm. It describes the shift of certain activities out of the public realm into the parochial realm. The withdrawal from participation in the public realm has become a "genuine option" (Lofland 1998, 144), especially due to technological developments of the previous century, such as sewage, water, heating systems, phones, improved mail delivery and vehicles. Industrialization made certain goods and items that impacted

everyday life accessible and affordable for not only the wealthy but large parts of the society. As a result, formerly collective activities and functions were moved also from the parochial realm into the domestic space, the "private realm."

Lofland names the example of horse-drawn conveyances for the sudden increase of privatism during industrialization – along with fewer pedestrian traffic and opportunities for (fleeting) encounters in the public realm, particularly in transit spaces like sidewalks. In pre-industrial times, only the wealthy could afford those carriages, which "allowed them to encase themselves in cocoons of privacy and thus insulate themselves from the public realm" (Lofland 1998, 16). Industrialization then introduced new modes of transport and developments in the field of construction and communication (Lofland 1989a, 20). Thus, the withdrawal from the public realm became more common across wide parts of the society. In "The Fall of Public Man", Richard Sennett (1977) illustrates well, how the "traumas of capitalism" have led to this withdrawal in Paris and London already during 18th century. In addition, new modes of communication substituted face-to-face interaction in the public realm with telecommunication taking place from home. The role of cars and construction have decreased the chance for casually encountering acquaintances or strangers. Amman's public realm was also impacted by that and led towards a general parochialization. Today, the city's design is immensely car-oriented and in some places offers practically no walkability to its residents, with narrow and bumpy sidewalks right next to congested and loud streets. This results in only 3% of Ammanis who use "soft mobility" (bike and foot), while Amman's car-ownership rate is comparatively high, reaching 67,3% (Shatanawi, Abdelkhalek, and Mészáros 2020, 7).

Simultaneously, debates about the negative image of the public realm re-awakened during industrialization. In fact, the morality of the public realm had been scrutinized for a long time. Already in the 18th century, women in London have been warned against the public realm as the home of the "wrong kind of people" (Lofland 1989a, 21). As mentioned, a fear and stigmatization of those invigorating the public realm continued in 19th and 20th century. In New York, for example, "proper men and women" were warned against the "disgusting ethnic character" of the public realm's dwellers; a mingling of people with lower economic statuses and different lifestyles was perceived as an immense threat, as common phrases like "getting people off the street" and "only fools' names and faces are seen in public places" (Lofland 1989a, 20–21) exemplify. Interestingly, this stigmatization of people invigorating the public realm is also apparent in Amman, where particularly male teenagers and young men are oftentimes seen in the streets where they hang out (due to a lack of other accessible options) – and by the public at large considered 'troublemakers' (see Chapter 3.1.6), oftentimes based on brief moments of passing by.

	Third Places	**Thirdspace**	**The Public Realm**
Author	Ray Oldenburg (1989)	Edward Soja (1996)	Lyn Lofland (1989)
Definition	Public and accessible settings providing community-building functions for its dwellers	"A fully lived space, a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and-virtual locus of structured individuality and collective experience and agency"	Constituted in accessible urban space that is communally shared by individuals in copresence; "the world of urbanity"
Actors/ Dwellers	Neighborhood and newcomers to an urban area	*(Unclear)*	Strangers and people personally unknown/ categorically known to one another
Relations	Community, friendships	*(Unclear)*	Fleeting, segmented, unpersonal/bounded
Distinctions	First place (home) and second place (workplace)	Firstspace and Secondspace (Thirdspace as combination of both)	The private (home) and parochial realm (community)
Examples	church, café, club, bar, beer garden, general store, public library, bookstores, hair salons, parks	*(beyond geographical units; "espaces autres"; could be ideas, events, appearances, and meanings)*	Public space (parks, plazas, sidewalks, streets, also indoor spaces like shopping malls, community centers

Table 2: Overview of three concepts offering settings for encounters between strangers in the public sphere

As a consequence of these two developments, the popularity and role of the public realm have declined, and activities have shifted from the public into the parochial realm over the decades. Rapid technical progress, especially the World Wide Web, have increased this parochialization, as for instance proven by Lee Humphreys' (2010) study of the impact of the social network Dodgeball on parochialization in New York City. The functions and social life taking place in the public realm, as described above, are threatened by that development. Returning to the concept of third places, the political scientist Robert Putnam (2001) has observed this development recently by the case of the American decrease of third places as the key site for community-building and the people's withdrawal from the public realm in his well-known book "Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community."

Not only the urban social life, but also its physical settings have faded away. The overall trend of privatization of the public space exacerbates the shrinking of the public realm. As Staeheli, Mitchell and Nagel (2009, 646) point out, the public realm requires the physical public space in order to exist: "The structure of the public realm is conditioned by specific arrangements of material space, social

relations, and institutions; a public realm is impossible without some 'place' where that realm can exist." The privatization of public space is part of a development that has jeopardized public space across the globe, i.e. neoliberal[14] urban development, which aims at developing cities to their maximum usage rate – oftentimes accompanied by large protest. Movements around the world have formed under the common goal to 'reclaim the cities' – from Madrid's Puerta del Sol, over Cairo's Tahrir Square to Istanbul's famous Gezi Park. Urban dwellers have therein positioned themselves in the broader public, highlighting the qualities of democracies in general and clarifying "what it means to be included in it" (Staeheli, Mitchell and Nagel 2009, 646). In examples like the ones mentioned, the private ownership and management practices threaten the diversity of the users, "reduce the vitality and vibrancy of the spaces" and furthermore "reorganize it to welcome only tourists and middleclass people," as Low (2006, 44) warns.

This neoliberal urban development and shifts in the actors' constellation in regard to urban planning have also affected Amman's public space and caused a general lack of it, as elaborated on in Chapter 3.1.3. It has also threatened Amman's public parks and other spaces for social encounter located in the public realm, exposing the relevance and uniqueness of the 7hills park.

2.2 Behavior and Performance in the Public Realm

A central element of Lofland's concept of the public realm are individuals with their social behavior. Social interactions are part of behavior, so it is worth taking a brief look at factors influencing those. Nobert Elias (1978) hints at the limited degree of "real" self-expression within the urbanite's "performance" in the public realm, stating that an individual's persona is defined by publicly reiterated performances of social mores. The term "persona" conveys the dramaturgical setting that Elias attributes to the public. Elias therewith points out that people carry out certain performances that are not necessarily an expression of their inner self. They rather adapt their behavior to what and who surrounds them.

A common behavior pattern of the city dweller is the suppression of own feelings, for example fears and aversion against the other people around. So, while one acts decent towards a stranger or an immigrant, that person might in fact be xenophobic. Georg Simmel (1903) set the ground for the identification of those socio-psychological adaptations by urban dwellers as a reaction to the overwhelming impressions coming from cities, resulting in the "increase of nervous life". According to him, life in rural settings is a combination of meaningful social relationships that consist of emotional

[14] "Neoliberalism" is thoroughly explained in Chapter 3.1.3

and social ties, which cannot be established in urban settings. This is due to the urban dwellers' adaptation to city life, i.e. the intellect, a blasé outlook and a reserved attitude. The urban dweller is also calculative, and can thereby scan his environment immediately or identify potential threats. This, too, adds to a general reservedness. This reservedness influences social interactions in the city.

Social interaction describes the ways in which two or more people (or things) act with and react to each other, either verbally or non-verbally (Goffman 1963). They can take manifold shapes – from routinized to brief to long-term and meaningful. Social interaction results in socialization, and vice versa. So, when people are socialized differently, for instance due to different cultures and traditions that they grew up with, their interaction might be more challenged than between those people who were socialized similarly. In 1934, George Herbert Mead was the first one to mention Symbolic Interactionism in his "Mind, Self and Society," which suggests that the self is an entity arising from social interactions between individuals and small groups of people. In the 1960's, Herbert Blumer builds on Mead's thoughts, stating that individual and collective actions reflect the meaning and relevance that people ascribe to things; those meanings arise from the society and the group that an individual is embedded in. Basing on his examinations of social interaction, Blumer differs between symbolic and non-symbolic interaction. While the symbolic interaction seeks to understand the meaning of something and therefore involves an interpretation step, the non-symbolic is rather a reflex to a certain action and does not include any thinking or interpretation (Blumer 1969, 8). Most interaction, though, is influenced by a mutual set of interpretation.

Erving Goffman, who draws on the theory of Symbolic Interactionism, has thoroughly examined social interaction in a range of places. Goffman divides into unfocused and focused interactions, the latter meaning "when people effectively agree to sustain for a time a single focus of cognitive and visual attention, as in a conversation, a board game, or a joint task (…)", while the first one happens solely by the interpersonal communication due to physical proximity of two or more people (Goffman 1961, 7–9). Both of those types are apparent in the 7hills park, as the observations have shown. By implication, this means that the interaction scheme differs according to what a person does in the park. People engaging in a common activity, for example playing basketball, generate focused interactions. Goffman equates focused interactions with the notion of "encounters".

Similar to Norbert Elias, Goffman furthermore describes social life as a performance carried out by "teams" of participants in three places: the "front stage" (Goffman 1956, 13), the "back stage" (70) and the "off stage" (82). These "stages" differ in the presence or absence of audiences, making 7hills a front stage during much frequented hours. Thereby, they set the degree to which one acts or

performs in order to fulfill expectations or the surroundings. Goffman's stages help to understand that social interaction is influenced by the time and place in which it occurs, as well as by the "audience" present to witness it. The metaphor of theatrical performance also helps to understand that the society expects individuals to perform a certain role (or persona), which in turn influences social interactions (Goffman 1956).

To summarize, social interaction is determined by the values, norms, beliefs, and common cultural practices of the social group or the place in which it occurs. And since different parts of the same city may be differently encoded in regard to culture, certain performances, gestures or vocabularies can be interpreted as friendly in one part of the city, and be perceived as rude or provocative in the other, as Collins (2000, 31) clarifies. This has to be kept in mind when examining interactions in the 7hills park as a place frequented by people from different parts of the city, different cultural backgrounds and possibly differing norms and beliefs.

The scholars named above give important preliminary remarks about the fact that interaction in the public realm is influenced by a range of factors. Basing on Erving Goffman's (1963) thoughts, Lyn Lofland (1989b, 461–65) concludes that the sociality in the public realm follows three principles, imposed by society, i.e. firstly, civil inattention, meaning the polite acknowledgement of the others, but no more interaction, rather a co-presence without co-mingling; secondly, audience role prominence (inhabitants of public settings act primarily as audience to activities which surround them) and thirdly, civility towards diversity, through which the urbanite acts decently towards diversity of "physical abilities, beauty, skin color and hair texture, dress style, demeanor, income, sexual preferences and so forth" (Lofland 1989b, 464–65). Taking into account these ideas about encountering strangers in the public realm, a deeper look has to be taken at encounters and the interactions between people of different ethnicities and other dimensions of diversity, as it is done in the following.

2.3 Encounters of Difference in the Urban Public Space

Cities have all along been melting pots, where people from various different backgrounds are born into or migrate to, and co-exist in close proximity to each other. Louis Wirth (1938), member of the Chicago School of Sociology, lists the social heterogeneity, referring mostly to the different racial and ethnic groups in a city, as one of the three characteristics of cities, beside their population size and density. Wirth argues that cities additionally promote individualism, meaning that city dwellers pursue their own interests more than aiming at fulfilling collective interests, as it is – or used to be – the case for

rural settings. Hence, their engagement in different social groups and circles adds to their intersectional sense of belonging: “By virtue of his different interests arising out of different aspects of social life, the individual acquires membership in widely divergent groups, each of which functions only with reference to a single segment of his personality” (Wirth 1938, 16).

However, Wirth warns at the same time that cities are segregated not after patterns of interest and personality, but rather after fixed characteristics such as ethnicity. This impedes the creation of close relationships with those sharing the same interests but – for instance – coming from a different cultural background, as Wirth notes:

> *(…) the task of holding organizations together and maintaining and promoting intimate and lasting acquaintanceship between the members [of interest groups] is difficult. This applies strikingly to the local areas within the city into which persons become segregated more by virtue of differences in race, language, income, and social status, than through choice or positive attraction to people like themselves. (Wirth 1938, 17)*

Wirth’s thoughts are up-to-date, as globally growing displacement and migration numbers on the one hand, and individualism or the emancipation from traditional norms and expectations on the other have actually exacerbated the diversity in cities. Stephen Vertovec (2012, 308) describes diversity as the process through which “multiple modes of social differentiation and fragmentation” have re-ordered society in economic, social and cultural dimensions, and through which “people are identifying themselves and others with reference to a number of categories.“ Vertovec has observed a diversification of attributions – by categories that go beyond ethnicity and citizenship, like “differential immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restrictions to rights, divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents” (Vertovec 2007, 1025).

An increase in diversity is also apparent in Amman, where the several influxes of refugees over the last decades, but also the immigration of western businesspeople or employees in the humanitarian sector have added to the cultural and ethnic, but also socio-economic diversity of the city. Social difference amongst city dwellers has multiple dimensions – for instance, sexuality, political views, or religious beliefs. In fact, certain people greet social heterogeneity with enthusiasm. The underlying trend to strive for engagement with the cultural other can result in an empathetic social inclusion. Mica Nava (2006) has observed this in London and describes it with her concept of “domestic cosmopolitanism”, which serves as a driving force for interactions between people with different backgrounds in cities. Nava claims that cultivated people have an intrinsic interest to engage with the ethnic “other” in the urban sphere. Therefore, diverse neighborhoods can be “spaces of contradiction – places of

conviviality and conflict, spaces for erasing and reinforcing differences, territories of inclusion and exclusion" (Phillips et al. 2014, 55).

Basing on the potentials of such open-mindedness and interest in the 'others', Nigel Thrift also highlights the contradictions. He calls cities, specifically urban public spaces, due to their comparatively high density of human interaction "reservoirs of hope" on the one hand, and "oceans of hurt" (2005, 147) on the other hand. With the latter, Thrift refers to unkind and generally negative interaction between different people in the urban sphere. And with that, he raises an important point, i.e. the fact that the proximity and co-existence of a range of different people does not necessarily lead to sociality, but in truth bears the risks of hostile interactions or practices that reflect indifference or even hatred, for example by the motive of fear or xenophobia against the 'others.' It was generally found that social encounters are more likely to occur between people who have commonalities or overlapping everyday realities than between people who have nothing in common. This social-psychological phenomenon is referred to as homophily or the similarity-attraction effect (Byrne 1961; 1997; Montoya and Horton 2013). Homogeneity facilitates coordination and interpretation within communication (Cohen 1977).

When looking closer at the theories circling around "geographies of encounter"[15], contrasts and nuances between the authors' perspectives become apparent. Generally, there is a consent that the public realm and urban public space in general have a high relevance for encounters between people of different backgrounds. And the fact that residential proximity of people of different backgrounds but potentially common interests is often not given due to ethnically or socio-economically segregated cities, calls for the creation of a centrally-located and accessible public space, where these people can come together and mingle in a mundane way. Fincher and Iveson (2008, 154) urge planners to recognize the potentials of planning for encounters, as they "are vital resource for opening up opportunities for all to experience 'strangerhood' without rejection and/or indifference".

Mingling happens only through actions, like moving through a city, exchanging looks, engaging in conversations. This recognition is reflected on a stream of authors that approach the theme of diversity and encounters of difference in cities out of an activity-oriented perspective and focus on the particular human behavior within that provokes encounters. For instance, Jane Jacobs (1961), one of the previous century's most prominent figures in urban ethnographic research, has from early on claimed that sidewalks – if the respective street offers a diversity of uses – foster contact between

[15] The term describes a research area rooted in the British urban and cultural geography, that examines encounters in public space in western metropolis (e.g. Laurier and Philo 2006; Dirksmeier, Mackrodt, and Helbrecht 2011; Clayton 2009; Wilson 2017).

different individuals and social groups. Jacobs refers to encounters of small-scale socializing, and argues that they have the potential to foster trust and tolerance among the residents of a neighborhood. These sidewalk-contacts are usually brief exchanges, like looks or other non-verbal gestures. David Bell (2007, 19), about half a century later, highlights "the vital work of urban life as a series of transactions productive of myriad socialities: those under-researched, mundane moments of togetherness that pattern everyday life." Eric Laurier and Chris Philo (2006) also drew their attention to such mundane civil exchanges in everyday public encounters. They regard these interactions, such as holding doors open or sharing seats in the public as a "doing" of togetherness, which expresses mutual acknowledgement.

However, those fleeting encounters that Helbrecht and Dirksmeier (2009, 19–20) grasp with the term "performative urbanity," do not necessarily result in intermingling. In fact, there is a large counter-movement, claiming that meaningful encounters require more than merely open public space. As drastically clarified by Jane Jacobs (1961, 92) about neighborhood parks, "It is necessary too, in understanding park behavior, to junk the false reassurance that parks are [...] community anchors. Parks are not automatically anything, and least of all are these volatile elements stabilizers of values or of their neighborhoods and districts." This is where Gill Valentine calls for a distinctive view on encounters in the public and suggests the term "meaningful encounters," to differentiate them from fleeting ones. She defines meaningful encounters as the type of contact that "actually changes values and translates beyond the specifics of the individual moment into a more general positive respect for – rather than merely tolerance of – others" (Valentine 2008, 325). Sometimes, even simple materialities can serve to enhance meaningful encounters, as found out in a study about public space and social relations in East London by Nicholas Dines et al. (2006, 18), in which an interviewee who frequently "bumped into old-time acquaintances on her local busy shopping street […] was frustrated that the absence of places to sit down (such as cafés with outdoor tables) meant that her fleeting exchanges could never turn into more meaningful encounters."

In contrast, fleeting everyday encounters as passing by on the sidewalk can even reinforce and reproduce stereotypes, as numerous scholars have proven (Clayton 2009; Wessendorf 2013; Matejskova and Leitner 2011; Allen and Cars 2001). For instance, an empirical study conducted by Lars Wiesemann (2011) about the stereotypes against residents with Turkish origin in Köln-Mülheim confirms that many of the German participants of his study further manifest and reinforce prejudices about the Turkish community when seeing members of it on the street. They base assumptions and opinions merely on visual impressions and visible (spatial) practices by their Turkish neighbors, such as "blocking the way" (Wiesemann 2011, 9). He therefore warns that "there is a need to take into

account the sedimented knowledge about the 'Other' brought into such everyday encounters" (Wiesemann 2011, 15). Nigel Thrift and Ash Amin (2002, 137) warn against sometimes arbitrary biases as well, stating that "we often wander with a pre-given attitude towards others … our contact with strangers is fleeting, a smile from someone might reassure or repel, depending on past experience, attitude or mood."

Amongst other scholars, Wiesemann clarifies that the short length of shared time in these transit spaces such as sidewalks bears dangers. This implies a distinction between spaces of transit and those, that people actively visit in order to stay or engage in social activity. Or – as Jan Gehl (2011, 9–10) differentiates – public space can be used either with (1) necessary human activity, e.g. going to school or work, going shopping or waiting for a bus, (2) optional activity, e.g. sunbathing or taking a walk, or (3) social activity, e.g. children playing, conversation or passive contacts. The park examined in this study is a park with only one entrance gate, meaning that it cannot be considered a transit space that people use for the necessity to get from A to B. Instead, park users choose freely to go to 7hills, carrying out either optional or social activities.

When discussing firstly difference in the urban and secondly fleeting everyday encounters, the concept of "throwntogetherness of place," developed by the already mentioned geographer Doreen Massey (2005) should not be ignored, as has strong links to both topics. With the term, Massey describes fleeting everyday encounters that include friendly short gestures and (non-verbal) interactions. She sees in them the base for urbanism in the global society. About the need for negotiation of difference amongst the participants in such scenes, she writes,

> *There can be no assumption of pre-given coherence, or of community or collective identity. Rather the throwntogetherness of place demands negotiation. In sharp contrast to the view of place as settled and pre-given, with a coherence only to be disturbed by 'external' forces, places as presented here in a sense necessitate invention; they pose a challenge. They implicate us, perforce, in the lives of human others, and in our relations with nonhumans they ask how we shall respond to our temporary meeting-up with these particular rocks and stones and trees. They require that, in one way or another, we confront the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity. The sheer fact of having to get on together; the fact that you cannot (even should you want to, and this itself should in no way be presumed) 'purify' spaces/places. (Massey 2005, 141–142)*

Massey, as one of many (e.g. Valentine 2008; Dirksmeier, Mackrodt, and Helbrecht 2012), in this quote highlights that the negotiation of multiplicity and difference, present in all cities, takes place in situative urban encounters. However, throwntogetherness does not guarantee convivial and inclusive practices, but can also create transgressive or aggressive ones. Only if the encounters are long enough, they bear potentials for a conviviality and can be meaningful.

Similarly to Thrift and Amin, Gordon Allport (1954) has stated that when a majority group member has a negative experience in an everyday routine caused by a minority group member, the person generalizes and instinctively builds up prejudices against that entire minority group. Valentine (2008, 332) adds that positive changing of people's attitude towards a minority group doesn't occur with the same speed as a negative changing. In addition, during positive encounters, few people reflect the individual onto the group and change the mind on the entire group, while negative encounters with individuals are often generalized onto the group. These aspects are as well reflected in the study by Lars Wiesemann, quoted above.

Ash Amin, who focusses on multicultural encounters, aligns with those critical views, stating that the city's public spaces are "not natural servants of multicultural engagement" (Amin 2002, 967). He attempts to invalidate the many claims which argue that intermingling takes place solely through the presence of public space. Amin faces this claim, arguing that many of these spaces are in fact territorialized by particular groups that reject others. As geographer Doreen Massey confirms and warns,

> *[…] the tendency to romanticise public space as an emptiness which enables free and equal speech does not take on board the need to theorise space and place as the product of social relations which are most likely conflicting and unequal. […] Such 'public' space, unregulated, leaves a heterogeneous urban population to work out for itself who really is going to have the right to be there. (Massey 2005, 152)*

Apart from territorialization and the fact that public space is in many cases contested through certain power dynamics, it has to be kept in mind that not all people want to engage in exchanges with strangers: "Some people want to be in the park to be alone or even anti-social" (Amin and Thrift 2002, 137); or as pointed out by Dines et al. (2006, 14), "public spaces were not always perceived as social arenas but were also valued for providing opportunities to be alone."

It is confirmed though, for instance quite prominently by Danish urban planner Jan Gehl (2010), that a particular design of the urban public space promotes its dwellers engagement in interaction with others. This is achieved for instance by enabling open views. Wherever an audience is potentially allowed intense insights in its surrounding environment, higher densities of interaction can be expected (Dirksmeier, Mackrodt, and Helbrecht 2011, 99). Furthermore, a passing through by different people facilitates contact – again, if the passerby's walking speed is not too high. It has also been found that city spaces that allow a certain flexibility for appropriation by its dwellers are successful in bringing people together. Therefore, Richard Sennett (1992) requests spaces, which "engage rather than regulate; that overlay social differences rather than segregate them into well-defined zones; that evoke recognition between strangers across 'weak' boundaries; that are intentionally incomplete,

'provisional', and open to unintended use". He therewith calls for spaces that allow action and a freedom for its dwellers. So, a certain design of the public space that puts human interaction and social life in the focus, can promote those meaningful encounters. The following sub-chapter presents another theoretical performance-oriented approach to meaningful encounters – by the means of micropublics.

2.4 The Concept of Micropublics and Social Interaction

One the one hand, as shown above, several authors argue that city life in opposition to rural life offers less potential for strong ties and the emergence of meaningful relationships between people. For instance, Wirth identifies a high degree of anonymity in cities, resulting in rather superficial relationships and transitory interactions between people (Wirth 1938), while Gill Valentine (2008) argues that cities' "classical" public spaces such as sidewalks, parks and squares are merely places of transit. Thus, they do not offer potential meaningful exchanges, but rather superficial etiquette between people, as the contact is very limited in these spaces.

On the other hand, several authors see massive potentials in particular public spaces for conviviality and meaningful encounters – also between strangers. For instance, Lewis Mumford (1938) has celebrated the civilizing effects of everyday mingling in spaces of recreation such as parks, fairs and squares, while Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift claim that the city's public spaces have the potential to be not only the scene, but even the generator of new shared meaning and hybrid cultures, which arise from an intermingling of diverse (groups of) people (2002, 136). The latter, British geographer Ash Amin, adds that those intermingling processes and (multicultural) exchanges can be achieved or facilitated through engagement in a shared purposeful group activity. Amin describes the settings of that activity and exchange as "micropublics". He sees micropublics as the key sites for prosaic negotiation of difference. Examples include "sports or music clubs, drama/theatre groups, communal gardens, youth participation schemes" (Amin 2002, paraphrased by Valentine 2008, 331). Valentine furthermore explains that in micropublics, "people from different backgrounds are brought together in ways that provide them with the opportunity to break out of fixed patterns of interaction and learn new ways of being and relating." Ash Amin explains the link between the activities and a "cultural transgression" as follows:

> *Cultural change […] is likely if people are encouraged to step out of their routine environment, into other everyday spaces that function as sites of unnoticeable cultural questioning or transgression. Here too, interaction is of a prosaic nature, but these sites work as spaces of cultural displacement. Their effectiveness lies in placing people from different backgrounds in new settings where engagement with strangers in a common activity disrupts easy labelling of the stranger as enemy and initiates new attachments. They are moments of cultural*

> *destabilisation, offering individuals the chance to break out of fixed relations and fixed notions, and through this, to learn to become different through new patterns of social interaction. (Amin 2002, 970)*

The "fixed" patterns that are broken out of are resembled in the previous sub-chapters, for example in Blumer's or Goffman's ideas of the society's or 'audience's' expectations and norms towards an individual's performance and behavior; or in Wiesemann's alarming findings about manifestation of stigmas about certain communities through brief contact.

The examples for micropublics given by several authors are all spaces or realms that form around a shared activity, i.e. sports, reading, or gardening. The empirical case study is immensely characterized through shared group activities and interests, such as skateboarding, basketball, gardening or arts. Therefore, Amin's micropublics are a fitting sensitizing concept for this study. About the central elements of the success of these micropublics in regard to meaningful encounters and intermingling of different groups and individuals, Amin elaborates,

> *For example, sports associations and music clubs draw on a wide cross-section of the population, they are spaces of intense and passionate interaction, with success often dependent upon collaboration and group-effort, their times are not the times of normal habit, and they disrupt racial and ethnic stereotypes in so far as excellence draws upon talents and skills that are not racially or ethnically confined. (Amin 2002, 970)*

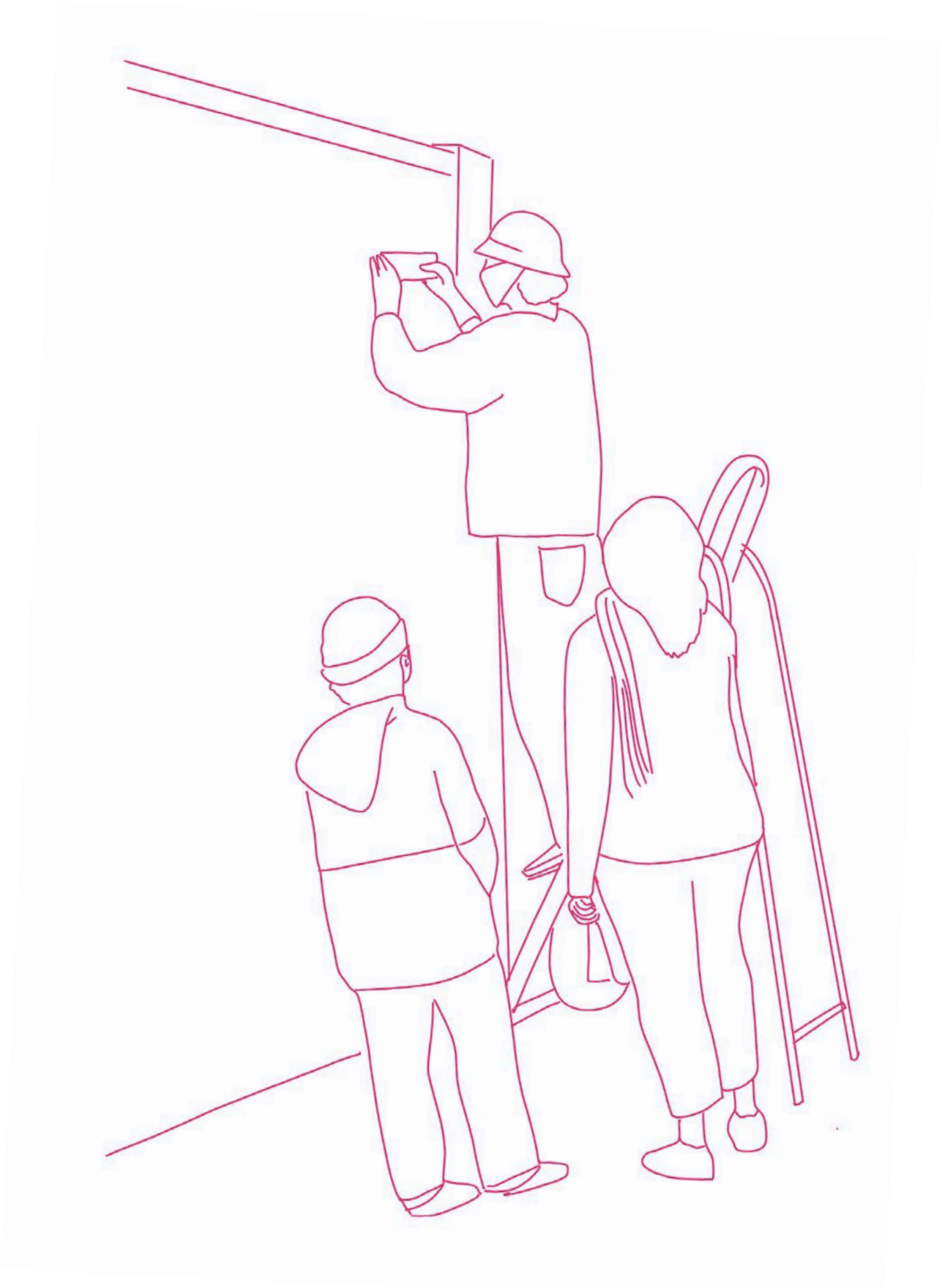
This quote by Ash Amin highlights that class or ethnicity no longer matter in those contexts and personal skills or achievements are brought to the fore. The common activity and the purpose of it blind the potential otherness that is partly perceived strongly outside these micropublics. The focus on talents and skills were also observed in the case study, as will be shown later.

Beside Ash Amin, there is a broad stream of authors confirming through theoretical or empirical approaches that joint activity can serve as a key to sociality. This sociality can either take place verbally – or non-verbally. For instance, Fincher and Iveson (2008) give the example of a library as a (quiet) place where people go with a common interest, namely literature, and thereby can also connect easier with each other. As public libraries are characterized by open access for all people and offer a diversity of uses and thereby users, they bring together dissimilar interests and people. As Wiesemann comments on this example,

> *In these moments, individuals can step out of their conventional stances towards each other on the basis of their common status as library users. Such convivial encounters may lead to new ways of being and relating which are not confined to prescribed identities. (Wiesemann 2011, 6)*

Wiesemann (2011) himself agrees on this approach to shift the activity enlivening the public in the foreground, stating that a commonality arises especially through a joint activity, such as playing soccer, basketball or boules together, while transit encounters bear risks. Another example for sites of community-building processes around a shared activity are urban gardening projects. Across the world, they have proven to create a (sense of) community through shared achievements and responsibilities in the garden. They are furthermore seen as a successful example for sites of discursive negotiation and democratic practices, but also for intercultural interactions and social inclusion (e.g. Hou 2017; Allen and Cars 2001).

If those micropublics or the public realm in general indeed offer potentials for the development of shared values as unifying elements or intercultural interactions, they may bear immense potentials for Jordan as well, where the case study is located at. The country has experienced social tensions between different groups within the society, while at the same time, the public space (as the key site for encountering strangers and respective negotiations) is comparatively limited. The roots and details of both phenomena are explained in the following chapter.



3
Background and Context of the Case Study

This background chapter presents the context in which the case study is embedded in. It is mostly based on a literature review, but also on own empirical data, and is thematically divided into two sub-chapters. The first sub-chapter serves as an explanation of the spatial context of 7hills as an urban neighborhood park. It provides a brief introduction on the situation of public space in the region of the Middle East in general, before setting the focus on the city of Amman. The city's urban development, spatial segregation tendencies and the quantity of public parks in the downtown area are presented here. The second sub-chapter examines the recent social tensions in Jordan. The 7hills park is often praised by the media and international Skate for Development NGOs for the high diversity amongst the park users. The population in Jordan is equally diverse, but a friendly togetherness of all the different population groups cannot be automatically be assumed. The chapter firstly presents the country's population composition before tracing down the roots for the tensions between different groups of the society. They take place firstly between refugees and Jordanians, and secondly between different groups of refugees.

3.1 Urban Development and Public Space in the Middle East and Amman

The chapter lays down the regional context of the study and presents Middle Eastern government's approaches to designing, creating or outsourcing issues of public space. The Middle Eastern region is an interesting scene, as its countries' public space policies are partly criticized for their limited degree of openness and democracy and the overall lack of public space. For instance, in 2016, the newspaper The Economist stated alarmingly, "Amid the bloodshed, car fumes and noise, residents are hard-placed to find anything fragrant in the sprawling cities of the Arab world. The number of places where people can mingle, picnic on cool watermelon by the rivers and fly kites has shrunk while their populations have soared" (The Economist 2016). After the section about the Middle East, the chapter focusses on the city of Amman. Here, a focus is put on the neoliberal restructuring of tasks in the field of urban development, as this has had large influence on the different types of public space that was developed in the following decades.

3.1.1 Public Space in the Middle East

Public space in the Middle East has different dimensions, of which many are connected with foreign influences. The chapter firstly lays down the historical and socio-political dimension, highlighting the role and typologies of public space throughout history in the Arab-Islamic city. Secondly, the chapter speaks about the economic dimension of urban development that largely influenced the planning in the region. This part contains elaborations on foreign influences that shaped urban development in the region.

The Historical and Socio-Political Dimension

The Middle East, as defined in this study, comprises the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Iran[16]. What the countries comprised in the region share, apart from their cultural influences, geography and historical background[17], is the design of cities. As Islam is widespread in the Middle East, the Islamic city is the most common type here.

About the spatial structure and elements of the Islamic city, Al-Sadiqal-Nayhum (quoted in Rabbat 2012, 199) explains that mosques used to be the "premier public space". They could be seen as equal to the Greek agora and city squares in western medieval cities, as they fulfilled similar functions for their visitors and are arranged in a non-hierarchical and undifferentiated layout. In addition, residential houses in the Islamic city integrate both public and private zones. An ideal example is the courtyard house, in which the courtyard, or *sahn*, serves as a public space and where guests and visitors are received (Al-Mulla Hwaish 2015, 88). As a reception area, it does not interfere with the private living space of the family, where the household members work and sleep. The residential houses are typically arranged in concentric circles around the city's Great Mosque, or *jāmi'*, positioning it in the center – not only spatially, but also politically and in regard to religion (Antoniou 1981, 25). The *suq*, which is the commercial quarter and (arcaded) street market close to the center, is the core public space of the traditional Arab city. It is considered the center of social life in the Islamic city. Other types of public space in the Arab cities are so-called *maydans,* which are squares from the times of military dynasties, when they were used for equestrian exercises. Now they are open markets. Another typology found in the Islamic city are public baths, or *hammams*, around which important "social occasions in the Muslim's lifestyle were centered" (ibid., 30). These baths served as a place for recreation and relaxation, but also for discussion and conversation about business amongst men or housekeeping ideas amongst women. The urban pattern described above follows a controlled hierarchy of roads, spaces and buildings (ibid., 25). In the Middle Ages, the Islamic cities were segregated, i.e. there were different districts, *mahallahs,* for Turkmans, Persians, Kurds, settled Bedouins, Christians and other non-Muslim groups. The quarters were not divided along the axis of socio-economic characteristics, though (ibid., 25).

[16] "Middle East" is a contested geographical definition and has been exposed as a mere Western geopolitical construct (Bonine, Amanat, and Gasper 2012). For example, some understand the Arabian Peninsula as part of the Middle East, while others exclude it. I have decided against focusing this chapter on the geographically largest of all territorial understandings of the "Middle East," being equal to the definition of the so-called "MENA" region and including Northern African countries all the way to Morocco, as there are immense differences in the respective cultures and geographies, but also the histories of urban development and public space.

[17] Many of the Islamic cities have had the same influences from Classical Rome, Greece and Byzantium.

Other types of urban squares in the Arab-Islamic city appeared in the late 19th century, when many of the states were under foreign mandates or occupied by European authorities[18]. Urban interventions were planned and imposed by the colonializing forces in their respective styles, in order to make the Europeans feel comfortably close to spaces they had been familiar to (Rabbat 2012, 203). The authorities built wide squares in the city center that also granted them a good overview and control of the crowd. Following successful battles for independence during the first half of the 20th century, of which many had taken place on these squares, the squares thenceforward served for national parades and celebrations (Rabbat 2012, 203–204).

Nonetheless, those squares kept on being used for political protest as well, during decades of military regimes, corrupt governments and war in the region. That led authorities to excessively control the general public space, "to quash any subversive move" as Nasser Rabbat (2012, 205), expert on Islamic architecture, explains . As a consequence, many functions withdrew from the surveilled public space into the private space, i.e. the urban residents especially took political debate and criticism inside their homes, but also other parts of public life[19]. (Rabbat 2012; Pahl-Weber and Building and Housing Research Center 2013, 16–17)

In contrast to this process, a counter development has taken place. In the course of the Arab revolutions in the beginning of the 21st century, the public sphere has regained importance in setting the scene for political protests. The protesters were oftentimes hindered to enter public squares by security forces, but sometimes succeeded,

> *Sometimes they manage to penetrate the security cordon and reach the square where other demonstrators join them to swell into magnificent public protest, such as the ones we witnessed in Tunis, Cairo, Alexandria, Benghazi, Manama, and San'a, but also in smaller cities, such as Dar'a, Homs, and Hama in Syria and Ta'iz in Yemen. The protestors stand together in their square, hoisting their banners and chanting their slogans demanding the departure of the corrupt regimes. The squares virtually become their homes, their operation rooms, and our window on their revolution. They sometimes morph into the places where they live, sleep, pray, socialize, demonstrate, and shape their destiny. (Rabbat 2012, 207)*

However, as a reaction to the protests in public space during the Arab spring, governments have started to fence or re-dedicate public space. This was the case for Cairo's Tahrir square, which became

[18] For instance, Syria and Lebanon were French protectorates, while Iraq, Jordan and Palestine were British mandate territories. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabica was created by the British ally Ibn Saud.

[19] This development corresponds with the already explained process of parochialization, developed by Lyn Lofland (see Chapter 2.1). However, the reasons for it are obviously quite different in the context of the Middle East.

iron grated, or for the Pearl Roundabout in Bahrain, which was levelled and turned into a traffic junction by authorities.

The Economic Dimension

Shifting the focus from political functions of the public space to economic terms, the late 20th century brought large western influences on modern Arab states. This was due to a general real estate boom in the Middle East, which began by decisions being taken in Lebanon in 1994 following the large destructions caused by the Lebanese civil war. The downtown area of Beirut was to be rebuilt by The Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut, also called the *Solidere.* This public-private partnership company, which was at that time embodying a unique governance model, was founded by the Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri[20] due to the malfunctioning government caused by the prior unrests. The large withdrawal of governmental actors from the planning sector and other sectors enabled a deregulation and economic liberalization. Thus, the *Solidere* was given powers of compulsory purchase and intended a master plan allowing to create a cluster of 'divided' city quarters, directed by respective property values, instead of envisioning a central homogenous district. Zoning and master plans are tools adapted from Europe or the United States of America, where they promoted visions of the modernist city during the early 20th century. Vanessa Watson (2009, 2261–62) problematizes them as being "enthusiastically" used by middle and commercial classes to maintain property prices and prevent the "invasion of less desirable lower-income residents, ethnic minorities and traders". Watson summarizes the views of fellow scholars and argues,

> *[…] that city governments themselves are producing social and spatial exclusion as a result of the inappropriate laws and regulations which they adopt. Other authors have suggested that this mismatch between planning requirements and the ability of poorer urban-dwellers to meet them, is not innocent. Yiftachel and Yakobi (2003) suggest that in ethnocratic states, and elsewhere, urban informality can be condoned or facilitated by governments as it allows them to present themselves as open and democratic while at the same time using this as a planning strategy to deny particular groups access to rights and services. (Watson 2009, 2261–62)*

To appear as "open and democratic" might have been a goal for the Jordanian government as well. When in 2002, Jordan was suffering economic and administrative issues, the government oriented on Lebanon's *Solidere* in finding alternative governance models in order to attract foreign investors for real estate development (see Chapter 3.1.3). And the utilized planning tools spread across the Arab world. In the rise of the 21st century, Dubai and the United Arab Emirates who had been prospering through oil revenues "had started to lead the way in master planning and real estate development in the Arabian Gulf" (Bagaeen 2016, 42), with a range of iconic buildings emerging.

[20] Hariri was prime minister in Lebanon from 1992–1998 and from 2000–2004. Together with King Abdullah II of Jordan, he initiated the mega-project Abdali in Amman (see Chapter 3.1.3).

This type of urban development however oftentimes brings tensions and intensifies other issues, as it focuses only on mega-projects while blocking out environmental concerns, supra-regional traffic issues, the inflation of land values, or the lack of affordable housing. For example, this is the case in Qatar, Saudi Arabia or Jordan, amongst others (Bagaeen 2016).

Spatial Consequences

How does this type of urban development manifest spatially in cities of the Middle East? Many of the economic and social functions, which were formerly accommodated in the old cities[21], were moved to the newly erected modern districts or buildings. Many of those new typologies are secluded from the old towns in "spatial, legal and behavioral" (Rabbat 2012, 202) barriers. Rabbat (2012) comments,

> *The end result, however, was that cities like Algiers, Tunis, Cairo, Damascus, Beirut, Baghdad, Aleppo, and many other smaller cities entered the twentieth century with two poorly reconciled and heavily hybridized halves: a pseudomodern and a faux-traditional one. (202)*

With the goal to attract foreign stakeholders and firms, many typologies were built to accommodate and cater for those coming from western countries. For instance, foreigners were partly selected as the target audience for housing. And in fact, many westerners moved to countries in the Middle East as they were gaining economic relevance through globalization processes. Also, new definitions and typologies of public space have emerged out of western archetypes, the most symbolic example being shopping malls. Together with consumerist spaces like cafés or restaurants, they provide a place to encounter friends – however, mainly for people of medium to higher economic status.

To name another urban typology arising from western models, numerous Gated Communities have recently mushroomed across the countries in the Middle East, as is explained in more detail based on the example of Jordan in the following sub-chapter. They segregate the cities further, making it unnecessary for its upper-class residents to leave the Gated Communities due to the range of offers inside the gates, such as parks, sporting facilities or community meeting places. Generally, the introduction of western design criteria in Middle Eastern cities, that underwent modernization processes as described above, with new spatial typologies arising, have caused divisions between old and modern lifestyles or images, that eventually lead to social divisions (Tawil et al. 2019, 3).

[21] The introduction of new street systems after the Second World war, that included the erection of wide squares and avenues, resulted in the "the destruction of old good buildings, the disruption of the relationship between private and public spaces and the creation of a new environment in the streets" across the Middle East (UN-Habitat 2012, 12).

The issue with typologies such as shopping malls and Gated Communities is that they are in private ownership and on private ground. Thus, they are mostly under excessive regulation by private security firms, who can evict or deny access to whomever they want to. As Susan Fainstein confirms, "in the situations where quasi-public or private owners are involved, arbitrary limits can be placed on public access" (Fainstein 2010, 573). With defining those enclosed spaces as public space, the term and its definition lose allegedly natural features such as inclusivity, as Staeheli and Mitchell (2008) clarify:

> *The publicly private spaces of the mall are cleansed of those people whom 'legitimate' members of the public find offensive. Accordingly, the importance of responsibility to the community seems to have trumped the importance of an inclusive, democratic public sphere. (87)*

These dynamics exacerbate the dramatic situation of public space in the region and prevents a mingling of different parts of the society. The vicious circle becomes apparent. The withdrawal from certain parts of the society from public space leads to the decrease of significance and usership of public space, which leads to decreases in the allocation of resources into inclusive, democratic, and accessible public space. That in turn results in the decay or entire disappearance of public space. And due to this and the generally limited availability of public space, the access to few public spaces is unequal amongst the citizens in many Middle Eastern cities, for example because the well-equipped parks are located in the city's wealthy suburbs and therefore for many residents inaccessible if they do not own cars.

Generally, this scarcity of public space stems from the historical density of cities in the Middle East, rapid urbanization, as it is also the case for Jordan, but also limited water resources that are needed for green public space. How limited the public space is confirm the drastic numbers; according to UN Habitat, public space makes up only about 2% of cities in the Arab world, while the average European cities has devoted an average of 12% to public space. In Beirut, only 0.5% are considered public space. This has not always been the case for all cities in the Middle East, i.e. in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh, "vegetated areas" per capita dropped from 78 m^2 (1950) to 16 m^2 within 50 years (Al-Sahhaf 2000, 150). Many of these places today lack behind the minimum of 8m^2 of public open space per capita that the WHO suggests; for example, the Saudi-Arabian city of Jeddah offers 2 m^2 (UN-Habitat 2012, 159), while the Jordanian city of Zarqa offers less than one m^2 per capita (UN Habitat employee, female).

Challenges and Strategies

In part, the respective governments express their awareness of those alarming numbers by increasingly investing in the improvement of open space like parks and recreational spaces; or by changing their urban development policies including its composition of stakeholders. It is also on the agenda of many international NGOs or agencies like UN-Habitat. But some cities do not change their

paradigms, and keep selling off public open space to profit-driven developers, as in the case of Beirut, where a last piece of natural shore was sold for the erection of gated high-rise buildings in the last decade (Fawaz 2016; Nazzal and Chinder 2018, 123–125). And, in cities that are impacted by conflict, investing in and simply making use of parks and public space is just not possible. An impression from Baghdad illustrates that,

> *Recreation space has a role in urban life, especially when housing is overcrowded and lacks outside space, but many local open spaces such as city parks and the stadium or walking along or boating on the Tigris have been either closed or are off limits since 2003. (UN-Habitat 2012, 49)*

Also, to prevent the traditional old towns around the *suq* and the Mosque in Middle Eastern cities from being 'forgotten', losing their significance and eventually decaying, Middle Eastern governments have started to implement "a number of restoration projects to improve public spaces, streets and facades that recapture the cultural significance and value of historic centres." (UN-Habitat 2012, 48)

3.1.2 Introducing Amman

Amman is one of the younger cities in the Middle East. Its strategic importance in the region increased with the opening of the Ottoman Hejaz railway 1908 that connected Damascus in Syria with Medina in Saudi-Arabia (Innab 2016, 123). Furthermore, Amman underwent large increases in population due to migratory movements in the region during the 20th century and has therefore expanded spatially through rapid urbanization. Before 1921, when Amman was chosen the capital of the Emirate of Transjordan, a British protectorate, Amman's population is estimated to have been 3,000-5,000 people (Jones 1969, 209), while approximately 230,000 people lived in the whole country, with higher concentrations in the north of Jordan (Mousa 1989, 135). The country became independent in 1946, three years before it was renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Until then, Amman consisted of some houses by the valley, or *wadi*, and few buildings on the lower parts of the surrounding hills, had they for a long time served as pastureland for the Bedouins who had settled here (Fig. 8). In 1918, 75 % of the area in Amman was still used as agricultural and recreational land[22] (Gharaibeh, Al.Zu'bi, and Abuhassan 2019, 16).

In 1948, around 506,200 Palestinians fleeing from the Arab-Israeli war arrived in Jordan, many of them in the capital, and thereby doubled Amman's population within weeks. The Palestinian refugees were sheltered in makeshift camps on the outskirts of the city – such as Jabal Al Hussein Camp in Northwest Amman, which was set up in 1952. But brick houses were not the norm yet; in fact, that year, the

[22] The category of "Agriculture/recreational", used in the cited study (Gharaibeh, Al.Zu'bi, and Abuhassan 2019), implies, inter alia, green public space, or the space used by Ammanis for recreational purpose. Translated into today's equivalent, the category includes public parks.

census revealed that nearly one third of the city's population lived in tents, while 8% lived in caves (Abu-Dayyeh 2004, 86).

In 1955, two British UN field planners, Max Lock and Gerald King, were commissioned to create a comprehensive city-wide master plan for Amman that should tackle the urgent issues of housing and infrastructure and furthermore present a new vision for the city. This master plan was the first of its kind in Amman. In the plan, nature was to be preserved through self-contained mountain neighborhoods with "green fingers" running through (Abu-Dayyeh 2004, 87). A park was supposed to become the central element of the city, which should host the municipal buildings and cultural uses, following the ideal of the Garden City concept by Ebenezer Howard. However, as a reaction to the drastic increases in population by refugees and the need to react to them, ad-hoc building activity and the erection of refugee camps ruled those envisioned 'green elements' out. In addition to that, the Jordanian nationalist movement was on the rise and held the majority in the Jordanian parliament in the 1950s, with its members clearly criticizing the masterplan as unwanted western interventions. According to Gharaibeh, Al.Zu'bi, and Abuhassan (2019, 3), the pressure to create housing led to "misfortunate decisions [by the planners] that jeopardized the natural resources of the city," causing drastic changes in land use, biodiversity and ecosystems due to impervious surfaces. As a result to the urbanization and ground sealing, Amman's residents only have access to 2.5 m^2 of green open space per capita today (Bazian 2019), while the WHO suggests almost four times that much (WHO and ISOCARP 2009).

A second large wave of refugee migration to Jordan followed the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967, the Six-Day war (*naksa*), with 390,000 Palestinians escaping to Jordan. New camps emerged particularly as a consequence of this influx, like Jerash Camp around 50 km north of Amman. Meanwhile, the existent and therewith growing refugee camps in Amman gradually started merging with the simultaneous development of new suburbs consisting of new houses and villas on the hills of Abdoun and Shmeisani. Today, the (urbanized) camps are embedded centrally in the city and barely stand out.

Fig. 8: Amman in 1940 (Source: Archive of Jordan 2020)

The 1960s brought another paradigm change in regard to planning, as King Hussein I. made use of urbanism to promote the westernization of Amman under the umbrella of welfare capitalism. Victor Lorenz, a Czech urban planner working as UN-sent technical assistant, created a master plan spanning 1967-1981. As the Jordanian economy had suffered due to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, tourism was meant to be revived; for instance, a national visitors' center was planned. The plan also focused on traffic issues, creating two new ring roads and a widening of the streets running through the center (Innab 2016, 128). The large highways and car-oriented developments have separated districts and cut off neighborhoods, decreasing recreational public space and the prospects for non-motorized mobility, making Amman a city with little walkability. Besides, Amman's sidewalks lack frequent maintenance and are affected by obstacles (Khawaja 2015). Planners furthermore covered the stream, *al-Seil*, that until then flew openly between the hills through the valley of the city (Fig. 8). Beside solving traffic issues, the purpose of this was to mitigate the issue of winter flash floods. The covered stream became Quraish Street, while the downtown area surrounding it became the commercial center of Amman. However, that change increased once more the soil sealing and threatened biodiversity. By the end of the century, the excessive urbanization has decreased the share of agricultural and recreational land use down to 23.4 % in 1992 (Gharaibeh, Al.Zu'bi, and Abuhassan 2019, 14). The planning described above furthermore reflects that the needs of (western) tourists seemed to be focused on, rather than those by the locals (Innab 2016, 129).

Aside the Palestinian refugee migration, another development in a neighboring country assigned new growth and relevance to the city of Amman, and besides brought another target audience aside tourists, i.e. the Lebanese civil war in 1975. Until then, Amman was a city relying on orchards and agriculture, while Beirut had been the financial and cultural center of the Middle East and therefore had hosted many companies' regional headquarters. However, with the tumult, many of them shifted their location from Beirut to Amman, the closest politically stable city in the region. These companies, as stated in Chapter 3.1.1, brought along financial capital that resulted in large investments, but also cultural western influences, which shaped the urban development of Amman in a way, that typologies such as shopping malls, high-rise office buildings and large multi-lane highways were created. The 1980s brought, firstly, immense construction activity, with large-scale projects as the Hashemite Plaza in downtown, the King Abdullah I Mosque and the National Assembly, and secondly, the first comprehensive master plan in 1987, resulting out of a co-operation between the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) and Dar Al-Handasa Consultants (Innab 2016, 133).

A third large wave of refugees, mostly Iraqis but also Palestinians, arrived after the Gulf war in 1991, leading to another expansion of the city limits especially in the Northwest and Southwest. With all of those incidents in the second half of the 20th century, Amman and its population grew massively, reaching over a million inhabitants in 2000 (World Population Review 2020). Amman's role as a popular location for international companies, in addition to the many international employees working in the humanitarian sector in Jordan, has kept the population growth rates up. While in 2004, 1,942,066 people lived in Amman Governorate, its population reached over four million in 2015 (Department of Statistics 2015, 13).

Having turned from a small village that was founded on seven hills into a metropolis within less than one hundred years, Amman is today densely built with houses spreading over nineteen hills, or *Jabals*. In fact, the density of Amman's central neighborhoods (20,000 inhabitants per m^2) is among the highest urban densities in the world (Ababsa 2011, 213). The following sections explore how this population growth and urbanization relating thereto have shaped the vanishing and reinterpretation of public space in Amman. It also reflects on the composition of actors shaping urban planning in Amman.

3.1.3 Neoliberal Restructuring and the Emergence of Semi-public and Private Space

Firstly, rapid urbanization, secondly, the global political and economic developments, namely the increased circulation of global capital, and thirdly, the competition amongst countries in the Middle

East over businesses and tourism from abroad (Daher 2009) were taking place during the late 20th century. Altogether, they led to a neoliberal restructuring of Amman's urban development.

Geographer David Harvey describes neoliberalism as a

> *theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (Harvey 2005, 2)*

In the case of Jordan that meant that governmental actors gradually withdrew from responsibilities in fields of action that could be considered as fragile, such as education, health care or social housing – and instead focused themselves on shifting those tasks to private actors such as real estate developers and (foreign) private companies from other sectors. As a result, public services were privatized, government spending therewith reduced and the state's role generally shrank. As Eliana Abu-Hamdi (2017, 103) criticizes, this went under the umbrella of advancement, but in fact massively limited services of public welfare. Those actors and their engagement especially in the field of urban development should furthermore facilitate the access to the Jordanian market for other foreign investments coming from multinational corporations, for instance by planning or contracting mega-projects that respond to globalized understandings of modern and prosperous cities. Another element of the strategy aiming to attract capital to Amman by governmental actors was to present their "peace with Israel as a means to generate economic opportunity and investment in a time of an economic slowdown" (Innab 2016, 133).

With success: the state's deregulation and economic liberalization practices have attracted foreign companies in search of secure and high-yielding investments in the Arab world. The construction sector made urban flagship programs pop up in Jordan, which impacted public life and "urban realities" in the region (Daher 2009), while, at the same time, the municipal planning department was withdrawing from certain planning responsibilities. This is reflected in Myriam Ababsa's call for a proper municipal urban planning, "since for twenty years the planning and development programmes (particularly that of 1985) only gave general guidelines, and were not applied" (Ababsa 2011, 208–210). Saba Innab (2016, 119) comments on this malfunctioning and lengthy planning, saying that it took Jordan and Amman decades to become "modern" (in a by then postmodern world), since only in the 1980s, "signifiers of the modern state started to become evident in the cityscape: the master plan, the plaza, and the monument." As mentioned before, and in addition to those, new spatial orders and typologies have arisen from the western influences, for example high-end business towers or shopping malls as modern spaces of consumption. The large amounts of money that were invested additionally

raised the local property values and speculation activity. By having gradually erased their planning sovereignty, the Greater Amman Municipality today relies heavily on private actors investing in urban development.

Aside from the development of high-rise office and commercial buildings, shopping malls, tech-parks like the King Hussein business park, the erection of gated communities or other residential compounds catering for people with medium to high socio-economic status, private actors have developed so-called “public space”. Many of those places are either in fact semi-public or completely privately owned and often embedded in the context of Business Improvement Districts (BID). As a result of the emergence of this type of space, the notion of “public space” is fully redefined, while the dichotomy between private and public space is interrupted. These spaces, among other approaches coming from multi-national corporations, often embody disconnected territories and have radial impacts, as Daher underlines: “This neoliberalization in the creation of public urban space circulates urban images, spectacles, and models and is leading to the dilution of local differences and the circulation of ‘corporate’ urban realities and images” (Daher 2009, 3).

An example par excellence for neoliberal urban development and new types of “public space” is the Abdali project. The idea for this mega project came up in a meeting in 2000 between King Abdullah and Rafiq al-Hariri, the former Lebanese prime minister (see Chapter 3.1.1). The same development strategy as the one applied for the reconstruction of Beirut’s downtown was implemented, with large investments by Hariri himself and the involvement of numerous Lebanese companies investing, buying property or opening branches in Abdali. The projects is located on the former site of the General Jordan Armed Forces Headquarters (Innab 2016, 133). This mega-project aims at a built-up area of one million m^2, of which most will be used for offices, hotels, higher class residential use, entertainment facilities, retail and commercial use (Fig. 9). Its developers call it “the new downtown” of Amman (Abdali 2015). The mega-project was launched in 2005 by a newly created public-private organization called “Mawared,“ which stands for the National Resources Investment and Development Corporation. It was initially created to facilitate the development of military bases in Amman (Abu-Hamdi 2017, 104). Mawared is a state-owned corporation, “leading Jordan’s drive towards urban regeneration and inner city development […] with a commitment towards generating considerable investment opportunities for the private sector, creating job opportunities, and stimulating economic growth” (United Nations and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia 2020). The organization massively decreased the role and power of state actors such as the municipal planning department, and simply integrates the fully public sector for land use permits or specific technical issues such as

traffic planning. Jordan's government heavily subsidizes foreign investments[23] and pursues the target to create the best possible conditions and environment for it, for instance by providing the land through Mawared. As Innab (2016, 133–34) argues, the Abdali project amongst similar regeneration projects in Amman is furthermore utilized to mask the previously more visible police state and to hide "further expanding circles of exclusion and suppression in another form, through banal architecture that impedes mobility, covers up memory, and perpetuates a kind of everyday oppression."

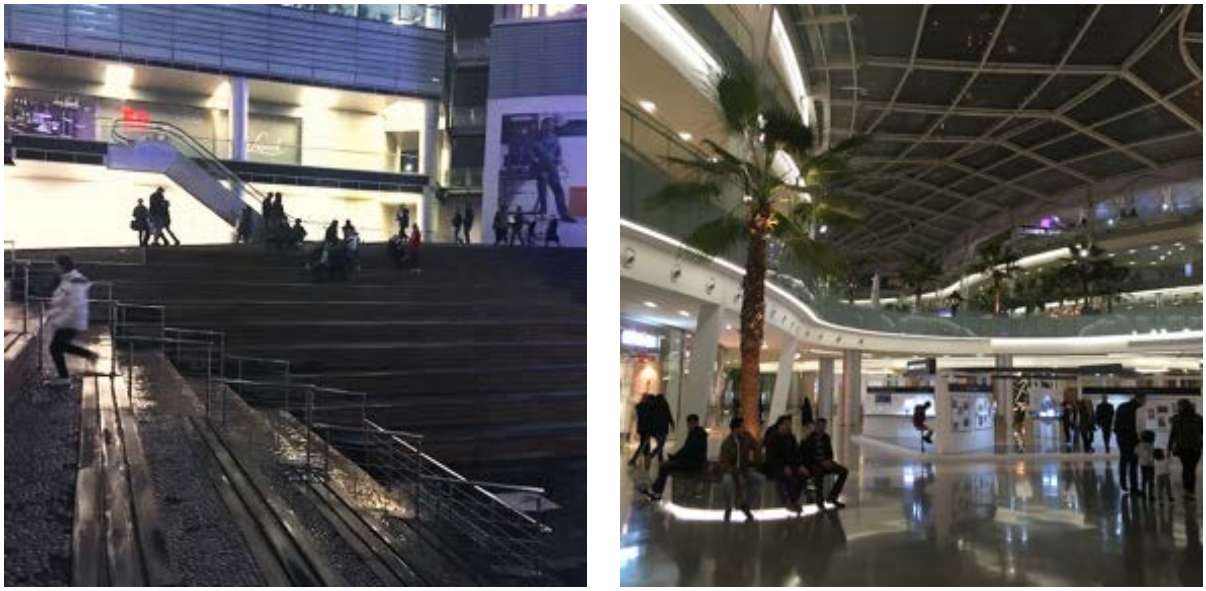


Fig. 9: Impressions from The Boulevard (Abdali)

In regard to functions, the area will agglomerate the State Mosque, the law court and the Parliament, located around a civic plaza. The downtown in the center of Amman, which is already suffering economically, is therewith eviscerated by numerous significant functions (Daher 2009, 4). The Abdali project will be first and foremost accessible to Amman's elite living in the West of the city, not least because private actors are in charge of regulating and controlling the 'public' space between buildings, allowing them to exclude whoever they want. Daher describes Abdali as an example for "new urban islands that cater to a lifestyle of excessive consumption for the elite, together with the internationalization of commercial real estate companies and construction consulting firms capable of providing high-quality services" (Daher 2013, 100). In fact, according to (Daher 2013, 108), the main investor and CEO of the privately owned Abdali Investment Company, an international developer from Saudi Arabia, named Saudi Oger Bahaa once stated that the project "is targeting the 'modern' high

[23] According to Daher (2009, 3), the investors profit from "tax exemptions, infrastructure provision, and elimination of all barriers and red tape in addition to special building regulations made possible for this particular development".

social classes of the city and added that once the other residents realize that a cup of coffee there costs 5 to 10 Jordanian dinars, they would never come back."

This drastic statement explicitly emphasizes the developers wished-for target audience. Only people with a higher economic status, wealthy enough to consume something, should use the space, while the people who cannot afford entrance fees that are charged on some days, or do not belong to the desired target audience, are excluded by being rejected by door policies or security checkpoints equipped with guards and devices. "Non-welcomed participants" (Daher 2009, 4) are young Arabic single men, as reported by interviewees and confirmed by own observations.

As soon as those men start skateboarding for instance near those shopping malls, they are usually "chased off" by security guards within minutes, as it was told by one of the youth leaders (YL 4, male, 24). They are considered "troublemakers" there (ES, male, 22). The 7hills founder confirms this, as he used to skate in these private spaces around malls as well. It also happens that personal identification documents are confiscated from skateboarders by the private security forces, and only days or weeks after returned to them (ES, male, 22).

Like already stated, neoliberal projects such as Abdali have caused a misconception and confusion in regard to the definition of public space. This is visible for instance in the categorization of shopping malls as public space. For example, Mecca Mall was once labelled the "most popular public Ammani space" (quoted in Daher 2008, 55) by a Jordanian newspaper, however, with their exclusionary practices and the private ownership, shopping malls cannot be considered public at all. A research participant elaborates on the financial threshold of the Abdali project, "It has a big area for walking, they call it 'The Boulevard.' And it's supposed to be like a public area, but then some days you go there and there'll be like entry fees. So you'd have to pay like 2 JDs per person" (7hills founder, male).

However, further issues with the neoliberal urban development and the complete change in the constellation of actors is that the international planners and stakeholders in charge of high-end developments often neglect the local or previous context of the site. Firstly, they are planned in an "island planning" manner, producing "enclaves of the rich" (Elsheshtawy 2004) which reject their surroundings and either are fully (gated communities) or partly (shopping malls) impermeable to the outside. And secondly, these projects force two different displacements, i.e. of residents, on the one hand, as it was the case for the Za'amta neighborhood, whose residents had to leave for the development of the Abdali project; and on the other hand, of functions catering to those with a lower socio-economic background, as for instance the Abdali project displaced a major transportation hub to the outskirts of the city. This drastic intervention was announced as a fait accompli, without giving

the people a chance to state their troubles or opinions. Those people who do not own cars and rely on access to (functioning) public transport, and also the low-paid taxi drivers, who cannot balance the financial loss out easily, both suffer from this particular relocation. The social threats of neoliberal urban development are furthermore examined by Abu-Hamdi (2017, 103–4), who calls the "modernization" in Amman through neoliberalism a failure,

> *Rather than produce economic prosperity and urban vitality, modernization in Amman has reformulated the urban politic and reinforced structures of class power, exacerbating the disparities between the elite and the middle-to-low wage earners. This is attributed to the undiminished power of the State, its imposition on processes of private development, and the network of elites that fund and facilitate these private endeavors.*

To summarize, the neoliberal planning oftentimes leads to social exclusion and "urban geographies of inequality" (Daher 2013, 100), reinforcing the gap between wealthy and economically marginalized people in Amman. Saba Innab (2016, 122) accurately sums up the socio-spatial effects due to neoliberalism and the emergence of "modern" consumerist spaces in Amman through foreign investment,

> *Cities grow in accordance with shifts in capital accumulation and patterns of consumption. Those patterns showcase the city as a field of opportunities by creating a free market, liberated from the state, and generating a fully commoditized form of social life through large-scale development practices and regeneration projects. Gradually, the city is transformed into an "image" that triggers marginalization, gentrification, and dislocation, increasing spatial and social segregation.*

Meanwhile, and in contrast to the developments described above, mega-projects like the Abdali project have forced the municipal actors to redefine their roles and responsibilities. According to (Daher 2009, 21),

> *GAM today considers its role beyond services and infrastructure provision and attempts to address the future of the City throughout a calculated vision that attempts to maintain a balance between the pressures of neoliberal investments by very powerful individuals on one hand, and the demands and desires of its wider citizenship base and the visions of its activists and intellectual crowd on the other.*

After claims by those "activists and intellectuals," the municipality has recognized the relevance for creating inclusive public space in the city. Fig. 10 shows municipal projects of public space regeneration and heritage management. The 7hills park was subsequently marked in orange. This is also revealed by GAM's willingness and openness towards NGOs' and volunteers' visions of own park projects, who, as in the case of GIZ, even include refugees in the planning process (GAM employee, female). With those stakeholder constellations and the approach of collaborative planning, the power of neoliberalism in Amman's development is tackled to a certain degree. It is also visible in the urban regeneration of Rainbow Street, executed by the Greater Amman Municipality. The objectives of the project included creating a pedestrian-friendly space and reviving active public life, spatially resulting

in broad sidewalks and a panoramic plateau with views over the city. The street is today frequented by a range of people, “local Ammanis from different socio-economic background, expatriates, and visitors from various age groups” (Daher 2009, 20) and even led to a reverse gentrification, as former residents returned to their old houses after the street has reinvented itself.

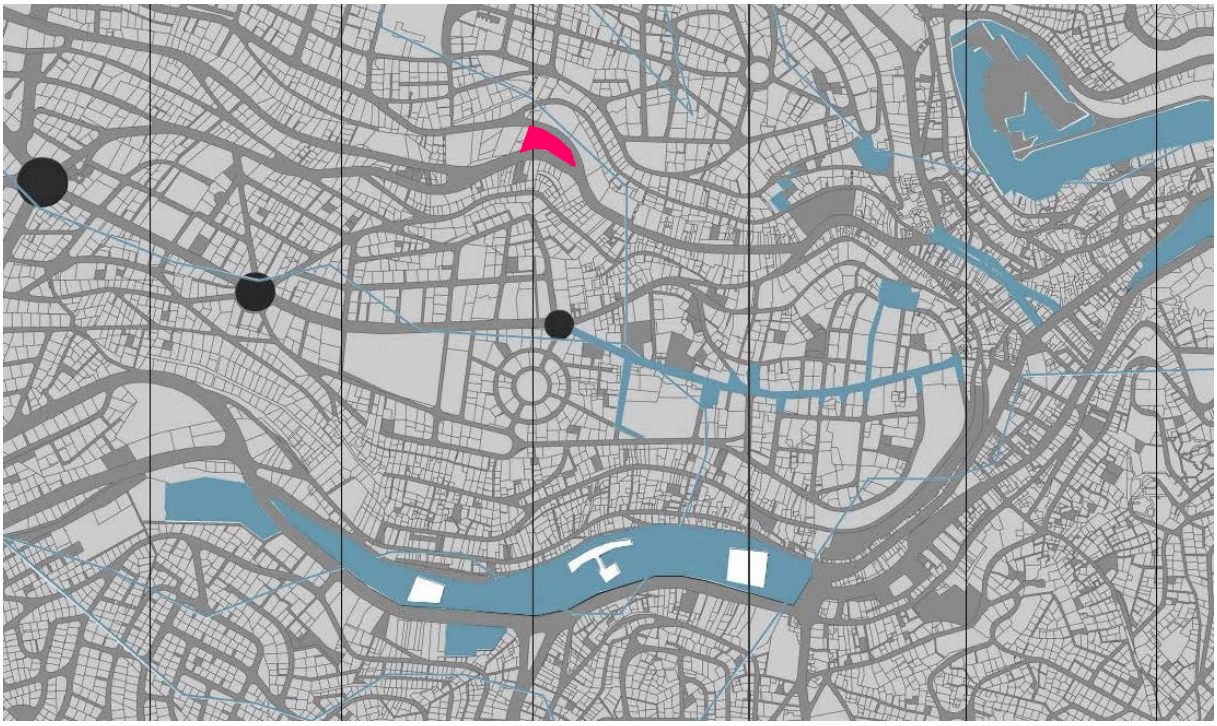


Fig. 10: Public space regeneration and heritage management projects (Source: Daher 2009)

Another example for counter-developments to the numerous malls and the decay of open public space is the development of Wakalat street, which is considered Amman’s first pedestrian street (Khawaja 2015, 60). The objective for the planning of this street was to “create a street that is inclusive, attracting people from different parts of Amman and creating a vibrant urban space that wins back public life from shopping malls to the ‘real’ streets of the city” (Myriam Ababsa and Daher 2013, 404). However, one must note that the street is embedded in Amman’s commercial district Sweifeh and therefore fringed by shops and cafés – what does not differentiate it drastically from shopping malls and only attracts affluent target groups. So, public space can differentiate immensely. There is public space that fulfills social, political and recreational functions, for instance plazas or parks, and there is the type of public space, that in fact brings along social threats and exclusion. Therefore, one must look closely at the type of public space instead of generalizing and idealizing public space as a whole.

3.1.4 Socio-spatial Inequalities between East and West Amman

Generally, as Saba Innab (2016, 122) notes on the basis of her mappings of former locations of the Jordanian royal palaces towards the west of Amman, the city’s urban development follows the paradigm that the ‘unwanted’ is pushed to the edges of the city,

> *In Amman, the edge condition is where contestation over representation plays out and structures of power become vivid […] —thousands of houses overlooking the stream of cars and the industrial areas that rely on cheap labor. Meanwhile, the new city waves back from the horizon. This is a scene of what the city cast aside. It is a center that was forced to become an edge.*

Since the 1970s, when the poverty in the city was mapped for the first time (Abu Khalil 2009), there has been an unofficial distinction of the city in East and West Amman, mostly enforced by its residents and urban scholars (Ababsa 2013; Jaber 2013, 165). Even though there is no clear border between them two, Al-Urdon Street and the Abdoun Corridor are ascribed to broadly separate the West from East Amman (Ababsa 2013, 230). The West is considered the affluent part of the city with upper class residential neighborhoods and a focus on economic and commercial functions, for instance manifested through shopping malls. East Amman is home to historical and (thereby) touristic sites like the Roman ruins on the citadel hill, amidst relatively economically underprivileged neighborhoods. Historically, Amman's eastern part is older than the West. The first municipal council was erected in East Amman in 1909, while large parts of West Amman only date back to the 1980s. Demographically, though, East Amman is younger, as Fig. 11 illustrates. While 38% of the population in East Amman is under the age of 15, this is the case for less than a third of West Amman's residents.

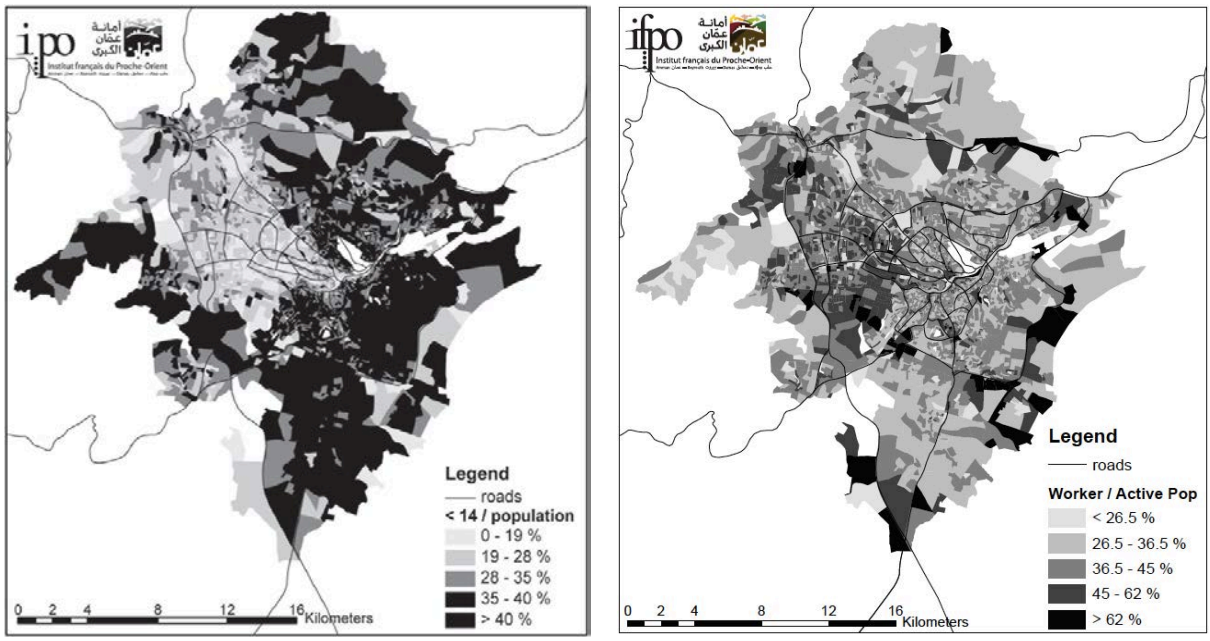


Fig. 11: Age structure of Ammanis and percentage of employed people (Source: Ababsa 2011, 221)

Statistics attest the divergences, for example in terms of the residents' level of education, their access to services, or unemployment rates, as can be seen in Fig. 11 (Ababsa 2011). Myriam Ababsa explains,

> *These disparities tie in with morphological differences between informal housing communities developed near the Palestinian camps of Wahdat and Jabal Hussein, with their self-built*

> *buildings; and West Amman neighbourhoods with family-owned four storey buildings, interspersed with villas and office blocks. They reflect types of activity, degrees of citizenship (between Trans- Jordanians, Jordanians of Palestinian origin who receive services and aid from UNRWA and refugees holding only travel documents), but also lifestyles and perceptions of others. (Ababsa 2011, 207)*

So, informal settlements were emerging mainly around the steep hillsides and floodable *wadis* near or within refugee camps, located in the East of the city. Simultaneously, villas and suburbs were built in West Amman, attracting the wealthy parts of the society. The divergences therefore are also largely manifested in the density and quality of building structures, as informal settlements in the East are denser and typically of a lower construction quality than villas in the West. (Ababsa 2011, 217)

The GAM has worked towards improving the access to services and housing in East Amman for four decades, to level out the divergences. When in 1980, more than a quarter of Amman was occupied by informal settlements for Palestinian refugees, the Urban Development Department was assigned to develop an urban renewal project for these areas in East Amman. The program fostered home ownership, job opportunities by including the residents in the works, and general community involvement. In the early 1990s, after the Oslo peace process, the Jordanian government decided to no longer tackle issues of property ownership, but instead focus only on the provision of (social) services in informal areas. A new approach was launched with the Community Infrastructure Program in 1997, which "provide services without any financial or even technical participation from the beneficiaries because they concern utility services, and not housing improvements" (Ababsa 2011, 226). Further ideas for urban upgrading were formulated in 2006, but never realized, as two years later, the royal initiative "Decent Housing for Decent Living" was launched. It aimed to build 100,000 affordable housing units in a period of over five years in areas outside of cities. In those areas, the access to employment opportunities, schools and social infrastructure are limited (Ababsa 2011, 226). And as the Jordan Times reported, the plan "stalled amid allegations of corruption and banks' lending restrictions" (Obeidat 2014).

The municipal efforts to balance out the disparities seem to have missed the mark, as spatial inequalities remain visible, also in regard to the access to public spaces and places of leisure. Fig. 12 illustrates the fact that almost all of Amman's shopping malls, which, as mentioned, function as places of leisure for many people, are located in the affluent West[24] (Abu-Ghazalah and Abu-Ghanimeh 2012, 136). Besides, another typology of so-called public space is located in the West, only beneficiary to the wealthy, i.e. parks that are located within the fences of gated communities in West Amman or near

[24] A mapping of shopping malls in Amman can for instance be found in Daher (2009). In Daher's map, only two out of the eight shopping malls are located in East Amman: Istiklal Mall and Mega Mall.

the Airport road in the South of Amman (Daher 2008, 55), such as Green Land or Andalucia, that are accessible only to those residing here. The residents of these communities are largely unsatisfied with the poor quality of public space in Amman and prefer the gated parks or private areas for sports (Khawaja 2015, 48).

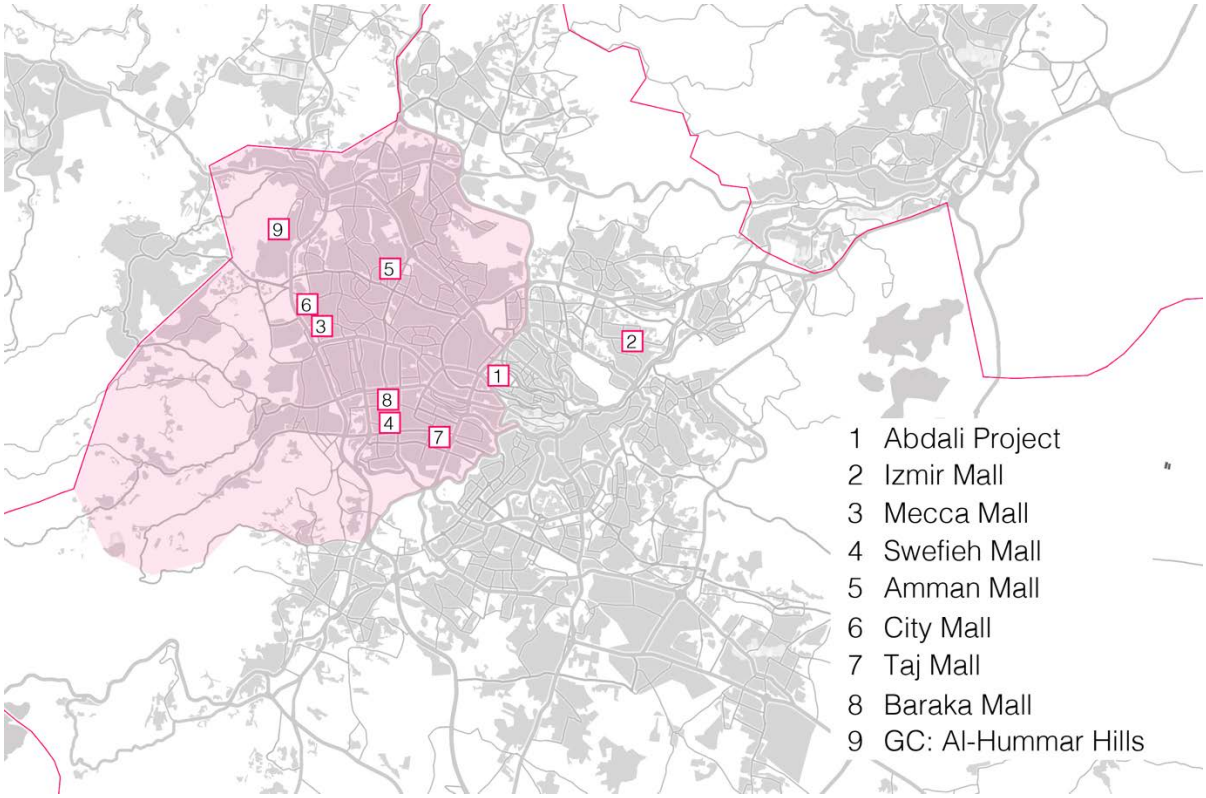


Fig. 12: West Amman and mapping of gated communities, malls and Abdali (scale 1:30000)

This trend that the wealthy stay in their secluded neighborhoods promotes the effects of residential segregation. The development to enclose public space in gated communities or on private grounds leads to a lack of that public space that is actually shared by a broad public, meaning different strata of the society, as Daher (2009, 3) remarked. A mingling of wealthy and people with a lower socio-economic status, of East and West Ammanis is obstructed. Tawil et al. (2019, 4) call for an urban green infrastructure network to tackle the (social) effects of urban sprawl during the last century in Amman,

> *[…] pressure for land becomes extreme as some cities do not have the means to cope with rapid growth, and therefore, the preservation of public space becomes a public burden that affects public life. The benefits of a more compact city with more efficient growth through an urban green infrastructure are particularly evident in the case of Amman city that has an evident divide within its social structure, which is further reflected on the urban areas causing discontinuity and fragmentation.*

To sum up, it becomes evident that even though the municipality is aware of this division and has taken effort to provide more services to East Ammanis in order to level disparities out, the division remains

and is manifested in the collective understanding of the city's residents. To conclude, one must see the emergence of gated communities and shopping malls, but also the mentioned shifting of public services from the city center (closer to East Amman) to Abdali as "the new downtown" as a threat in regard to a social divide between residents of East and West Amman.

3.1.5 The Situation of Public Parks in (Downtown) Amman

The relevance of open and green spaces, such as parks, for social interaction and therewith the public realm are highlighted by Maram Tawil et al. (2019, 3), who notes that "Open and green spaces are considered as a critical component of cities as they define the public realm by framing development within a network of parks, recreation areas and other open spaces that accommodate everyday social interaction." However, Jordan's provision of not only public space but especially public parks lacks behind in international comparisons, as figure x clarifies. Apparently, as stated by a Syrian refugee in Jordan, these divergences also exist on a regional level: "In Syria, they [Syrian refugees in Jordan] could go to parks – places for children to play and adults to socialize, but in Jordan there is nowhere for them to take their children" (Mercy Corps 2012b, 5).

A comprehensive GIS evaluation of public parks in Amman by Tomah, Abed, and Saleh (2017, 266–67), confirms that there is an immense lack of public parks not only in Jordan, but especially in Amman. They have found out that Amman offers 0.85 m^2 park area per capita (Fig. 13), while, as mentioned before, the WHO suggests a minimum of 9 m^2 (WHO and ISOCARP 2009). The rapid urban sprawl especially in the 1980s and 1990s 'overran' the green areas at the previous "fringes" of Amman, leaving only few opportunities for accessible parks or other green open spaces. This lack of green spaces threatens the biodiversity and furthermore results in missed opportunities in regard to air quality, recreational and tourism benefits, drainage and even food and energy security (Tawil et al. 2019, 2).

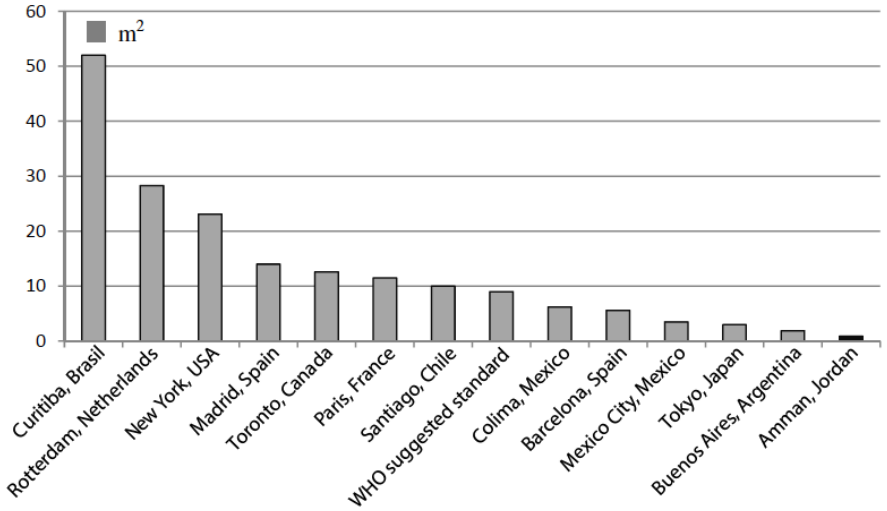


Fig. 13: Specified Park Area in m^2 per person for several international cities (Source: Tomah, Abed, and Saleh 2017, 271) (labels adapted by author)

Amman's lack of parks and recreational public space is furthermore reflected in the empirical results of the study. The survey conducted amongst park users in 7hills revealed that parks – aside from 7hills – were not mentioned to be spaces of social encounter at all. Even though the participants' naming of "outside" as a meeting point (mentioned by 80% of the users) can be interpreted quite broadly and therefore might also include parks, it can be suspected that parks would have been specified, if present, because they form quite a specific typology in the "outside." When being asked to elaborate on other places he would frequent to meet friends, one of the youth leaders responded "No, everybody just comes here" (YL 2, male, 16), referring to 7hills. Another park user said,

> *The people who did not skate, they found some things [to do], but it was always connected with a lot of money and long ways and ... no idea what. [...] What are you doing in the city? I did two things, either secondhand shopping [for clothes] downtown with the [other] boys or skating. (ES, male, 22)*

This inaccessibility of places to meet friends or hang out as a young person is also expressed by the employee of NGO 2, who has particularly insights on Sudanese children living in Amman. According to him, due to the fact that they are not as mobile as he as an adult with a driver's license is, they cannot access safe environments to meet each other and play:

> *I'm different from those little kids, because I go [by car] and play football with my friends. So, we can meet somewhere else rather than here. For kids, this is the only place where they can meet, they don't have any other places to go or where they can meet. (NGO 2 employee, male)*

As indicated by this interviewee, many of the municipal public parks are large-scale projects located outside the city center and are not accessible for people who do not own a car, or families of more than five persons. Apart from 7hills, the closest local park from the downtown area[25], which stretches out in the valley between Amman's hills, is near the 3rd circle, approximately a 20 min walk from downtown. Apart from that, there are only concrete plazas like the 50,000 m^2 Hashemite Plaza in front of the Roman theatre. According to the interviewee from GAM, this lack of parks in downtown, as visible in Fig. 14, is due to various reasons: "The topography of the area itself. And the context of it, it did not allow to make any parks. Also, it is very old. So, the planning aspects of our times were not applied." (GAM employee, female).

[25] Saba Innab (2016, 122) defines Amman's downtown as "a triangle whose points are al-Saha al-Hashemiyeh and the Raghadan bus terminal at the eastern end of downtown, the city hall building in Ras el Ain at the western end of downtown, and al-Abdali bus terminal at the end of Salt Street." This is also the geographical definition I use.

Fig. 14: Mapping of green spaces in downtown and the neighborhoods Jabal Amman and Jabal Al Weibdeh, 7hills park in the center (scale 1:25000)

According to the park's founder, there is land allocated to neighborhood parks near the city center, however, they are "just not activated", and are not financially invested in, so that they lack in infrastructure and maintenance and are therefore not seen as attractive spaces to spend free time in. A representative study by Gharaibeh, Al.Zu'bi, and Abuhassan (2019, 16), which focuses on the public perception of downtown Amman, found out that the majority of people between 20 and 75 suffer from the lack of green spaces in the downtown area and long for spaces for relaxing and recreation here. And in fact, their land use analysis of the downtown area reveals that only 4,4% of the area are "open spaces" (Gharaibeh, Al.Zu'bi, and Abuhassan 2019, 18). Also, many parks in Amman charge entrance fees (Aljafari 2014, 156). The unusual nature of 7hills as a park with skate and basketball facilities being free of charge is in addition reflected in depictions by an interviewee who is the 7hills' social media manager and therefore regularly responds to people's questions about the park,

> *In general, some people, especially from West or North Amman, people who don't live around, they don't really know what 7hills is. They think it's a skate park where you have to pay money to get inside and that it is not a public space. (YL 1, male, 18)*

When speaking about curious children approaching the construction site of the new skate park, the park founder also reveals this surprise: "[…] and they were like 'okay we do not know what that [a skatepark] is but how much will it be for entry?' and we'd be like 'free.' And they were like 'woah,

that's crazy!'" That shows that the people in Amman are used to paying entrance for spaces of leisure and activity. Generally, this exacerbates inequalities, allowing only people from upper social classes to have the privilege to visit certain parks. One of the interviewees expresses his frustration about this, saying, "If you are right, you can go and have fun. You can pay money to go inside any park. And yeah you can have fun, but if you don't [have money], you don't have any chance to have fun" (YL 1, male, 18).

In summary, this shows Jordan, Amman and particularly downtown Amman are characterized by a general lack of public parks that are free of charge and accessible for everybody. Those parks that do exist are neither geographically nor financially accessible for all people. These two barriers can be easily overcome by people with a higher socio-economic status. The non-wealthy people, however, are simply excluded.

3.1.6 Places of Social Encounter

As the provision with public parks in Amman is insufficient, people come up with alternative places to spend their free time at, and particularly to meet friends. In the following, the most common spaces to socialize at are described, while also exposing their limits.

As examined by Khawaja (2015), many Ammanis, especially women, generally meet their friends in consumerist spaces such as shopping malls, cafés and restaurants, as they argue they feel secure here. Shopping malls have become the "public space par excellence" in Amman, as Daher (2013, 104) notes, among the most prominent ones are Mecca Mall, City Mall and, quite newly, Taj Mall and Baraka Mall in West Amman. However, many malls, cafés and restaurants in Amman have the 'couples only' door policy, meaning that only couples or single women can enter, while single Arabic men are not allowed to enter. They have doormen or security guards who oftentimes deny the access for these men. The founder of 7hills elaborates on these places as being exclusionary particularly against men and boys,

> *The space in Amman is very discriminating. So for example when you are young, a group of young boys would go to a mall, they would not be allowed in and they would go to a café, they would not be allowed in under the couples-only policy. (7hills founder, male)*

One of the park users who is originally from Germany and was at the time quite new to Amman said, "That was one of the first things I learned [when coming to Amman], that the Arab young man is simply so disadvantaged in society. They are not allowed in malls, in clubs, in bars, they are not allowed anywhere" (ES, male, 22). He himself, as a Caucasian, was never denied access to those places, while one of his Jordanian friends confirms this couples-only policy from his personal perspective: "As any normal person, you go out in the streets, to restaurants, just hang. […] Some restaurants and clubs and

stuff, you can't go inside if you're alone or with your male friends. So, you need girls to get you inside" (YL 1, male, 18).

The wording of this statement, specifically the lack of criticism, shows that he has resigned to the fact that some spaces are that discriminating. The exclusionary character of cafés and bars, mainly aiming against Arabic men and boys, additionally is reflected in the survey conducted in the skate park. Around four out of five of the participants meet their friends in the streets or "outside" (22), as they have expressed in the survey. It can be suspected that these are the people who either do not have the financial means to linger in consumerist spaces or are rejected due to their gender or other personal characteristics. Other meetings places named in the survey were 7hills (7), cafés and bars (5), home (3), school or university (2) and the church (1).

But shopping malls and places of hospitality are not the only exclusionary spaces in Amman. Due to neoliberal urban development described in the previous sub-chapter, some streets and also other typologies are often wrongly referred to as public space, when in fact, they are partly privatized and therefore also not accessible for everybody. For instance, the 'public space' around shopping malls or within Business Improvement Districts (BID) is largely in the hands of private corporates, equipped with CCTV and security guards who can send off whoever they find does not fit into their target audience concept. As mentioned before, young Arabic men are oftentimes the focus here.

As a consequence to this lack of options where those young men are accepted, they find refuge elsewhere, i.e. mainly in the streets or cocooned and therewith protected in cars. Groups of young people get into a vehicle and either aimlessly drive around Amman or are simply parked at a spot with a view over the city, and sit together in the car. This impression was confirmed by an interviewee,

> *The car is becoming like a private bubble within the public space, and so they take the car and there is like five guys in the car, they go and they park somewhere nice with a view and then no-one can harass them there because they took their own space. (7hills founder, male)*

As confirmed by own observations, one of those parking spots is in fact close to the 7hills park on the Dirar Ben Al-Azwar Street in Jabal Al Weibdeh. But again, not everybody has the financial means to buy a car or knows people who own one, so this place of encounter again is not accessible for everybody.

Due to a lack of activities there, the men develop behavior patterns which are partly not socially acceptable. The founder of 7hills sums up how the displacement of those men to the public streets and cars in addition to their way of behaving there leads to stereotypes about them,

> *The young boys are rejected from the commercial spaces in general. The residential areas are not allowing the young boys because they're troublemakers and then they end up on the street. And you end up having the chicken and egg situation, what came first, was it the boys that are being behaving in a bad way, that they are rejected from these spaces, or is it that they are behaving that way BECAUSE they are rejected from these spaces?*

He goes on elaborating that the boys, while "hanging out" in the streets, would whistle after women, fight with each other or harass passersby. These are acts, which obviously reinforce stereotypes about them. One of the interviewees comments, "You see all the other young men hanging around. In cars. Smoking in the street at the shisha, whistling after the women, that's all you can do" (ES, male, 22).

The 7hills founder interprets this behavior as the men's only outlet for surplus energy. And this seems to be a general problem amongst Ammanis. Another interviewee working particularly with children stated that children and teenagers have a lot of that surplus energy, as their school schedule does not allow for physical education but rather demands them to sit still for several hours. Thereby they lack a possibility to let it out, "so then it's difficult for the kids to like let off steam in a way that is productive and fun and cooperative" (NGO 1 employee, female).

This section has reviewed the issues and overall lack of spaces of encounter in the public sphere in Amman that allows people of all genders, classes, origins. Generally, it can be summarized that the Ammani places that people frequent in order to meet other people are to a large extent in the private or semi-public (consumerist) space, i.e. shopping malls, restaurants and cafés. People with a lower socio-economic status, unable to afford many of the products and offers, are unwanted here. Other typologies of those places are private plazas or privatized streets near BIDs. All of the above are under excessive control by the corporates owning them who intentionally exclude certain parts of the society, which makes a mingling of different groups impossible and fosters inequality. Especially young men are the victims of those exclusionary practices. As a consequence, they appropriate and re-define places like the car to turn into a place of social encounter, which is looked down on by other parts of the society.

3.2 The Situation of Urban Refugees and Social Tensions

This sub-chapter serves as an introduction to the societal context, in which 7hills is embedded. As already stated in Chapter 3.1, Jordan has been a refugee destination for decades, starting with large numbers of Palestinian refugee arrivals in 1948 and in 1967. In 1991, after the Gulf war, Iraqis and Palestinians arrived and in 2003, after the US invasion of Iraq, again, many Iraqis came to seek refuge

in Jordan. The recent refugee movements[26] to Jordan started in 2011, following the civil war in Syria which caused large numbers of people to seek refuge in Jordan as Syria's neighboring country. Syrians make up the largest group in Jordan's recent refugee influx[27]. For some years, Yemeni and Sudanese and also Somali refugees – even if in comparatively low numbers, have also migrated in Jordan in search for a better future.

Since the recent refugee arrivals, Jordan has witnessed increasing tensions among refugees living in urban areas and their Jordanian neighbors in the host communities. Furthermore, the government has for a long time put certain groups of refugees over the others, manifested in a range of origin-specific policies for the refugees. Members of underrepresented refugee groups are generally granted fewer rights and face bigger uncertainties than Syrian refugees. This has also led to tensions amongst the different groups. This sub-chapter gives a short overview over those circumstances. It serves as a context for the introduction of 7hills park, because, firstly, it describes the individual background and realities of many of the park's users, of whom around a third are refugees (7hills 2020). Secondly, in order to examine the role of parks for social encounters, a portrayal of the general social situation and potential societal xenophobia is required.

3.2.1 … between Host Communities and Refugees

As of May 2020, there were 747,875 refugees living in Jordan, while Jordan's overall population consists of almost 10 million people (UNHCR 2020a). Jordan is thereby the country hosting the second highest share of refugee per capita in the world. 83.3 % of the refugees in Jordan live outside of the large refugee camps in urban areas. In the last decade, an increase in hostility from host communities against their new neighbors was observed. While the Jordanian population consists to a large extent of people with Palestinian descent in possession of Jordanian citizenship, and this refugee group is therefore generally largely accepted and integrated, tensions between Jordanians and Syrians have started growing, as illustrated in Table 3.

The tensions are mostly due to the increased competition on economic opportunities, mainly on the job market (UN-Habitat employee, female; Achilli 2015), as the effects following the large influx of people have been higher unemployment rates and rising poverty in the country (te Lintelo et al. 2018, 5). A representative study examining specifically the tensions in the city of Mafraq furthermore

[26] By recent refugees, the author refers to those refugees who had arrived in Jordan within the past decade, meaning 2010-2020.

[27] As of November 2019, a total of 654,861 Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR in Jordan, followed by 67,225 Iraqis, 14,752 Yemenis, 6,106 Sudanese and 744 Somalis. However, it has to be noted that not all refugees, especially those belonging to the latter ethnicities, register with UNHCR. (UNHCR 2019)

identified the increased prices of housing rents, which tripled in average (Mercy Corps 2013, 9), as one of the main reasons for the resentment (Mercy Corps 2012a, 3). Other reasons for these tensions are claimed to be the severely diminished water supplies (mostly in Northern Jordan) and daily power outages. In addition to that, the education system and health-care providers were not able to adapt quickly enough to the sudden increase of people to serve (UNDP 2015, 15; te Lintelo et al. 2018).

	Jordanian host community	**Syrian refugees outside camp**	**Zaatari camp**
Most Syrians/Jordanians can be trusted	3	14	21
Most Syrians/Jordanians can be trusted, not all	10	32	33
Few Syrians/Jordanians can be trusted	20	24	31
You have to watch out for Syrians/Jordanians	69	29	15
Total	100	100	100
Sample Size	1003	332	75

Table 3: Survey results regarding trust between Jordanian workers and Syrian refugee workers in Jordan (Stave and Hillesund 2015, 112)

In addition to those effects, which can be summarized under the enlarged pressure on already scarce resources in the country, different social norms provoke anger about the newcomers. For instance, most Jordanians in Mafraq do not leave the house after 10 PM, while Syrians enjoy going outside at night. Conservative Jordanians perceive that as “shameful” and fear that the attitudes among Syrians “will change the social and ethical environment of the area” (Mercy Corps 2012a, 7). This anger and hostility by the Jordanian host communities is sometimes not hidden, but instead openly expressed by harassments and shouting at Syrians in the streets. The tensions and the mistrust have led to many Syrians voluntarily leaving Jordan around 2014 (Mercy Corps 2012a, 8).

However, Hawkins, Assad, and Sullivan (2019, 13–14) claim that the distinction in regard to quality of and access to basic services cannot be made along the line of refugee vs. no refugee, but rather alongside different classes. A higher economic status can enable everybody in the country to receive for instance private health care, while both refugees and Jordanians of lower socio-economic status suffer equally from the overall lack of resources. The anger by the Jordanians and the blaming of newcomers can therefore be interpreted as a quick solution of finding somebody who in their eyes is responsible for their own misery, instead of identifying the bigger issue, i.e. an overall lack of resources which had threatened the country even before the Syrian influx.

But what is done by whom, in order to fight tensions between host communities and refugee population? Specific programs by NGOs and agencies like UN-Habitat, and their financial investment

into creating so-called social cohesion and lowering tensions between Jordanians and Syrians, confirm the recognition and relevance of the issue. UN Habitat has implemented the project "Public Space for Social Cohesion" in Jordan, in which they approach host communities and refugees to participate in planning a public park with a Minecraft workshop. A neighborhood park in Zarqa, that cost around 100,000 US$, was eventually implemented through the program (UN Habitat employee, female). Also, the Resilience Strategy for Amman[28] puts high emphasis on "social cohesion," highlighting that this is an issue on the municipal agenda recognized by city officials, which needs to be solved. The strategies range from events, collaborative design competitions, the expansion of youth employment programs for migrants, "promoting the presence of refugee-owned businesses in non-refugee resident areas" and the support of "cultural, social and sports-related initiatives in the city" (Rockefeller Foundation 2017, 85, 100).

In fact, the government issued the "70/30 requirement," aiming – first and foremost in the field of business support, to serve 70% Jordanians and not more than 30% Syrians (Huang and Gough 2019), to at least tackle the Jordanians' fear of coming off badly in regard to livelihood and foster 'social cohesion.' An employee of NGO 1 confirmed:

> *It's '70-30' […] So now, over time, it has become less, not 50-50, more 70-30. Non-governmental organizations serving Syrian refugees should be serving 70% Jordanians, 30% refugees. […] If you're doing any kind of urban operation or anything outside a refugee camp, then you are supposed to be following the 70-30. (NGO 1 employee, female)*

She furthermore stated that NGO 1 has served more Jordanians than before since 2018. In the field of community centers, which offer a variety of services including psychosocial support or vocational trainings, at least 30% of the beneficiaries are required to be (vulnerable) Jordanians (Röth, Nimeh, and Hagen-Zanker 2017, 9). In their 2020 Planning summary for Jordan, UNHCR (2019b, 4) announces that a focus will be put on the social inclusion of refugees, and the alignment of their programs with national social protection schemes.

As explained in Chapter 2, the fears and suspicions against the unknown are attitudes which can be fought by encountering the unknown, by getting to know the 'stranger' who is in fact not to blame for the lack of resources in the country. However, a mingling between host communities and refugees is made difficult due to the lack of spaces of encounter such as parks, as the Mercy Corps study has revealed:

> *In particular, Syrians complained about the lack of social/recreational spaces and events at which they can meet and establish better communications with the local community. The only places where Syrian refugees usually meet are the charity organizations that distribute weekly food and non-food items. (Mercy Corps 2012b, 9)*

[28] The strategy is embedded in 100 Resilient Cities program, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.

That is why contact between host communities and refugees oftentimes remains superficial, basing the feelings one has towards the other group only on visual impressions that base on skin color, gender and religion. This can in fact reinforce and strengthen stereotypes and therefore also intensify tensions in the society. Furthermore, manifested hierarchies challenge contact on eye-level; for instance, the interactions between Jordanians and non-Jordanians oftentimes are employer-employee or customer-server relationships (Hawkins, Assad, and Sullivan 2019, 14–15).

3.2.2 … among different Refugee Populations

Jordan's refugee policies differ from target group to target group, which causes stark inequalities in the access to citizenship and services. Today, more than half of the Jordanians are of Palestinian origin and a vast majority of them have full Jordanian citizenship, making them equal with Jordanians. Gazans, however, are not recognized as refugees by the Jordanian state and therefore have fewer rights (Gabbay 2014, 1). For instance, they are not allowed to open businesses, buy property, or even work, unless they find a sponsor through the *Kafala* system[29].

Iraqis only enjoy partial citizenship rights – depending on their financial assets. While wealthy Iraqis simply buy residency permits, which also grant them better opportunities on the labor market and access to public services, those who cannot afford the permit remain with no legal status. Syrian refugees who do not own legal identity documents, can also be denied basic services in Jordan. Most Syrian refugees in Jordan, however, do receive basic aid, distributed through CARE or UNHCR, with whom many of them are registered. Furthermore, and adding to the *Kafala* system, the Jordanian government released a work permit program for Syrian refugees, enabling a certain number of people to work in certain sectors, like construction, agriculture or manufacturing. The interviewee from NGO 1 expressed her concerns about this,

> *There isn't labor laws specifically for refugee workers, except for Syrians. There was like a conference that was held to make that legal framework for employing Syrians. But not for other refugees. So other refugees in general are considered under labor laws as just non-Jordanian workers, so in order to hire a non-Jordanian workers there is a certain amount of like legal registration that you have to go through, it has to be approved by the Ministry of*

[29] *Kafala* is a sponsorship system, through which those people who are not granted work permits by the Jordanian government, as for instance Gazans, find a Jordanian with a national ID number, a *Kafeel*, who guarantees for them, so that they are allowed to work. In most cases, this person is also their employer. The system is furthermore common around the Gulf states. It is highly criticized for leaving the migrant worker few rights, little freedom to switch jobs and high risks, as the sponsor can withdraw from his responsibilities at all times, making the migrant's stay in the country suddenly illegal. Also, different minimum wages apply to Jordanians than to migrant workers, exploiting them at high levels. (Gordon 2020) Finding a guarantor can be quite hard, considering that that person has to pay a fee and prove that "the job requires experience or skills not to be found among the Jordanian population" (Achilli 2015, 2). In fact, in 2014, only 1% of Syrian households had a family member who was holding a work permit (UNHCR 2014). Hence, most refugees work in the informal sector, while almost half of all Syrian refugee families have at least one working child (ILO 2014).

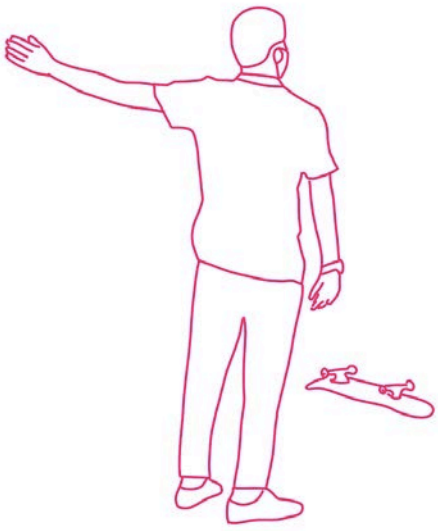
> *Labor and it has to be approved that the work that this person is doing can't be done by another person. So, it is not like open employment. There is lots of specifities that have to happen and lots of justifications that have to be made. It's not like, you can just compete with anyone. It's not open competition. (NGO 1 employee, female)*

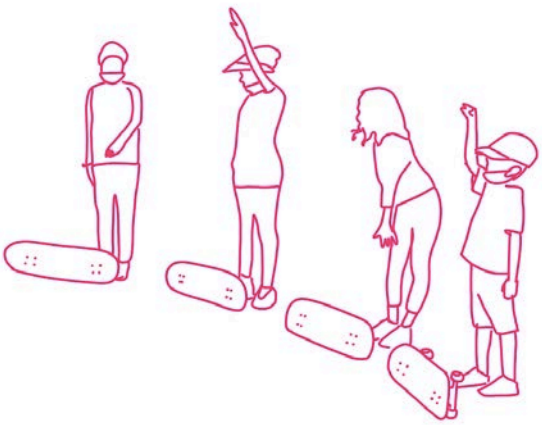
Those "other" refugees, so Yemeni, Sudanese and Somali refugees, are practically excluded from the formal labor market. The inequalities in policies for the different refugee groups in Jordan are massive. The basic aid offered to Syrians and work permits are denied to underrepresented refugee groups. Even though all refugee children are officially allowed to go to Jordanian schools, some groups are discriminated, having to pay higher school fees or follow deadlines more strictly than Jordanian children (Baslan and Leghtas 2018; Hawkins, Assad, and Sullivan 2019, 9–10).

Moreover, the school visits by Sudanese children are oftentimes accompanied with racism experiences, as has been told by several interviewees. These experiences are partly so bad that the children decide to quit school. One research participant explained, "Like in schools, Sudanese they hear racism, some bad talk sometimes. Like for example Jordanian people being like 'ah this is our country!'" (YL 1, male, 18). Obviously, the racialized thinking and action do not confine to the school context. Interviewees and other reports tell about racist comments they hear in the streets (Hawkins, Assad, and Sullivan 2019, 14; Baslan and Leghtas 2018).

These discrimination practices by other individuals, paired with institutional inequalities regarding the access to social services, lead to tensions between different refugee groups. They can circle around the notion of financial "contributions" to the country (Hawkins, Assad, and Sullivan 2019, 12), as for instance Iraqi businessmen feel they are treated unjustly in oppose to Syrian refugees, because they, due to their business activities, pay regular taxes while not being allowed basic services to the degree that Syrians can access them. And again, adding to a mingling of different groups barely takes place because of perceived cultural barriers, xenophobia, racism, or the hierarchies described in the above.

Similar to the 70/30 rule, the "one refugee approach" as a response the hierarchization of refugees by the Jordanian state, is advocated and employed by several humanitarian NGOs operating in Jordan, like the Danish Refugee Council or UNHCR, to hinder the tensions among different refugee groups (UNHCR 2019b, 4). While many services had until then mainly focused on serving Syrian refugees based on their mandate issued by the Jordanian state, members of the underrepresented refugees were oftentimes forgotten. The approach attempts to demonstrate that all refugees should be treated the same.





4
Empirical Findings: The 7hills Park

The 7hills park is a public neighborhood park[30] which is around 4.900 m^2 large. It is located on Prince Muhammad Street (Arabic: Sharia al-Amir Muhammad) in downtown Amman. Until 2014, it was mainly referred to as the Samir Rifai Park[31], named after a former Jordanian prime minister. While today, most people today call the entire park "7hills", some only mean the integrated skate park by it, which makes up about a fifth of the park's area. When "7hills" is mentioned in the following, the entire park is meant, unless specified with "7hills skate park", as I consider the park as a whole without internal 'borders' between the different zones and activities happening within the park, since they are all frequented by the same people. Furthermore, the 'operating' non-profit organization is called 7hills[32]. Its office is located on the opposite side of Prince Muhammad Street, which is framing the park on its southern verge. From here, a team of three people manages the planning of activities, organizes the communication to donors and municipal actors, and responds to media requests.

This chapter sheds light on four different dimensions of the park's uniqueness, i.e. spatially, in regard to governance, culturally and socially. The different aspects were results from the multi-step analysis carried out, which is explained in Chapter 2. Highlights from the analysis and most striking features in that respective regard are explained in detail. Finally, this third chapter ends with an overview of findings from the fieldwork, which synthesizes the quite detailed aspects mentioned previously.

4.1 Spatial Dimension

This sub-chapter responds to questions of spatiality of the 7hills park, both on the macro and the micro level. Codes that were connected to this theme are presented in the applied coding paradigm scheme demonstrated below (see Fig. 15). Firstly, the chapter answers where the park is located at, which neighborhoods surround it, its accessibility and where the park users live. Secondly, this sub-chapter chapter illustrates the spatial features the park has within itself, looking closer at the park design and the different zones and facilities.

[30] With "neighborhood park," I refer to the rather small-scale public parks, that are embedded in mixed-use and residential areas and therefore easily accessible for its neighbors. As Jane Jacobs (1961, 91) suggests, "[…] neighborhood parks are the most generalized form of city park that we possess. They are typically intended for general bread-and-butter use as local public yards." In Amman, they stand in contrast to the city's large-scale parks outside the center that are oftentimes only reachable by car or request entrance fees (e.g. King Hussein Sports City or Al Hussein Public Parks). According to the Greater Amman Municipality, there are around 145 neighborhood parks in Amman, spread across the entire city (GAM employee, female).
[31] By municipal actors like planners in the landscape division, the park is called Samir Rifai Park. However, I use the name "7hills" in this study, as this is the term used by those people, who are in the focus of this study, namely the park users.
[32] Whenever referring to the organization, it is clarified respectively.

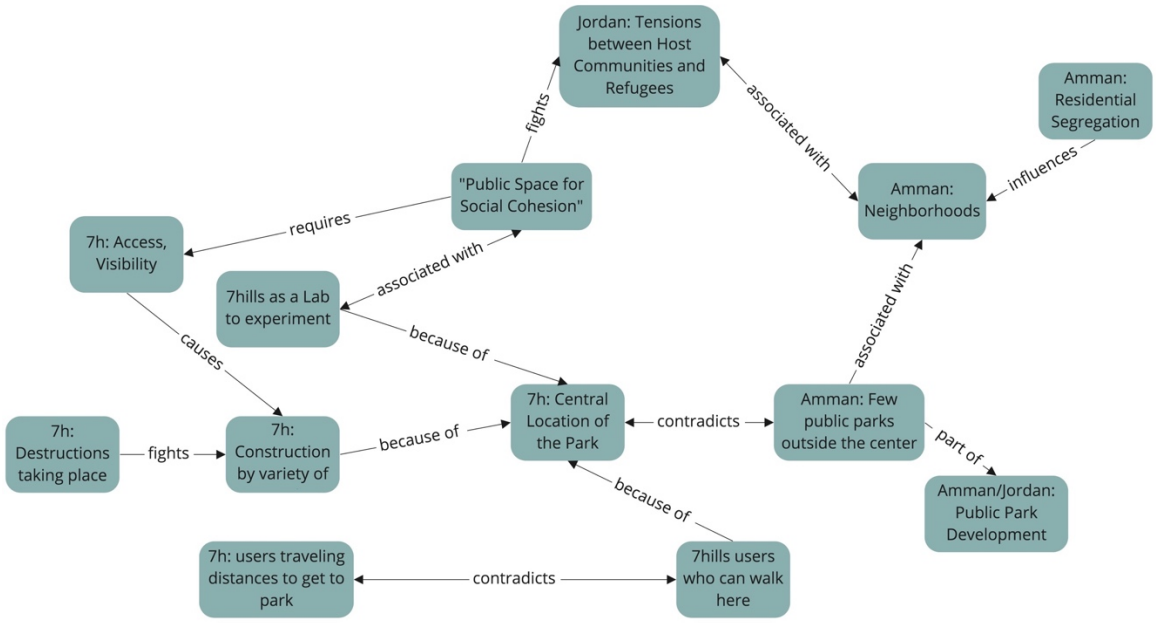


Fig. 15: Code network and relations around “Spatial Aspects”

4.1.1 Access and Visibility

The central location of the 7hills park is often highlighted as an aspect with high relevance. Many of the park users are from the neighborhoods surrounding the park; in fact, results from the survey show that more than four out of five people can walk to the park. That is quite unusual in the city of Amman, which, as stated before, is not pedestrian friendly. The park’s central location within Amman is furthermore highlighted as important by one of the NGOs cooperating with the park, as it facilitates the access to public parks for many of their beneficiaries:

> *We have been searching for other places like this in Amman, but this is the only place we got: just an open area where kids can go and play together. […] And it’s central between Jabals with refugees around and it’s very close, sometimes they don’t have to take transportation to get here. It’s very close. (NGO 2 employee, male)*

Although the park is central for many people, for others, living outside the center or in areas that are ‘disconnected’ by one of the massive highways or hills, it is still a far distance to travel. Those people, who are not able to walk here either accept to travel long distances by taxi or car, or rely on the provision of a shuttle service by one of the cooperating NGOs (NGO 1 employee, female). One shuttle service is provided by 7hills for Palestinian refugees living in Jerash Camp, which is about an hour north of Amman. Also, without the bus rented by the 7hills team and the partner NGOs, the people from the area of Hashemi Shamali for instance would not able to come to the park on their own. Walking would take over an hour and 15 minutes, and as Amman’s municipal public transport is not well developed and unpopular (Jaber 2013, 176), this is not an option for many people, either. Only one survey participant, who lives in Jubeihah (northern most point on Fig. 16), takes the bus to get to the park, which takes over an hour. Another youth leader suggests implementing the concept of the 7hills park

also in decentral parts of the city: “This is near downtown, so it’s very nice and local, available. But I think they need more of these kind of public spaces in other regions of Amman” (YL 3, male, 21).

An employee of GAM agrees, saying that she

> *[…] told [the 7hills team]: ‘if you saw that the skating area in this park was successful and the effects are perfect, why do not repeat this journey in different sites? Why do you just decide to take only Samir Rifai to make works?’, […] the other kids in another neighborhood have the same rights, to find these experiences for themselves. (GAM employee, female)*

So, 7hills is located centrally in the city of Amman, but in order to provide access to small scale-neighborhood parks for everybody in Amman, more parks are required in decentral parts of the city.

Fig. 16: Routes from 7hills to to park users’ places of residence (scale 1:10000)

Furthermore, and looking at the location on a neighborhood scale, the park is located in the valley between the two hills Jabal Amman and Jabal Al Weibdeh and can therefore be seen as being on the edge of downtown, which consists of Quraysh Street and its backstreets. Jabal Al Weibdeh, north of the park (in the background of Fig. 18), is a neighborhood that is popular amongst mostly western “humanitarian-, aid- and development workers, diplomats and international students” (Thomas and Vogel 2018, 217). The area is characterized by its cultural offer with several art galleries and museums and its architectural heritage. The area – for a long time home to a rather poor population – has

recently shown tendencies towards gentrification, threatening local small businesses in family ownership and leading to rapid rent increases (Qudah 2018). Nevertheless, the interviewee from the GAM feels that these new residents in Weibdeh, mostly expatriates, combined with the rich heritage add to the value of the park,

> *You know what makes it special? I think it's because it's close to Weibdeh. And since Weibdeh is considered as a heritage site, you know the theme of heritage with all the shops and the circle of Paris circle in the middle of Weibdeh and the restaurants. It gives the area there […] an own identity. And its own theme. And most of the foreigners like to go to Weibdeh […] The location of the park itself, it is considered as the nearest park. Or open space. Officially. For Jabal Weibdeh. (GAM employee, female)*

Jabal Amman with its well-known Rainbow Street in the center is on the other side of the park, south of it. It is located on the hill that can be seen in the background of Fig. 17. The quarter is home to touristic attractions, such as the famous Souk Jara flea market, and numerous stores selling Jordanian souvenirs. The neighborhoods Jabal Al Jofah or Jabal Al Hussein, both characterized through large Palestinian populations, are also close.

Fig. 17: Skate park with Jabal Amman on the right

The exposed position of the park ensures its visibility. The Samir Alrfai school is located right next to it, and it is framed by two main connecting roads, one going up the hill to Jabal Al Weibdeh, the other one leading to downtown and Jabal Amman. The visibility initially led to the neighbors' attention towards the project. During the first phase of operation, some of those neighbors were skeptical,

> *Yeah at first, even all neighbors were looking here, like 'what is going on, so many people?' So by the time, they got used to it. Nobody came and said 'why are you being here?', as soon as they knew that there is refugee kids skating here. Nobody came and said 'why are you being here?' (NGO 2 employee, male)*

This visibility was also of relevance in the construction phase of the park. During the construction days, numerous locals who walked by the fence and saw what was taking place inside the park spontaneously decided to join and to become part of the voluntary construction team. They were the

same people who then told their friends and family about the park, and soon after and without advertising activities, the park was frequented by many people, as reported by the 7hills founder.

The visibility to pedestrians, neighbors and car traffic around two out of the three sides of the park leads to social control and hence might also add to the fact that the park is considered as safe by its users, in opposition to "meeting outside" or "in the streets": "Even though it is public and there is always the type of like unsafety problem in public, I think they have really tried to make it a safe space" (NGO 1 employee, female). Even though not specifically stated to be connected with the spatiality of the park, 26 out of the 28 survey participants responded that they either feel very secure and safe or mostly secure and safe in the park. This may also be due to the fact that the park is equipped with adequate lighting and almost at all times during the day frequented.

Fig. 18: View from the entrance of the park

4.1.2 Park Design

The park has a slightly curved triangular shape and a total size of around 4.900 m^2, stretching about 140 m from the northwestern corner to the southeastern corner. This comparatively small size enables visual connections between almost all edges of the park and furthermore leads to physical proximity of all park users, which enhances encounters. The northern part is a little higher in altitude as the southern part. The park has one entrance located on the southwestern side, constituted by a wide gap in the concrete wall surrounding the park. The fact that there is only one entrance prevents the park from being transit space. The concrete wall is to a large share topped by translucent wire mesh fence, allowing views from the surroundings into the park. The entrance gate is always open[33]. The spatial facilities of the park offer opportunities for a range of activities. Beyond the four activities basketball, skating, meeting friends and relaxing, which were named the most in the survey and are certainly the most visible ones, a number of other activities could be observed and were mentioned in the

[33] After I had left the field, it was reported by interviewees, that the park was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, to prevent larger gatherings of people. The pandemic had furthermore caused the issuing of contact rules by the 7hills team for the time after the re-opening (ES, male, 22).

interviews. All of those are presented with their respective 'zones'[34] in the following (see Fig. 19). I differentiate between the following five: (1) skate park, (2) lawn with sand pit, (3) entrance area, (4) multi-functional area with basketball court and playground equipment, (5) 7hills office and project space. Cobbled pathways connect the zones with each other.

Fig. 19: Park user movement map and zones in the park (scale 1:1000)

Firstly, the north-western part of the park is mainly designated for skateboarding, with a skate bowl and a mini ramp on its side. 7hills' skate area holds around 650 m^2 and was not thoroughly planned. In fact, everybody helping with the construction was able to articulate and partly even to implement own ideas and visions in the ongoing construction, as the founder explains,

> *I mean the design of the [skate] park was also very – there was no design. It was a 'no-design design' […] We kind of came to the construction site before breaking ground and then everybody was like imagining stuff and we drew it on a paper and then that was the implementation of the park. It was really communal in that way. And everyone had their input which is also sometimes not that great. Because you have people who always want to go big. Go bigger and bigger, build bigger stuff. (7hills founder, male)*

Due to the large share of involved people, who had not been familiar with skateboarding before, the skate park's spatiality and the assembly of obstacles turned out partly unsatisfactory by professional skateboarders, as the founder and one of the youth leaders (ES, male, 22) reveal.

[34] There is no separation into actual zones within the park. However, to facilitate the connection of textual description with a spatial imagination of the respective place, the author decided to broadly divide the park into five different zones. However, the different zones are not noticeable when being inside the park.

Fig. 20: View on the skating area and lawn with sand pit

Fig. 21: Garden in the entrance area and sand pit in the park

Secondly, there is a big lawn with smaller trees and a small square-shaped sand pit south of the skating area (Fig. 21). The lawn area constitutes the largest of the zones. Families use the lawn for picnicking and parents, or other people relax here while their children skate. On the southern fence of this area, a small concrete shed pointing to the sidewalk is used for climbing and sitting on the roof by some children.

Thirdly, in the area of the entrance, different uses can be found. There is a small garden that one of the youth leaders has created and takes care of. There are also two bunker-like cement cubes, serving as a storage for skateboards. A shipping container is also located close to it. It is used by a small radio station. As the entrance is a paved space, car drivers sometimes enter the park to park their car in the entrance area and sit in their cars (Fig. 31). This was observed especially in the mornings and at noon. When I approached a man sitting in his car and started a conversation, he pointed out that it calms him down to sit in his car in the park, away from the traffic-congested streets and the hustle and bustle of the city.

Fourthly, the basketball court (Fig. 22) is in the Eastern zone of the park, where the park' shape tapers. It is framed by three benches and small swings, partly in poor shape. The basketball court was donated by an American family who wanted to support the project of 7hills. Further plans are already waiting to be implemented. A small breakdance area and a playground made out of recycled material are currently planned for near the basketball court.

Fig. 22: Picnic table near the extended ramp and basketball court

Generally, I observed much individual movement between the zones 1, 3 and 4, while zone 3 served as a point of communication between basketballers and skaters who would then return to their respectively preferred activity from there. Some skaters also engage in basketball games in between their skating sessions, while it was reported that basketballers seldomly skate (ES, male, 22). There is a picnic table in the park, which regularly finds itself in new locations, constantly serving for different activities – as a skate obstacle, as a picnic table, or as an observation point near the skate park.

A key result is the fact that the park is always growing and transforming, and new equipment and facilities are added *peu-à-peu*, not only by the team of 7hills, but also by its users. For instance, a couch was carried into the park, specifically to the skating area, for the skaters to sit on. This constant adaption, expressed by the park founder as "always changing, never finished," was also described by 7hills' contact person in the municipality:

> *After they made the skating area, they came back to us […] and they wanted to make – it's like an adaption. They adapted the park. And they decided to do whatever they can do by getting more funding to make more facilities. […] That is why they made adaptions for the park and they came back for us, two to three times and every time they bring funding from*

one of the sources and bring the designs for us to make the approvals for it. And in 2016, they came back for us for making a working out area. (GAM employee, female)

Artistic elements can also be found in the park. Beside a large mural covering part of the high wall in the northern side of the park, small mosaics decorate the mini ramp, one of them saying "Make Hummus Not War," as shown in Fig. 23. As one of the youth leaders from Norway comments appreciative, having taken park in the mosaic project taught him the techniques of making them (YL 3, male, 21).

Fig. 23: Mural on the wall and mosaic "Make Hummus Not War"

Fifthly, the 7hills office and a large room connected to it function as an extension to the park, only separated from the park entrance by Prince Muhammad Street. The project room with its high ceiling is used as an artist residency. As it is vis-à-vis the park entrance and has large shop windows to the sidewalk, the room has the potential to raise many people's attention as well. Several workshops or art projects have consequently taken place there. During the fieldwork, it was rented out to a local artist who makes murals in Amman and, in return for using the space she was supposed to produce an art piece for the public park. The office next to it is mainly equipped with desks for the administrative work of the organization.

To sum up, the park design, combined with a activation and a 'curation' by the 7hills team (skate program, artist residency and workshops), allows for a range of activities, i.e. skating, basketball, free play, running, playing in the sand pit, relaxing, reading, observing, spray-painting, creating mosaics, photographing and doing video-shoots, attending artistic workshops and visiting exhibitions.

4.2 Governance

The following part focusses on the governance of 7hills. In that regard, the park is unique in the context of Amman, as different actors from public, private and civil-societal sphere are involved in the project of implementing, programming, maintaining and managing the 7hills park. They can be broadly divided into 'givers' and park users. Among the givers are NGOs that have donated financially or whose members helped in other ways. For instance, they helped in the construction of the park, as many NGO members had previous experience with building skate parks. Others helped teaching the locals how to skate. Another 'giver' is the municipal "Studies and Design Department," belonging to the landscape division, whose staff agreed to the 7hills founder's idea of 'activating' the park. The users are locals, like neighbors, Ammani skateboarders, Jordanians or non-Jordanians, but also NGOs in the field of refugee-related work, who cooperate with the organization 7hills. This sub-chapter reveals the story of the initiation of the 7hills park and sheds light on the skate program, the actors' responsibilities and the effects of the alternative governance model applied here, namely the comparatively strong sense of ownership over the park by the locals.

4.2.1 Initiators and other Actors

This chapter presents all actors who were and still are involved in the project of 7hills. In 2014, when the initiator of 7hills realized that Amman's skateboarding community[35], which he was a part of, needed a skate park, he approached the municipality directly, as a private person, without the backing of a registered NGO or non-profit organization.

Greater Amman Municipality: Studies and Design Department

Regarding collaborative park projects, the municipality has cooperated with organizations like GIZ, UN agencies, local NGOs or private donors like in the case of Zaha Cultural center. An employee from the GAM stated,

> *This is not the only project done with NGOs or volunteers. But as I told you, they did a great job – they know how to talk about the project in social media and the media. That is why whenever you search for a special case in Amman, you just go and find Samir Rifai Park, but I can count hundreds of projects that were done in the same way as their way in Samir Rifai. (GAM employee, female)*

In those joint projects, a written contract usually defines regulations and responsibilities between the two parties. GAM oftentimes profits from the fact that the organizations are responsible for the

[35] At that time, Jordan did not have a large and established skateboarding scene. In fact, and as several interviewees confirmed, the park's founder was part a comparatively small group of people who were the "first generation of skateboarders in Jordan." (See Chapter 4.3.1)

financing of the parks, while they can still set rules and a framework for it: “The things will be constructed from you. The money is from you. The policy here in GAM – we welcome anyone who wants to make it. But by our values and our requirements” (GAM employee, female).

The model of shifting costly factors from state actors to non-profit organizations was also applied in the case of 7hills, after they had agreed to the partnership. The team at GAM liked the initiative and, according to one of its employees, generally appreciates park projects initiated from NGOs or volunteers:

> *For sure, after all, as GAM, we do not say ‘no’ to anyone who want to make any good things for the locals … we are so open and we are welcoming for anyone who wants to make – since the output of his project will give benefits on the locals and into the neighborhood itself. (GAM employee, female)*

In opposition to other collaborative park projects, in the case of 7hills, not a single official document stating responsibilities has been issued. The partnership is until today “unofficial”, as told by the interviewee (GAM employee, female). After the GAM had agreed to the idea of ‘activating’ a park with a skate area, the 7hills team and the Studies and Design Department at GAM negotiated about potential plots. After propositions for plots for coming from the municipality, the 7hills founder decided on Samir Rifai Park close to Jabal Al Weibdeh and Jabal Amman. The piece of land is owned by the municipality and – according to the land use plan, designated for recreational use, but found itself in poor shape at the time.

Donors/Volunteers

The founder, who back then owned the only skateboard brand in the Middle East, then partnered up with the German Skate for Development NGO[36] Make Life Skate Life for the construction of a 650 m^2 skate park within Samir Rifai Park. Together, they had raised around 25,000 US$ in a crowdfunding campaign. Around 20 voluntary skate park builders came from abroad to help with the construction, many of them through Make Life Skate Life. The construction of the skating area was quite short, taking only 18 days. The foreign volunteers’ engagement has partly lasted beyond the initial construction phase, as they until today donate skateboarding equipment or help otherwise, for instance by giving

[36] The social potential of skateboarding on youth and disadvantaged communities have been recognized by a number of NGOs worldwide, that commit themselves on building skateparks and launching skate classes in oftentimes marginalized communities – ranging from Johannesburg, South Africa, to countries like Tunesia, Cambodia or Brazil. Amongst the most famous organizations are Skatepal with their skateparks in Palestine (Abulhawa 2017) or Skateistan and their flagship skate school in Kabul (Friedel 2015). The association “The Goodpush Alliance,“ which aims at providing information material and creating synergies between those organizations, lists about 150 Skate-for-Development NGOs in over 50 countries (Goodpush 2020).

skate classes whenever they come to Amman. The park's initiator remarked that the helpfulness and solidarity are a uniqueness of skateboarding culture:

> *You have an international skateboarding community that donated to build a skate park. And it's cool to see, kids in Copenhagen were donating money to a skatepark they would probably never be able to see. Just for the sake of kids having a skatepark. And so, being part of the skateboarding community, you simply have friends across the world. Because wherever you go, if I go to a new country and I have a skateboard there, I can easily make friends with skateboarders. (7hills founder, male)*

Locals

The existing street skateboarding community in Amman and around 20 other locals – among them children and adults – were also involved in the construction. Most of them had not been familiar with skateboarding at all, but as they saw the construction site from outside, they curiously joined the 20 foreigners. The overall atmosphere on the construction site, impacted by a diversity of people, was highlighted positively:

> *It's cool because sometimes we had an old guy, 60-year-old, who always goes on runs in the morning. And then he saw the construction site and decided to join. So, it was very communal in that way. You have an open space; you have a bunch of people working in that space and there was always music blasting, so it was very enlightening for people. (7hills founder, male)*

This inclination to involve a range of people in the construction, either with our without expertise in building skate parks, had the effect that 'beginners' or those who were completely unfamiliar with skateboarding, were transferred the knowledge and construction skills by the professionals and potentially were thereby empowered to one day build a skate park on their own. To this day, park users contribute to the maintenance and in small construction projects in the park.

Refugee NGOs

Around two years after the construction, a Belgian skateboarder joined the team of 7hills in 2016 and helped to implement a skate program. They partnered with three organizations working with refugees:

> *I am friends with the guy who stated [NGO 2], so I am kind of like 'you know let's have a skate class with the kids' and so from there it was easy. And then with [NGO 1], we had had connections with them before. And then, we started also other classes. We have [another NGO], that's an organization that works with sports for girls, so we started a girls-only skate class. That was sure cool actually and helped a lot to get more girls to the park. And we had loner sessions which are the open sessions, so anyone can join. (7hills founder, male)*

The refugee NGOs brought the children and families that they served to the park, so they could either attend certain classes or just hang out in the park. Sometimes, the NGOs rent busses, as most people are not able get to the park by themselves. However, that always depends on the financial capacities of 7hills. The alternative composition of actors involved in the planning of the park is praised by the partnering refugee NGOs:

> *The skatepark is nice because it is more organic, less of it … it doesn't have such top-down planning approach, it's much more this grassroots planning approach at this point. Because different community members come and they make the most of the space in a way that they want to use it. It's a public space for Jordanians as well, so it's not like a [refugee] center. It's a public space. And that's very rare. Even in Amman. (NGO 1 employee, female)*

The quote contrasts 7hills to places that are specifically designated for refugees. This is an interesting point that I return to in the discussion of the findings (see Chapter 5.1.2).

7hills NGO

During the early phase of the skate program, the team of 7hills handed donated skateboards to the children for free. This was done until they realized that this gesture was taken for granted and that the children had become demanding. For instance, a child who broke his axis, instead of politely asking for a new one, apparently said, "Yo, give me free wheels" (7hills founder, male). This is when the 7hills team turned the skate program into a youth leadership program. The program followed the principle of 'give and take', i.e. if a more advanced skater was willing to give a certain amount of skate classes to the other children, he or she was rewarded with a free skateboard. This program has shown to be successful, as the founder explains, "For every 15 classes you get a board. For every ten classes you get wheels. So, we have a system, which created a cool problem, which is all the kids want to teach now." (7hills founder, male)

The skate classes are self-driven, so that the 7hills founder and his colleagues are not required to be present in the park. The about 20 youth leaders have the key to the storage of the skateboards and run the classes themselves. And if injuries or fights happen in the park, the 7hills office as a point of contact is close by.

Only since the beginning of 2019, 7hills is a registered non-profit organization, since this step seemed like a financial, bureaucratic and time-consuming obstacle to the team for a long time. However, this official status facilitates the access to donations also coming from actors beyond the Skate for Development field (Zaatari Radio 2020). The organization's office also gives the team an opportunity to connect closer with direct neighbors. For instance, neighbors, who know the 7hills founder and the park, have built trusting relationships to the organization: "The relationship we have with the people of the street is really nice. The moms send their kids to the office to just hang out with us sometimes" (7hills founder, male). The three employees of 7hills are responsible for fundraising, responding to media requests, the planning of future operations and communication to municipal actors.

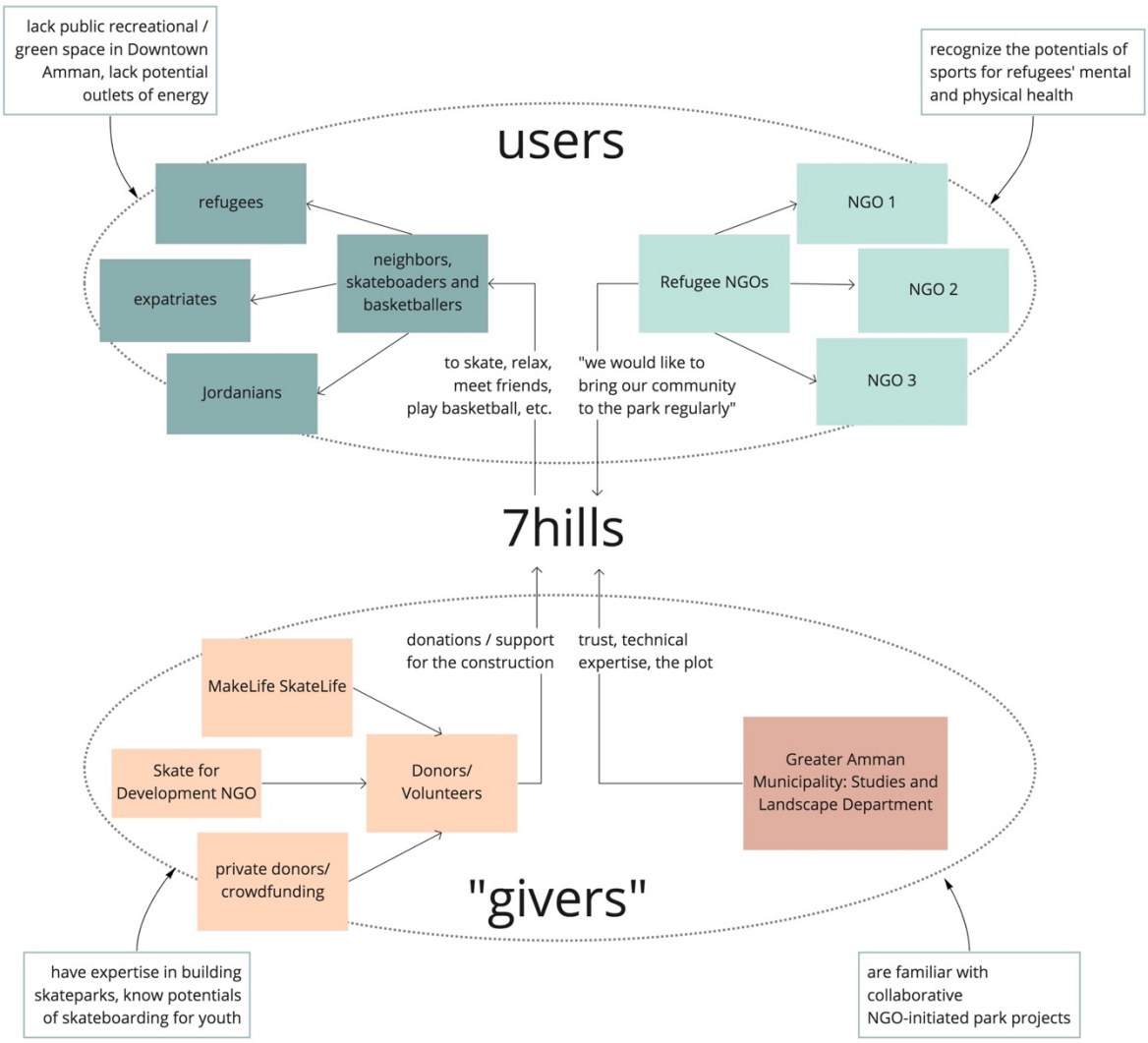


Fig. 24: Overview of Actors around 7hills

Delegation of Responsibilities

The team of 7hills does not do their tasks in an isolated manner, but rather tries to include the park members whenever possible, also beyond construction projects. One of the youth leaders has become the social media manager of the park and is responsible for responding to questions about the park and posting pictures and updates on social media platforms. Another youth leader from Norway has substituted the skate program manager when he was abroad for some weeks, as he himself wanted to do voluntary work: “I was so interested, because in Norway we don’t really opportunities like this to work as a volunteer. It’s a bit difficult to find it. And it really helps to get jobs in the future if you have a volunteering background” (YL 3, male, 21). So, beyond the youth leadership program, where the youth leaders learn to interact with partly younger children and take over the responsibility for their ‘students’, the team of 7hills provides opportunities to the teenagers to get familiar with certain other tasks and responsibilities which may also help them in their future. Generally, the project around

7hills is characterized through flat hierarchies. For instance, the relationship between the founder of 7hills as the initiator of the project and the park users, ranging from very young children to older adults, is personal and close. He seems popular among all interview partners; especially the children spoke highly of him, and in fact, many of the park users call him a friend. That implies that he erases potential hierarchies and communicates with the children on eye level.

Furthermore, he as the founder does not call 7hills "his park" but rather "their park", referring to its users, as his goal is for them to feel a sense of ownership (see Chapter 3.4.2). His 'higher position' only becomes apparent, when social conflict among children or teenagers occurs, as would he then refer back to certain rules that help to maintain a respectful togetherness in the park. For instance, in the beginning he tried to teach the children that the park bases on give and take, i.e. if they use the park, they should in one way or another to give back to it. He also stated clearly to them that racism, harassment, fights and littering trash are not tolerated in the park. However, as he is also not legally authorized, he has not ever sent anybody off, as it is a public park that everybody should be allowed to use. His mechanism would rather be to not give any skateboards to the troublemakers.

Treading on each other's Toes: Rehabilitation Plans

Eventually, the entire park started growing and evolving beyond the skating area and enjoyed great popularity. This on the one hand, while on the other, GAM's Landscape Division has perceived the park to be quite "empty" and merely recognizes the two 'obvious' facilities, i.e. the skating area and the basketball court, as it was also revealed in the interview with a GAM employee.

The interviewee from GAM stated, the requirements for a public park, which 7hills is, are not met by the current design. For example, the rather bumpy and uneven pathways are not accessible for wheelchairs and strollers. The staff had similar concerns around 2016, when they came up with own plans to redesign the park (see Fig. 25). GAM's plans included new steel fence around the park, a public toilet, a workout area (requested by the locals and communicated via the park's founder), and a guard room. However, and in regard to hierarchies within the actors constellation quite interestingly, the plan was not implemented, as the 7hills team started a call for propositions under the umbrella of Amman Design Week[37] in 2017. This the "Urban Park Design Competition" asked for ideas for the until then rather in-activated parts of the park. The winning proposal was rewarded with 5,000 JOD.

[37] The Amman Design week is an annual art event which started in 2016 and has provided "free and open access to a series of large-scale curated exhibitions, student and community programs, workshops and talks, and city-wide cultural programs" (Amman Design Week 2020).

Fig. 25: GAM Rehabilitation Plans of 2016, Amman Design Week Call for Proposals (Source: Amman Design Week 2020)

However, this design was not implemented, either. Instead, it was decided that the proposed elements will be implemented piece by piece, whenever the donations that 7hills receives allow them.

It can be concluded that the founder of 7hills, together with his team, has a central role in the project. He as the initiator is well networked to NGOs in the context of refugee-related work, whom he approached to invite the communities to the park, but also to international Skate for Development NGOs, which are important to keep the park and the skate program going through donations. Furthermore, he has a good relationship to the users of the park, not putting himself above them but rather encouraging them to co-determine on eye level. Despite the mentioned misunderstanding about rehabilitation plans, the GAM's satisfaction with the 7hills cooperation is reflected in their openness towards implementing the 7hills concept elsewhere in Amman with the same actors involved, so that other children have access to the experiences made in 7hills park (GAM employee, female).

4.2.2 Sense of Ownership by the Park Users

The survey results reflect a large sense of ownership among the park users with the park, as for instance, more than two thirds of respondents replied that they get very mad when they witness another person destroying facilities or littering in the park, while half of the survey participants responded that they identify "very much" with the park.. It is also reflected in responses about the participants' willingness to "give back to the park somehow," either by picking up trash, repairing things or giving skateboard lessons. 60% responded "very much" and 25% "mostly yes", while a minority of participants negated with "mostly no" (2) or "not at all" (2). And while only five of the

survey participants were involved in the initial construction, many others expressed that they "would have loved to."

The strong identification and engagement in keeping the park attractive was also confirmed through observations and interviews. One day, it was observed that a group of young boys willfully put too much weight on the picnic table, which crashed as a consequence. When I returned to the park shortly after, a group of other boys was successfully fixing the picnic table with tools. The frustration following another destruction incident was revealed by one of the youth leaders, "There was some guy that spray painted over the mosaic, like some days after we finished it. It was so annoying. […] But they were able to wash most of it off. But you can still see some green of that" (YL 3, male, 21). I identify three key factors that contribute to this large sense of ownership and responsibility, that I explain in the following.

Locals' Participation in (Initial) Constructions

The first factor I identify for this sense of ownership is the fact that many of the locals were involved in the construction process in the beginning and in the construction of a skate park extension (Fig. 26). When asking the founder of 7hills if it was a conscious decision to include locals in the initial construction process and if he and the professionals had directly approached them, he denied:

> *The kids came after school, there is a school right next to the park, after getting out of school they came and helped on the construction site. You know, the family would send their kids to help us. […] the thing is, people are so bored. […] And so, they were like 'we work on a skate park' and they were like 'okay, we do not know what that is but how much will it be for entry' and we'd be like 'free.' And they were like 'woah, that's crazy' and then the vibe on the construction site was really cool, that people just started showing up and helping because they wanted to hang out. (7hills founder, male)*

Apart from the actual topic here, the quote again emphasizes the boredom due to a lack of options for activities for young people. The locals were also part of the initial planning of the skate park, which in part took place simultaneously to the construction on site. The people who participated in the construction then later came and enjoyed what they had created.

Beyond that, an identification which is not stemming from a previous involvement in constructing the park is also there. When being asked about his willingness to help construct extensions or new facilities in the future, YL 3, who had only recently moved to Amman, responds, "Of course. But for me, I don't really have construction experience. But … if I am allowed that'd be very cool to watch and do baby steps, help out." (YL 3, male, 21)

Fig. 26: Construction for a mini ramp as an extension of the skate park (Source: Indiegogo 2017)

Co-Determination Opportunities

Until this day, the users of 7hills are actively invited to articulate their perspectives or aspirations for the future of the park and can with their responses influence future developments in the park. For instance, in September 2020, the team of 7hills asked park users to fill out an online survey (see Fig. 27) about how they use the park, if they feel welcome, who they perceive as the most frequent users, what is missing in the park and what they generally like and dislike about it. The survey also asked for the perceived impact that the pandemic COVID-19 has had on the access to public space. In addition, and to ensure a broad range of opinions, the leader of the skate program furthermore specifically reached out to the youth leaders, asking them what they wish for in the skating area (ES, male, 22).

In the past, the users of 7hills have expressed that the park lacks a workout area. Concerns like that are passed on to the people in charge at the municipality. As a result, later on, this workout area was implemented in plans issued by the municipality. This is a form of citizen participation that is quite rare in the context of Amman's urban development.

Self-Interest of an Attractive Park

Since the park relies on its users' attentiveness in regard to picking up trash, the users themselves are largely sensitized for the fact that if they do not pick up the trash, the park becomes unattractive, also for themselves. In the skating area, this is a special, as the surfaces are only skateable when they are clean and without obstacles like stones. The city cleaning only cleans the park on an irregular basis (ES, male, 22).

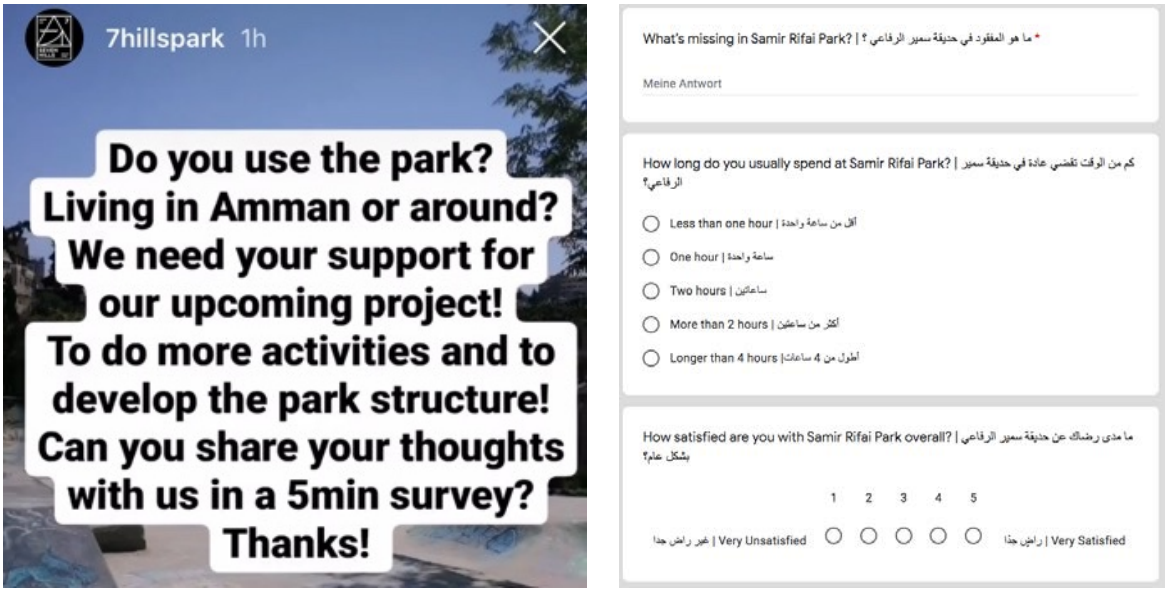


Fig. 27: Survey (by 7hills team) about satisfaction with the park (Source: Instagram 2020)

So, this sense of ownership, this "local responsibility for the park" (7hills founder, male) is also quite important for a clean and attractive park:

> *And that was extremely important, that the local community was involved in the construction. Because they had the ownership over the space. So it is their space, you know. They built it. And that is the local governance part that I am talking about. And so, the idea of the park is that it is a community space. It is owned by the community, it is built by the community, it's maintained by the community. (7hills founder, male)*

Effects of Locals' Sense of Ownership

The three factors might have taught the people participating in the process of planning and constructing the design of a public park, that they can have an impact on space beyond the scale of the park – if the right form of governance is chosen from administrative levels above, while hierarchies are dismantled. In comparison to other places, Amman's urban development has used only few participatory approaches like that. But it gives the people, especially the youth, who typically barely gets a chance to influence and co-produce the design of spaces, a sense for being able to shape the city they live in; and it also challenges their perception of power and spaces. They furthermore learn to articulate spatial imaginations that might seem utopian to them at first, but are well-appreciated by the team of 7hills.

Fig. 28: Park users working on the basketball court (Source: Instagram 2020)

Lastly, the particular knowledge of how to build a skatepark or how to fix a broken picnic table is transferred to the locals helping in construction projects. Through this sense of ownership by the park users, 7hills is a self-maintaining project, as the park can largely do without employing professionals with construction expertise who are paid for their work. The involvement of volunteers and the openness to bring them together with unexperienced locals who are able to learn from them substitutes that. The sense of ownership has numerous other positive effects on the park, for instance regarding attentiveness and careful handling of facilities.

4.3 Cultural Dimension

The fieldwork brought up two issues related to the notion of culture. The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology defines culture as the "form, content, and effects of the symbolic aspect of social life" (Turner 2006, 111). Firstly, 7hills and skateboarding embody a foreign culture in the Middle East, even to Jordanians, who partly have been well acquainted with American or western influence. Secondly, it was observed that activities take place in the park that express particular cultural preferences of a certain cultural community. Therewith, two seemingly contrary phenomena were observed. On the one hand, many people in the park step out of their own habitual hobbies and comfort in order to execute a 'western' type of sport and to engage with people from all different ethnic backgrounds. On the other hand, some people come to the park to return to habits and practices stemming from their culture of origin, by meeting members of their ethnic group, i.e. to eat traditional Sudanese food together.

4.3.1 7hills and Skateboarding as a 'Foreign Concept'

Skateboarding, as it is today found in contemporary skateparks, was born in Southern California during the 1960s. There, surfers decided they need an alternative activity for days of flat waves, and so they occupied the benches found in school yards or empty swimming pools in sub-urban backyards with skateboards (Glenney and O'Connor 2019, 3–4). In that decade, first skate parks were built in California and back then called arenas, centers, rinks or jamborees. In fact, those Californians brought many surf-related tricks into the sport of skateboarding (Borden 1998, 2). In the 1970s, skateboarding gained massive popularity and then again in the 1990s, leading to the erection of large numbers of skateparks in the early 2000s, also in Europe (Borden 2014, 57–59). Today, there are estimated to be more than 5,000 skateparks across all continents with a focus in North America and Europe (SurferToday 2020), while skateboarding was planned to have its debut in the Olympics in 2020 (Schwier and Kilberth 2018). However, it is not long ago that skateboarding was considered a subculture even in western contexts.

In the MENA region, however, skateboarding is a relatively young sport with only few skate parks across the countries in this region. Therefore, it represents a foreign culture for many Ammanis. Only gradually, those western influences were disseminated for instance through the internet to Arabic parts of the world. At first, the skate pioneers in Amman, to which the founder of 7hills belonged, struggled to firstly get access to skateboarding equipment[38] and secondly find spots in the urban landscape where they were accepted to skate. Exemplary, he explains about the early days of street skateboarding around the year of 2002, when they were chased off[39] Amman's Culture Street in the Shmeisani neighborhood, which is one of the most popular spots to skate in Amman due to its smooth surfaces and variety of edges:

> *It was a struggle, […] because you are bringing in this foreign culture into a Middle Eastern culture. And then people are like 'what the fuck is this?' and so it took some battle, but then we had nowhere else to go, so we just stayed, kept coming back. Got kicked out so many times, got arrested so many times. But there was nowhere else to go and so we kept coming back and then eventually, they just gave up. And now we kind of own the space. And it's pretty cool to use skateboarding in that way. (7hills founder, male)*

On the other side, and in the same street, skateboarding was met with a certain ambiguity and curiosity by some people; one of the youth leaders explained that they were "sometimes met with amusement

[38] There are no skate shops in Amman. The only way for the Ammani skaters to get access to boards it through the office of 7hills, where donated skateboards can be purchased – either by volunteering in the skate program or by buying them. The boards are imported or shipped from abroad, oftentimes by cooperating partner organizations.

[39] It is globally common that skateboarders get chased off public spaces, as Vivoni (2009, 142) explains: "Skateboarders' exclusion from public space is most often justified through appeals to public safety and property maintenance. Noise pollution, loitering, property defacement, and trespassing figure among the offenses incurred while skateboarding on unsanctioned grounds. Private security guards, state police officers and vigilante property owners work toward ridding skateboarders from city streets."

from spectators and sometimes frustration" (YL 4, male, 24). The latter provoked the skaters' resistance in regard to staying in that street: "We would often get chased away by shop owners, security or police, but at Culture Street we made it incredibly clear that they weren't going to get rid of us by coming back day after day and eventually we were left alone" (YL 4, male, 24).

An employee of one of the NGOs cooperating with 7hills praises the sense of freedom that skateboarding bears in her point of view. According to her, this also leads to the dynamic of appropriating the space around the foreign activity more easily as a foreigner in Amman, as foreign culture is met by foreign culture and that makes it easier to enter:

> *I think the idea of building a skatepark and what skateboarding kind of represents as an idea is giving people freedom in a public space. And skateboarding already in itself is usually looked at as like extra-legal, like, not super legal. […] But the way you can import something, the structure, the graffiti, the everything, … even a lot of wall art in Amman, how some things are chosen, what do they reflect, what's the point of it … Adults could at least talk about the idea, that, how moving into a foreign space, and Jordan already is a foreign space, but then moving into the park as a foreign space and then making it your own space. I think that's cool. (NGO 1 employee, female)*

What comes along with the strangeness of skateboarding is the strangeness of the respective habitat that are skateparks. Until the opening of 7hills, there was only one other skate park in Amman. Until today, it is a private park. In 7hills, the skating area in the park adds to its uniqueness, as an employee of GAM remarks, "From my point of view, what makes it special is that the park itself took a theme. There is something special. The specialty in this park, what makes it unique and different from other parks, because of the skating area." (GAM employee, female)

This curiosity, and even an admiration of this foreign culture expressed through the park, not least due to its English name, and skateboarding is also reflected in the fact that individuals as well as brands utilize the space and what it conveys. They want to associate themselves or their product with western culture and a certain modernity, that skateboarding and the park embody in their eyes, as a frequent park user told:

> *Because this place […] is the only place in Amman that is considered to be a bit western or creative or open-minded, there are always so many other people who had nothing to do with skating, but who somehow, for example ... there were quite a few new fashion labels, where some homies said 'we're going to start a brand', then made the designs and always came to the skatepark to do the photo shoots. Always! Every time I went there was at least one photo shoot there. Once a music video was shot while I was there. […] 7hills has something cool, alternative, western, with the skatepark and so on. (ES, male, 22)*

I actually witnessed a photo shooting as well during my observations. To summarize, not only the skating area, but also the neighborhood park 7hills itself is partly perceived as something foreign in the context of Arabic cities, where most meeting point are malls, cafés and restaurants – or, like

mentioned, large scale parks either outside the city center only to reach by car, or embedded within Gated Communities (see Chapter 3.1).

4.3.2 Uses reflecting Culture of Origin: The Sudanese Picnic

Amongst the activities executed at the park, there is one that only members of one particular ethnic group carry out, i.e. the picnicking done on Saturdays by the Sudanese community. After an refugee NGO serving Sudanese initiated the idea to take the people from their community center to the park on Saturdays, originally so that the children can attend the skate classes there, the practice became a regular habit in the park, enforced by Sudanese people beyond the NGO's community (NGO 2 employee, male). Gradually, the park and the picnic have therewith taken a relevance for social encounter amongst the Sudanese community, but also Somalis, as an interviewee working for NGO 2 has told during the interview:

> *I mean the Sudanese and the Somali – this is the only place where they can meet. Sometimes, [they have] different life conditions, they are not seeing each other for a long time. So, since we are ordering busses from different places, they feel like 'yeah this is the only place where we can meet.' […] Unless they just visit themselves in their houses but yeah this is the place where they can all come together. (NGO 2 employee, male)*

That practice takes place centrally located on the small lawn in the center of the park. It has to be noted that the people who told me about the picnic themselves are not part of the Sudanese community. However, they all highlighted how much they appreciate the atmosphere created through the picnic:

> *The moms come, bring their kids, the families meet at the park. The kids skate and the moms sit down here to have a picnic, to have music. And it's cool to witness, especially with the Sudani community, a micro economy […] has started. A very very very micro economy, like the moms are bringing their home products to sell to other moms and it's super nice in that way. (7hills founder, male)*

When YL 4 explains the general atmosphere of the park on busy days, he emphasizes the picnic as an enlivening factor:

> *Vibrant, diverse, energetic, sometimes a little bit manic and chaotic, but overall really wonderful. We would have families picnicking and smoking shisha near the park, kids running around, doing all sorts. We'd have migrants, local kids, foreigners from NGOs, artists, dancers, all descending into a park that used to be really boring. Quite beautiful to witness actually. (YL 4, male, 24)*

The picnic is as well-accepted as it is because it is an activity that is compatible and does not interfere at all with other activities in the park, which is important especially for the skateboarders, as a statement by YL 3 clarifies,

> *Yesterday when I was here, there were no classes, but we met up […] And I saw families having picnic and stuff. […] I don't know if they moved the bench over there. They were sitting*

at the bench and some were sitting here chilling. It's open to everybody, as long as they don't get in the way for skaters. (YL3, male, 21)

The picnic generally adds to the cultural diversity in the park. While basketball and skateboarding are activities that do not necessarily reflect the individuals' respective cultural backgrounds, the food which the Sudanese community brings to the park does. And shared meals bring people together, either those who are part of the same community or those of different ones.

4.4 Social Dimension

This sub-chapter looks at the questions of who uses the park, who interacts with whom and what kind of relationships are formed within the park, making use of the codes shown in Fig. 29. Therewith, this chapter returns to the key subject under which the park was examined. Before focusing on the nature of the social relations, this section starts off by presenting how people had been introduced to the park.

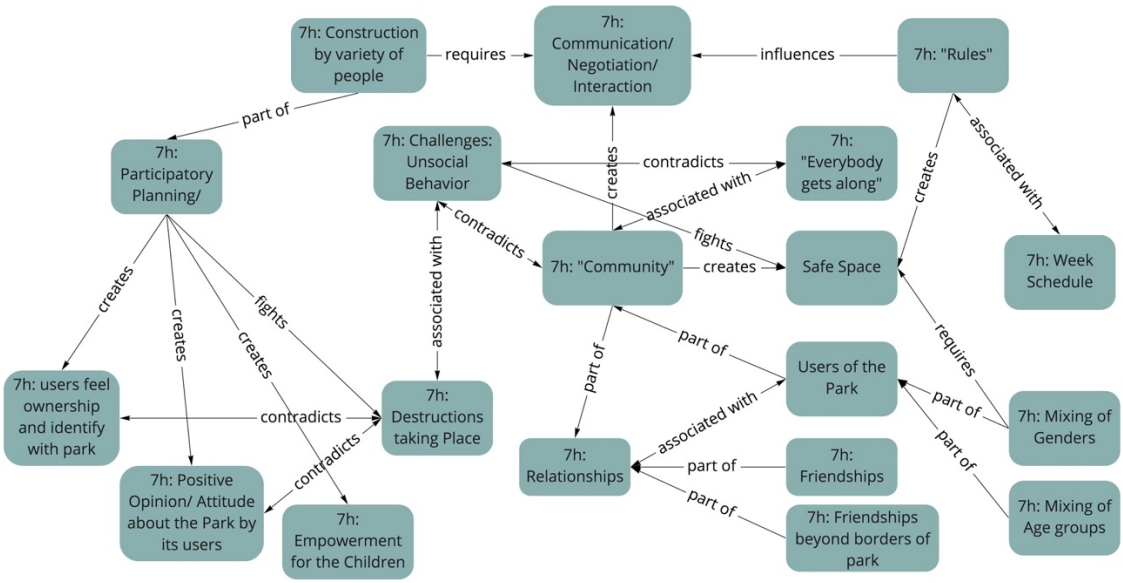


Fig. 29: Code network and relations around "Community and Participation"

The survey results show that 13 out of the 28 survey repondents had initially heard about the park from friends. The second most dominant response is "from a certain organization," with eight responses. More than 70% of the survey participants perceive the park as very welcoming, another 25% find the park "mostly welcoming". When being asked to elaborate on that, a Norwegian youth leader contextualized 7hills by explaining the social atmosphere in Norway's skate parks, "And if a new person comes in, they'd like eyeball you. But I mean, I haven't talked with these guys, could be like a

resting kind of face as well. But here [in 7hills], they come up to you and are like 'Hi, who are you?' and there it's more with distance" (YL 3, male, 21).

The people around 7hills form an open and accessible group instead of an exclusive community that makes it hard for newcomers or 'outsiders' to enter. I experienced this myself. When entering the field, I was met with enthusiasm and curiosity and found the people warm and welcoming. I did not hesitate to approach people, as they gave me the feeling of being part of the social group by little gestures such as quick smiles and waving from afar.

4.4.1 Diversity in the Park

Beginning with the first activities that were taking place in 7hills, namely the construction and planning process, a range of different people came together to work on the same project, all aiming at the same goal. This social diversity has continued until today, as the park's user community is very heterogenous. The following sections illustrate the dimensions of that diversity that was reflected through the survey results and interview statements – from citizenship and ethnicity to gender and age group.

Ethnicity

In terms of country of origin, the park users reflect Jordan's diverse population (Fig. 30). Among the park users, many were born in countries of the MENA region (Jordan: 8, Syria: 3, Palestine: 3), while others come from Sudan (6), Somalia (3), and Bangladesh (1). Western countries of origin are Germany, Norway, Switzerland, the USA, Spain and Denmark.

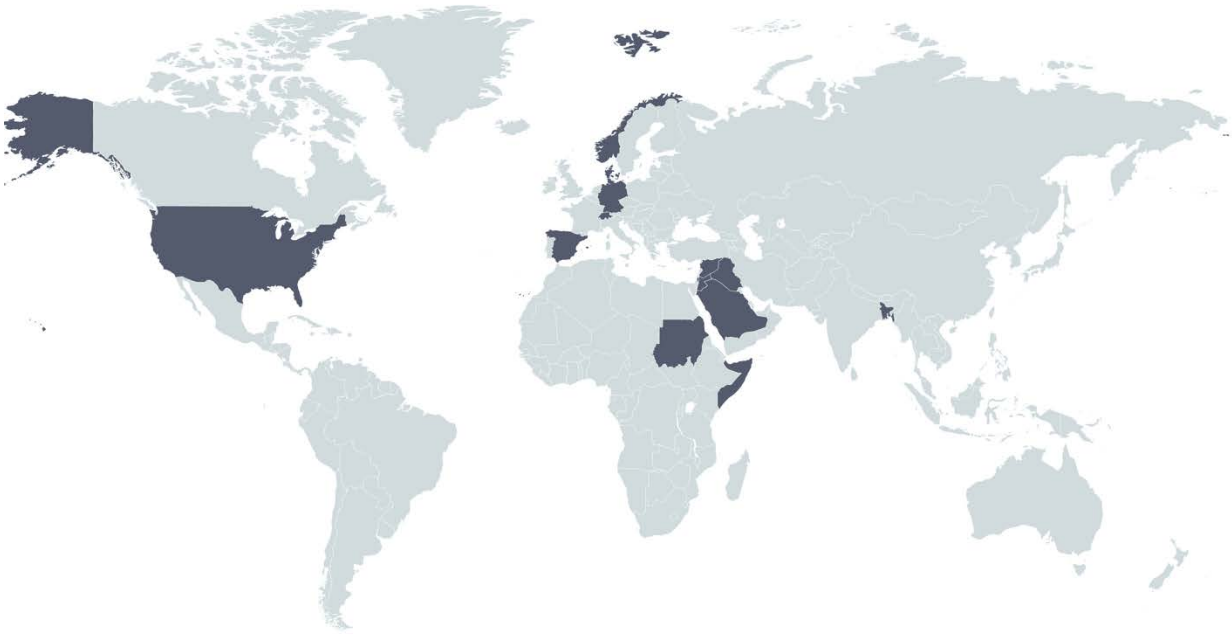


Fig. 30: Park users' countries of origin

The people from western countries are mostly in the city temporarily, for instance within the framework of a semester of studying abroad or volunteering for a humanitarian aid organization. When asked about the extent to which the park users reflect Amman's population, an interviewee responds, "pretty accurately actually" (YL 4, male, 24). The founder of the park even describes the diversity among the users as a microcosm of Amman's society:

> *And you see actually the fabric of the city. Because you have the local kids skating with refugees, kids from Sudan, kids from Yemen, kids from Somalia, expat kids, kids from the Royal family. So, it's a really nice mix that you don't see anywhere else in the city. (7hills founder, male)*

This ethnic diversity is appreciated by many park users. According to a survey participant, the park "provides a place for people to connect with individuals from all over the world and Jordan". Not a single racist or xenophobic statement was given about the diversity or people of other origins in the park.

Gender

In terms of gender, the entire park, but also the skating area shows a more or less equal number of females and males. This is specific and quite interesting, when holding it against data from skateboarders in western countries, where skateboarding has been around for decades and is only gradually turning into a popular sport for girls as well. In the United States for example, data from a representative survey shows that around 77% of skateboarders are male (Public Skatepark Guide 2020), while an ethnographic study from Colorado reports about the common sexist behavior by male skateboarders in a skatepark (Beal 1995). In contrast, 40% of the 7hills skaters are female (7hills 2020). This can be explained through an idea which was also brought up by an interview partner working in an international skate for development NGO, which implemented a skate park in Afghanistan. She says that only due to the fact that skateboarding had not for decades manifested as a boys' sport and was something completely new there, a total unknown, both girls and boys equally joined their program (Skate for Development NGO employee, female).

These two different perspectives on skateboarding – familiar and unfamiliar – are apparent in the case of 7hills as well, as the founder confirms,

> *Before, we used to skate in Culture Street, and it was mainly kids who had western influence, who knew what skateboarding was. So they knew that the space can be used for skateboarding because they had that influence. Whereas the kids that come to the skate park do not have that western influence, so they see skateboarding from the angle of the skate park. (7hills founder, male)*

As the skate program in the park was from the beginning attempting to loosen the manifested gender relations in skateboarding by offering "girls only" classes, the users of the park who had seen skateboarding as a sports for the first time at 7hills park did not perceive it as a male-dominated sports. The interaction to people of a different gender, who are not family members, is a *terra incognita* for many of the children, as schools are separated in Jordan and there are barely any spaces where boys and girls meet and learn to interact with one another. In their everyday life, after leaving school, most children go home to their families, and a mingling of genders barely takes place. This new experience is a by-product of the skate classes, where girls and boys are required to interact with each other, to negotiate the use of the limited skateboards, but also the use of the limited space. The founder of the park particularly wants to empower the girls to do so, to claim their own space and therefore interact with the boys:

> *And then also the girls learn to own their space. You know, 'you have the right to be in this space as much as these boys' and they also interact with the boys. Which is also cool, because there are no other places where the boys and girls interact. School, they don't do it. (7hills founder, male)*

An incident in the basketball court exemplifies the girls' newly appropriated self-esteem as the effect:

> *It is cool also to see the way that the relationship between girls and the space. It's developing in a way because the girls are actually claiming their space in the park. For example, the other day, there was a bunch of boys that were playing basketball that wouldn't allow the girls to play. And so, what the girls did, they did a civil disobedience. They sat down in the basketball court. They were like 'you're not going to let us play? You won't play as well!' And so eventually, they took turns. (7hills founder, male)*

Age structure

Additionally, the barriers between different age groups are loosened. The teenagers interact with and partly teach younger boys and girls skating. As reported by one of the research participants, most of the skaters in 7hills can be loosely divided into pioneers and members the first, the second and lastly the third generation (ES, male, 22). Pioneers are a small group of skaters that brought skateboarding to the Middle East before the 7hills skate park was built. The first generation describes the first of skaters in the park, who then also gave the first skate classes in the youth leader program. They taught members of the second generation, who are now around 14-17 years old, how to skate. Slowly, members of the first generation withdrew from teaching, because the second generation replaced them as youth leaders. The first generation sometimes still helps out when it is needed. The members of the second generation currently teach members of the third generation, children from roughly five to 15 years old. Still, convivial interactions and a mingling were observed to take place across those distinctions.

Also, the basketball court attracts people from different ages, as one of the employees of 7hills confirms: “The basketball court that was built is crazy, what a success it is! It’s used from morning to evening by everyone; boys, girls, young men, even the old guys are coming to ball!” (Zaatari Radio 2020) During noon, it was observed that single adults come to the park, either sitting in their car (Fig. 31) or sitting in the park on a bench, to spend their lunch break, as a middle-aged man explains: “Sometimes my head is full and I need a break”. He finds that “most of them [other parks in Amman] are not as nice as this one.“

Summing up, the park attracts a range of people, targeting close to all parts of the society, which is quite unusual Amman, as the chapters 3.1 and 3.2 have illustrated. Further sub-chapters identify factors for that. What can be said at this point, is that the 7hills park is one of the only parks in Jordan without a security guard: “Usually, in our sites in the parks here in Amman, usually there is a guard man, or police” (GAM employee, female). Those guards watch the park users and have the legal authority to even send them off. This not being the case for 7hills which makes the park accessible for everybody. As mentioned before, the municipal planners criticize that the park is not accessible for wheelchairs and strollers, as the paths to reach the skate bowl or basketball court are quite bumpy (GAM employee, female). Hence, the apparent diversity could furthermore be increased to also include handicapped people and parents of with strollers.

Fig. 31: People around the basketball court and parked cars in entrance area

4.4.2 Conviviality, Meaningful Relationships and Mingling

However, this diversity alone does not guarantee intercultural exchange and a friendly and respectful togetherness. In the following, an examination of the social interaction and relationships that exist in

the park takes place. Relationships vary in the "character of emotions prevailing, the degree of interdependence, the amount of trust, the parties' relative amounts of power, the amount each knows about the other" (Lofland and Lofland 1984, 83–84) and accordingly differentiate into friendships, intimate relationships, strangers, impersonal relationships, bureaucratic relationships, to just name a few. The parameter of trust and support was specifically referred to during the study and serves as an indicator to describe the relationships apparent in the park. Also, the study's results regarding the mingling between people from different ethnicities, ages and genders are demonstrated in this section.

Engaging in Social Interaction

Encounters, if not too brief, can result in social interaction. So, when describing the 'organization' of social interaction constituted in the park, it is helpful to return to Goffman's terms. Goffman says:

> *Persons present to each other need not be engaged in any encounter, constituting, therefore, an 'unfocused gathering'; that persons immediately present to each other can be parceled out into different encounters, as all partygoers know – a 'multi-focused gathering'; and that persons ostensibly engaged in one encounter can simultaneously sustain an additional 'subordinated' one. In the last instance the 'subordinated' encounter is sustained through covert expressions or by deferential restriction of the second encounter so that it does not get in the way of the officially dominating one. (Goffman 1961, 18)*

Goffman describes a space or situation in which several people or groups have different kinds of interactions and encounters, partly overlapping. He clarifies that they appear simultaneously on different levels. Some people in 7hills do not interact at all (or in a subtle, sub-conscious way only), and are connected to the others only by physical proximity, for example when one chooses to sit in the grass alone to read. Goffman refers to a situation like that as unfocused gathering. At the same time, others seek a focused interaction, by greeting each other, shaking hands, recognizing the people around from previous encounters – and are thereby engaging in a focused interaction. Goffman's words above reflect the dynamics observed in 7hills, as I have observed unfocused gatherings, consciously initiated focused (group) gatherings, but also subordinate encounters within.

The focused and thereby relatively close interactions took place both in homogenous groups or dyads, but also between people of different age groups, genders and ethnicities. For instance, an advanced group of skateboarders who come to the park several times a week range from the ages of 8 to 23. And when looking at the gathering of people around the basketball court, different ethnicities and genders engage in excited conversations with each other. An example for a homogenous encounter is a group of Sudanese girls, all from the same age group, who in the park seemed to interact mainly with each other. However, they were still open to outsiders that approached them.

Support and Trust

Generally, even though skateboarding is not considered a team sport, I was surprisingly often confronted with the statement that skateboarding is only possible through the support of the people around who cheer for a landed trick:

> *You can't really do it [skate] on your own. I never have seen anyone who skates on their own. Because you always need that support of people around you. We're all trying new tricks, all falling down. And it's really cool, also to see within the skateboarding community, when one person lands a trick, everyone gets excited. It's the same everywhere. (…) (7hills founder, male)*

This highlights the absence of envy among the park users, as it can be suspected that they identify with each other instead of being opponents. Many incidents were observed, in which one person fell, and the people around rushed to get or at least stop the skateboard or to help the person up. This helpfulness is also visible in other activities in the park, such as basketball. Looking closer at the survey results about interpersonal relationships, it can be said that there is a relatively high degree of trust and mutual understanding among the users of the park, as the diagram (Fig. 32) shows. The trust is also reflected in the fact that only two survey respondents (one basketballer and one skater) negated the question if they feel safe and secure in the park with "mostly no", while nobody replied, "not at all". In fact, I observed many of the park users leaving their belongings in one area of the park while moving to another zone, without fearing a theft.

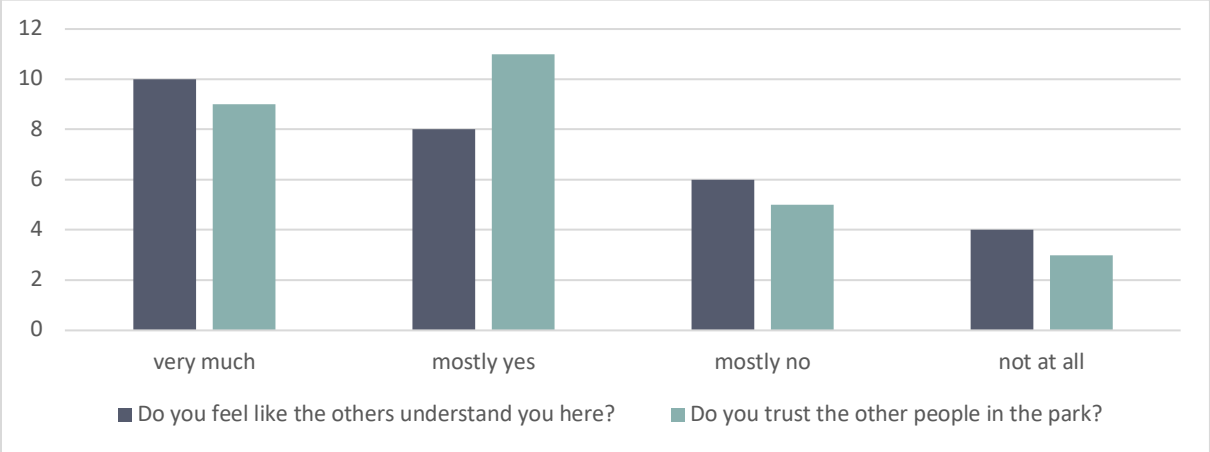


Fig. 32: Survey results regarding trust and mutual understanding among the park users

The relationships in the park range from tight friendships to acquaintanceships with rather "weak ties" (Granovetter 1973). Beyond those relationships, the park users generally have a large willingness to offer help to the others, as the survey results showed (Fig. 33), reflecting the existence of Granovetter's (1973, 1361) "reciprocal services" as one of the four components of weak ties. Almost equally high was the number of people assuming that others would help them.

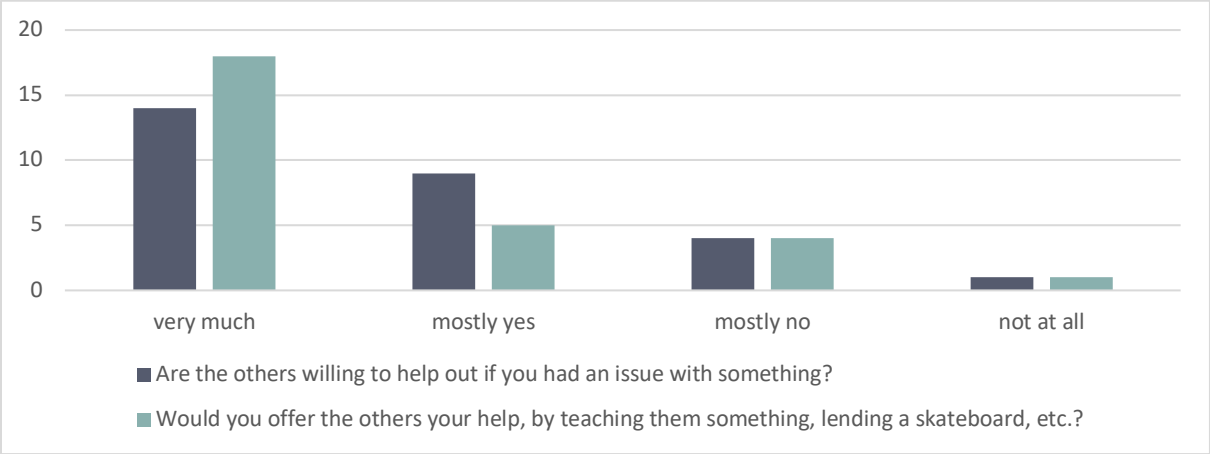


Fig. 33: Survey results about the willingness to help other park users

Relationships confined to the Park

The relationships in the park differ in terms of frequency of encounters, emotional commitment and the degree of knowledge that people have about each other. Generally, the words "friendships" and "friends" appeared strikingly often throughout the research. Statements from interviews or the surveys like "We all know each other" (ES, male, 22) reflect rather weak ties that base on the frequency of seeing each other rather than the sharing of personal and biographical information, or giving each other positive emotions. John Lofland and Lyn Lofland (1984, 85) refer to this type of relation as social groups[40], while the park users used the notion of "community" to describe the social unit apparent in the park. A more detailed analysis of community in the park can be found in chapter 4.5.3.

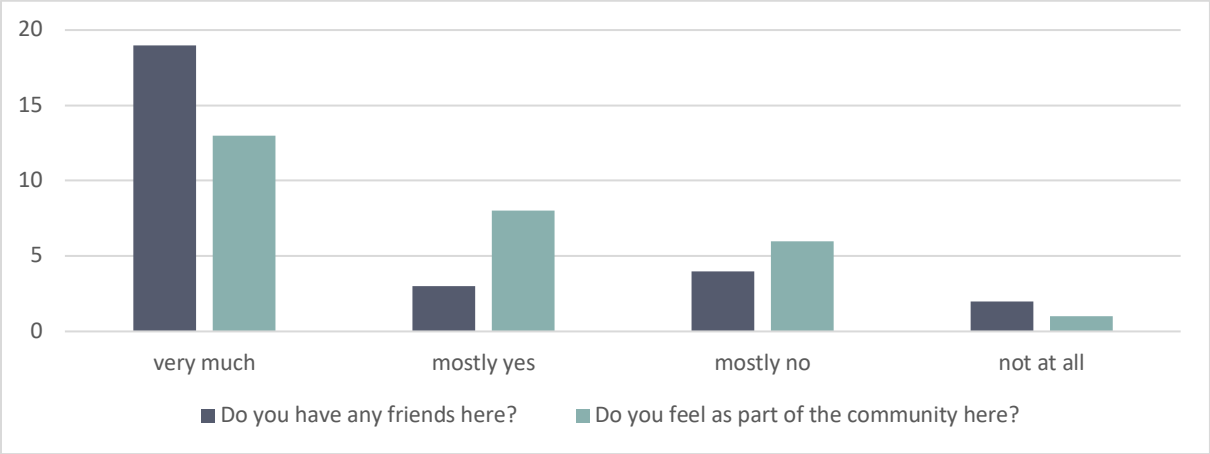


Fig. 34: Survey results about types of relationships

[40] Social groups are formed by several people who interact with some regularity over an extended period of time and who refer to themselves as a social entity, for instance, reflected by the use of "we". (Lofland and Lofland 1984, 85–86)

When looking at friendships, it has to be differentiated between those only existing for the time being together in the park and basing on the shared activity, and those existing beyond the park's borders and activities. The survey results generally show that many people claim that they have friends in the park and the number of people feeling as part of the community shows an equal distribution of responses.

Relationships beyond the Park

As mentioned, other relationships last beyond the time of being together in the park and are 'taken outside.' This reflects mostly strong ties and more intimate relationships than those that confine to the park, as the individuals are open to share elements of themselves that do not merely focus on the common activity, like skateboarding. Those, who referred to the people in the park as "community", differentiated those other park users, whom they also meet outside of the park by calling them "friends" or "cliques."

One of the park users confirmed that members of "the second generation could be seen in small groups in downtown when they needed new shoes. Buying shoes. Always on the road with a board." (ES, male, 22) It is interesting to note here that while these people seem to also be friends outside of the park, they still carry the element reflecting their uniting interest, namely the skateboard. Another youth leader told, "I made good friends with the teenagers here, so we hang out and stuff otherwise. Yesterday we went to a club together. […]. It is in Jabal Amman. It was fun. One of the kids was 16, the other guys 19 and I am 21 years old." (YL 3, male, 21)

Mingling

This particular statement by YL 3 also reflects a mingling of both different age groups and ethnicities, as the interviewee is Norwegian and the teenagers whom he referred to are Jordanians. Generally, this mingling is apparent in the park. I observed numerous light-hearted, convivial interactions between people of different ethnicities, ages, genders; there were no barriers. One youth leader reveals that "the kids just come to 7hills to play and learn to skate – and to get to know each other! Here, everybody is playing with everyone" (YL 2, male, 16). Another youth leader reports, "Over time I formed pretty close bonds with some of the kids, and we'd even go on skate trips to Culture street in the car, or share meals together and have chats about life and all the rest" (YL 4, male, 24).

Building on the question if the respondents "have any friends here," the survey asked, "Are those friends all from the same background as yours?", leaving the interpretation of "same background" purposely to the research participants. This may mean that they perceive their friends to generally

face other everyday life realities or simply that they were born in a different country. The majority of people responded no here (not at all: 5; mostly no: 11), while only seven respondents said that the friends are completely from the same background and five said "mostly from the same background." That means that more people form friendships also to people of other groups in the park, than park users building friendships only to people of their own gender, age, or ethnic background.

How is the mingling initiated or facilitated? It seems that the barriers that exist outside this park (gender, citizenship, age, ethnicity) are practically erased through engaging in an activity together:

> *And you know, we have Sudani girls and boys who are like responsible for teaching other girls and boys. And that is also like breaking this barrier of gender first of all, socio-economic*[41] *barriers, like we have the refugee kids teaching the royalty. And so, you have the breaking of the classes. So, no classes inside the skate park. (7hills founder, male)*

To summarize, the words of one of the youth leaders fit quite well, and can – based on the other interviews and surveys – be considered as exemplary. He says, "I met loads of people from communities I'd otherwise have no contact with, and spent time with kids from camps I'd have no access to" (YL 4, male, 24).

4.4.3 Individual Development

Shifting the focus from group dynamics to the individual, it was found out that a number of children experiences individual positive effects which the park has on their well-being. The sporting successes contribute to this, as one of the youth leaders confirms: "It taught me as well how to not give up, just skateboarding - you fall, you stand up" (YL 1, male, 18). Furthermore, the park founder notes about skateboarding that "It's not a competition between individuals. It's just a competition between you and your past self, so you're only trying to become better than what you were yesterday." To this, he adds,

> *With skateboarding, it humbles you. You always have to fall. And it's okay to fall among this community who is also – all of them are falling down, and like laughing at each other and falling down, and that kind of breaks the sense of someone is above you, you know. We are all falling down, we're all laughing at each other falling down, and that creates a one-dimensional, a flat […] community.*

[41] The socio-economic status was not particularly addressed through the research design, so this statement about the mingling of different socio-economic profiles remains unconfirmed. However, one can assume that Royal family members and expatriate children are rather wealthy, while a large share of refugees in Jordan rely on the aid of humanitarian organizations. Also, as Amman is comparatively segregated after this exact parameter (see Chapter 3.1.4), simply the identification of the park users' different areas of residence reflecting East and West Amman, leads to further assumptions regarding socio-economic diversity and mingling in the park.

The lack of hierarchy and the fact that everybody in the park can become a good skateboarder and be applauded also adds to the self-esteem of those, who are potentially elsewhere bullied or face discrimination. Beyond that, the park with all its other activities has further impacts on its users' individual well-being. In the survey, three people called the park "therapeutic" or brought up the positive impact the park has on the person's mental health. One survey participant explicitly stated this connection, "The park is one of the most important things in my life, because I suffer from a psychological condition". Those statements, together with my observation of the outstandingly joyful atmosphere in the park, confirm the claim by William Whyte (1980, 7) that "healthy places that people like in cities" contribute to happiness.

The individual development and well-being of the young park users is also a concern to the park founder and his team. The case of one of the youth leaders is a good example that the park welcomes even those, who are not aiming at friendships and being part of a group. This youth leader was apparently quite shy and did not seem very enthusiastic about collective activities like skateboarding, where interaction with others is required, so that the 7hills team asked him what he generally likes to do. When he said that he likes gardening, he was given the opportunity to plant things in the entrance area of the park (see Fig. 21) and thereby have a responsibility over something that he by himself is doing without having to interact with others. As the founder explains, they "are always trying to adapt to the skills of the kids" (7hills founder, male).

Also, the people attending one of the activities in the park develop their self-identity beyond dimensions such as gender, sexuality or ethnicity. They become 'good skaters', photographers or passionate basketballers, as they are given the chance to test whichever 'identity element' they feel comfortable with. The other people in the park might thereby serve as a reference group that also supports the self-evaluation and self-definition. Furthermore, as the example of some girls' sit-down strike in the basketball court shows (see Chapter 4.4.1), they gain new self-esteem not only through the skills, but also through asserting oneself in negotiations happening in the park.

4.4.4 Social Tensions and Challenges

Generally, few challenges or disputes happen in the park. The atmosphere I observed was consistently peaceful. However, the interviewees revealed some incidents that reflect tensions and social challenges.

Territorialization

In the early days of the park, there were different groups trying to use the park who did not get along with each other, where a rivalry and a battle for domination over the park was happening, reflecting Doreen Massey's concerns about the territorialization of public space (see Chapter 2.3). The incident of boys trying to push the girls out of the basketball court also reflects a territorialization approach by the boys, which – through the girls' resistance – failed. Generally, with negotiation and over time, the groups understood that the park is for everybody. As the park's founder remembers,

> *They were trying to force us out of the space. And it's always these public space politics. Like 'this is my park, you're not allowed here.' But we always try to include people rather than just label them as bad. And now we are friends with all these troubled kids, and they are behaving in a way we want them to behave. In a way that is respectful to the people. (7hills founder, male)*

Racism

The initial skepticism against each other followed patterns of racism. In the beginning, some people denied to skate with People of Color. The initiator of the park was trying to make clear that if they do not want to skate with them, they should rather leave the park, subtly exposing their racism as unwelcome in the park. And that was not the only 'rule.' Certain principles that were tried to be made clear to those behaving in a bad way substantially shaped the understanding of their limits, not only in regard to social behavior but also towards the space itself.

Vandalism

Another issue is that some people destroy the equipment or facilities that the community had laboriously built, which of course provokes anger:

> *We had a lot of problem kids who were like breaking stuff and destroying shit and being assholes to other kids. But we kept coming back. (…) Respect the people around you and you will be respected. And so, in the beginning, we always had to be present. If boys were reacting or behaving in a bad way, you always have to stop them. (7hills founder, male)*

The quote shows that this used to be a bigger problem than it is now. The incident when unknowns spray-painted over the mosaic, or when the picnic table was destroyed are both elaborated on in Chapter 4.4.2.

Sharing of Skateboards

The skateboards are a limited object of desire for many park users. Consequently, a certain sociability is required by the users. Only a certain number of skateboards is handed out at the same time, therefore the people have to share them. Sharing in turn requires communication and negotiations. This limited number of skateboards also leads to conflict. One of the youth leaders reported that during

the girls' class, many boys would come up to the pile of spare skateboards and simply take them and obstruct the girls in their class:

> *So, the guys would just come up and take it. Then skate down here. And I have to go there and tell them 'no, you cannot, wait until 4 o'clock and then you can.' And then they are like 'okay' and they'd put it back and then like 5 mins later they come and … so that's the most frustrating. (YL 3, male, 21)*

Strategies

There is a fine line of intervening from the side of the park founder, as he considerably emphasizes the fact that it is a public park and it belongs to the people using it. For instance, he does not explicitly send perpetrators off. Also, he does not see himself in the position to do pedagogy work, as he says, "this is not a school" and that the children have to solve their issues on their own, also in order to learn how to negotiate and stand one's ground. His leverage to balance out the impact of the perpetrators however was that he would not hand out skateboards to those kids, so that they were not able to skate. As YL 4 explains, the incentive to get a skateboard is big enough of a means of pressure, so that children automatically started to behave according to the park rules, so they could skate:

> *All the positives totally outweighed the challenges and overall helped us to instill the ethos of ownership: Taking care of the space, making it the kind of place that people enjoy and feel safe in. The kids all knew we had skateboards, and that's all they really wanted, so they had the incentive to behave. (YL 4, male, 24)*

The youth leaders furthermore help to uphold the sociability by teaching the children how to behave with one another:

> *It's not just about skateboarding – it's also about how to deal with each other. How to love each other and spread love. And support. It's really important. If for example a fight happens, we just tell them that this place is for skateboarding and having fun, and 'just don't fight!'. (YL 1, male, 18)*

As some conflicts have remained, in the future, some rules will be printed out and hung in the park, saying "no fighting in the park, no trash, no harassment, (…) skating at your own risk" (7hills founder, male). This section has reviewed that the 7hills team and youth leaders have subtly worked towards conviviality amongst the park users whenever they were around, without becoming caught up in a pedagogue role. Therewith, low hierarchies remained.

4.5 Cross-Dimensional Findings

The results from the analysis provide important insights into 7hills park as a whole. The four dimensions are largely interwoven, which is why this sub-chapter presents synthesizing tendencies deriving from them altogether, in addition to further aspects that do not comply with any of them.

While the findings before are rather of a descriptive nature, the following findings are to a certain extent located on an analytical meta-level, reflecting also on theoretical concepts.

4.5.1 "Reaching one thing via the other" – The Evolution of Aims

As the street skateboarding community had to undergo constant battles over their right to use the public space in Amman, the project of 7hills arose out of this very motivation to create a first public skate park for the city of Amman – a place which skaters could not be chased off from. After the creation of the skate area by a group of people that consisted to a large share of skateboarders, this first aim was reached.

Slowly after, taking note of the popularity of the space also among non-skateboarders, the team of 7hills realized that the entire park, if seen as not only the skating area, can also turn into a project aiming to improve the situation of public space in Amman in general:

> *For me, it started with 'I need a skate park for myself', but I wanted a public skate park where everyone can join. And from there, things keep growing. They keep growing, keep adapting, keep seeing the opportunity because with challenges come opportunities. […] We started with the skate park and the idea was only the skate park. And then it would lead to resolving public spaces and so we diverted our attention to working on the public space itself. (7hills founder, male)*

With that new aim, the focus of the project expanded onto the entire park. Two years after the construction phase of the skate park, the team developed a program for skate classes – and included their third aim. It relates to the ethnic diversity and large refugee populations in Amman, who are in part socially and legally discriminated and whose life conditions are generally challenging. Thus, the team developed a skate school that particularly invited refugees to the park. The existing contacts between the founder and NGOs providing help to refugees were therein used and gradually institutionalized, after the NGOs had started to take members of their beneficiary groups to the park.

Through these gradual steps, the 7hills park has become a multi-faceted project that has succeeded broadly and improved the situations those various fields, for which aims were formulated. First, 7hills has become a popular spot for Amman's skateboarding scene; it solved the skateboarders constant battle of having to fear to be chased off by security guards or having to negotiate their legitimacy in certain spaces. Second, the neighbors from downtown, an area impacted by loud traffic noise and a lack of places of recreation, have gained a park which had before not been activated and maintained. Today, it serves as a place for coffee or lunch breaks for adults working in the area, neighbors sending their kids to play and is – beyond the neighborhood – a popular park in the center of Amman. Third, 7hills is largely known and praised by actors in the field of refugee NGOs, as an intermingling takes

place here that is seen as extraordinary. As reported, the community centers serving refugees offer services to Jordanians as well, however, the effect of an becoming familiar with the 'strangers' is not as big. Furthermore, the mingling there does not cover such a large part of the society, as the community centers typically serve people who are of a lower socio-economic status. The park, however, is an important haven even for members of the Royal family and expatriates, because even they can break out of 'fixed patterns' here. It can be suspected that through the fact that 7hills is not a designated refugee project, but rather subtly conveys to be open for everybody, including refugees, the aim of creating a togetherness of refugees and locals was successfully reached with a certain ease. This ease and the positive impact that the park has on refugees, without 7hills being a designated refugee NGO, is also praised by NGOs from the refugee field:

> *You don't have to regulate it as much, if that makes sense. It's a public space in Amman and people in Amman can come there and … it's not like 'how many Jordanians are we serving?' It's a public space in Jordan, any Jordanian can come there any time for instance. And also, it's okay for Sudanese to come, and for Syrians to come and for different people to come. I think this is pretty cool about it. It's more of a place as the idea than it is an association or an organization. It's more organic than that. (NGO 1 employee, female)*

The lack of regulations and rules that might impact the openness of the park is moreover reflected in the fact that there is no guard in the park, which is rare in Amman, as the skate program manager explains: "7Hills is one of the only public parks in Jordan where you can just go and hang out without a guard being there watching you all the time" (Zaatari Radio 2020). The 7hills team always looks for further potential improvements of certain issues. For instance, they have developed an art program, in which they provide young artists with a space to produce art on the one hand, and teach children certain arts on the other. Workshops for analog photography, animation, design and filmmaking have taken place and offered children opportunities which they had otherwise not encountered that easily:

> *These organized workshops for analog photography and photo development, and just all the time trying to look for creative activities to bring to these kids because there are very few opportunities to discover their creativity. Photography, video editing, social media … it is really important for these kids to use these tools to tell their story. This is why we are now developing our arts program at the park, collaborating with local artists where they can show the kids what they do through workshops to inspire the kids. (Zaatari Radio 2020)*

Furthermore, the 7hills team plans to replicate the park project. They have realized, through knowing more about the situation of urban refugees by encountering them in the park, that other parts of the city also host large refugee populations, but also domestic workers from Asian countries, who are not served by the NGOs partnering with 7hills. The next aim is therefore to implement a similar park as 7hills in the area near the 2nd circle in Amman:

> *Because there is a [unused] park there and there's very high density [of constructions] and it's also high density of refugee population but also people who come here from Philippines and*

> *Sri Lanka that have families here or work in the households for example or construction and stuff like that, so we want to target these kids as well. (7hills founder, male)*

This mode of operation – characterized by gradual transformations and step-by-step adding of facilities, of functions, of the skate classes, rather than 'being finished' at one point in time – points out the ambitiousness of the 7hills team members. Instead of resting on their successes, the team is constantly on the lookout for further challenges they can attempt to solve. 7hills has become flexible in reacting to new challenges, things that had prior to their recognition been invisible to the team. The accuracy of creating exactly what is needed might consequently be as high as it is. Therein, the 7hills team does not shy away from taking risks.

4.5.2 "We want to make as many mistakes as possible" – 7hills as a Laboratory

Through the openness towards trying different things out without being able to foresee the outcome, the park becomes a space of experiment. "Experiment" as defined by Cambridge Dictionary refers to "a test done in order to learn something or to discover if something works or is true" (Cambridge Dictionary 2020). Generally, the actors around 7hills have no fear of failing when testing, but to instead value failure:

> *Professional skateboarders are professional fallers, all of them. They know how to fall, rather than they know how to succeed. And this is our mentality. It's like 'yeah, let's fuck up as many times as possible and then we can learn as much as possible' rather than being very careful with our steps. (7hills founder, male)*

Several examples of that laboratory character are explained in the following.

Free Equipment

In the beginning of 7hills and before the skate program was established, people came to the park to receive free skateboard equipment, however, did not give anything back to the park. As the skate program manager Kas Wauters elaborates, "After a while it created a sense of entitlement 'you're supposed to give me stuff' and it seemed like people were showing up to the park just to get things for free" (Zaatari Radio 2020). As this 'test' failed, the team reacted. With curated skate classes and the youth leadership program, which functions by the 'arrangement' that by giving a certain amount of skate classes the youth leaders receive free equipment, the mentality and identification of the people with the park turned to the positive.

Mingling

Another component of the experimental character lies in the social dimension. As mentioned, Sudanese children often are confronted with racism at school. Also, since schools are gender-

separated, boys tend to behave disrespectful or insecure towards girls. Actively bringing the children of all skin colors, genders, ethnicities together results in the situation that children experience for the first time what it is actually like to interact with Sudanese children or a person of a different gender. This 'experiment' also failed initially, when children rejected to skate with Persons of Color or when boys tried to territorialize the basketball court and push out girls. However, they were clarified by other park users and the 7hills team that they should treat everybody in the park with tolerance. And with time and 'testing', the interactions between different groups have become more frequent, as the people came to the park regularly. For instance, after this gradual mingling, Sudanese came to the park also apart from the skate classes that aim at their community as they had made friends from other ethnicities.

Hierarchies

While children are used to hierarchies typically enforced by adults, the park's initiator tries to dismantle this and other boundaries, i.e. between adults and children, professionals and laymen, and between male and female. That is achieved through the guiding principle that in the safe space of the park, everybody is the same. Two other poles are also brought closer together, i.e. those typically in charge of park development and those imagining abstract visions for their neighborhood. So, 7hills also provides opportunities to think about spatial aspirations in order to participate in shaping the space. The park founder himself describes it as "a playful atmosphere that we try to have". And 7hills attempts at turning 'dependencies' and power geometries around, as the founder stated that he wishes also that the municipality can learn from 7hills.

Governance Model

The governance of the park also shows elements of experimenting and 'first times.' The absence of wariness is reflected in the fact that – in order to keep initial enthusiasm about certain projects up – the 7hills team oftentimes takes action, ignoring intermediate steps like the communication with municipal actors. This was the case for the extension of the skating area: "Sometimes we implement stuff and then we ask for forgiveness rather than permission. Because it is just easier. Because if you have to go the direct channels all the time, a lot of projects die." (7hills founder, male) With that, the founder hints at the long timeframes in the mode of operation by municipal institutions.

In regard to the landscape of actors forming around 7hills, the organization is generally quite open to "spontaneous" (Zaatari Radio 2020) ideas and visions coming from other actors. The 7hills team greets them with promising trust, as in the case of a group of breakdancers asking for a place within the park where they can practice. And it can be considered a 'self-runner', as the actors demanding something

from the park are always willing to give back. In this case, a breakdance program will be implemented by those people with weekly classes, once the designated breakdance space is there. With those arrangements, the park becomes a microcosm functioning under own logics, rules and agreements.

Summing up, the results from 7hills show that elements all of the described dimensions of the park reveal moments of trying out and experimenting. The spatiality of the park had never been thoroughly planned and still, to this point, is not fixed or considered a finished product by its makers. Socially, 7hills brings together people who would normally not get to know each other, and who are – if they follow a certain group activity such as skateboarding or playing basketball, required but also willing to interact with each other. In regard to governance, the municipality appreciated the initial ideas and visions – even though not complying with municipal park regulations – and gave the initiator an opportunity to activate the park, without having known much about him or without the backing of a registered organization. Partnering up with a private individual was an experiment on the part of municipal actors; and on the other hand, initiating a dialogue to municipal actors was also new territory for the park's initiator. Lastly, the introducing the new typology of skateparks, or even skateboarding itself, in a Middle Eastern city, can be seen as a cultural experiment.

4.5.3 "There is not Hate. Just Peace and Love." – Community Creation

The quote in the title of this section is by one of the youth leaders, who highlighted the conviviality and the community[42], which has formed around the park. The term community was the noun mentioned the most throughout the interviews, as the analysis revealed. The different communities around 7hills have two characteristics. Firstly, they are harmonious communities. This youth leader, but also other interviewees, confirmed, how seldom conflict occurs in the park. During the observations, I did not witness conflict or tensions at all. The absence of conflict expresses a high degree of individual tolerance among other park users. That sets the base for a community that includes diverse people. This is also reflected in the large trust amongst the park users, which was expressed in the survey results (see Chapter 4.4.2). Secondly, the park community is permeable and inclusive rather than exclusionary (see Chapter 4.4). It presents itself open to the outside and people who are new to the park or to Amman, no matter their background. The collective perception of 7hills as an inclusive place, expressed in the media, is therewith confirmed by the empirical results. A warm and welcoming atmosphere and an openness towards 'strangers' was expressed by all participants and observed by me, as I entered the field. For newcomers who were new to Amman (YL 3, ES) and went

[42]I take note of how contested the term "community" and its definition are in academic literature. However, this chapter first and foremost focusses on the participants' choice of words. A discussion of the notion of community takes place in the Chapter 5, while at this point, the descriptions are closely oriented on the interviewees' choice of words.

to the park right after they had arrived, the park even served as a "port of entry" (Oldenburg 1991, 17). Diving deeper into the theme of community, I observed it to be multiscalar in the context of 7hills, meaning that in the park, communities were found on different 'levels' (Fig. 35).

First, there is the park community. Nearly all research participants go to the park regularly. Merely due to the consistency of encountering the others, the people connect – even if they all go to the park for different purposes or activities. They all associate themselves with the unique vision and ideas, but also the (western) culture (see Chapter 4.3.1) embodied by the park. As was often told, the uniqueness of 7hills lies also in the fact that it is "the only public space with activity offers" (ES, male, 22) which is moreover free of charge. So, since the options are that limited, people come to the park again and again – which sets the base for enduring relationships and communities. Secondly, I identify activity-focused communities, mainly the skatepark community and the basketball community. The skate program manager notes that skateboarding generally has community-building potentials and calls it "the seed to grow a community" (Zaatari Radio 2020). Both activity-centered communities partly overlap, with individuals switching between the activities and thereby belonging to both. But there are also other, smaller, partly temporary and not so static communities forming around projects, like the mosaic-making or the construction of the skate park extension. And third, there are 'micro-communities', or rather cliques within these activity-centered communities. One example is a group of quite advanced skateboarders from the 'first generation' of youth leaders. They have formed close bonds and also meet outside the park, as they do not rely on the provision of skateboards through 7hills. They refer to each other as friends. The same goes for a group of basketballers, both male and female, which has formed in the park. They partly arrange dates to meet each other to play basketball. As observed, and in opposition to many other relationships, these group members have formed rather communal or even strong social ties, as they know about each other's individual backgrounds (e.g. occupation or school, country of origin) and refer to incidents which had been experienced together outside of the park.

Regarding the first and second levels of communities in the park, according to one of the team members of 7hills, an immense driver for community-building were and still are the joint construction processes and their results. The park serves as an approach to respond to the overarching joint call for the provision of more accessible public space, as the manager of the skate program confirms in an interview:

> *By building a skatepark you build a community and by working with this community you feel that there is a need for more, especially after living a bit longer in Jordan you become aware that there are no public spaces at all […] And there is so many young people in the city, I think about 60% are 30 years old or younger. And all these people don't have a proper place just to hangout, or outlets and tools to just express themselves. (Zaatari Radio 2020)*

This statement clarifies that even if people come to the park for different activities, they are united in their respective aims and motives to actively engage in the project or simply come to the park, i.e. hanging out, meeting friends, being an active part of 'something big' and expressing oneself or certain parts of the identity therein.

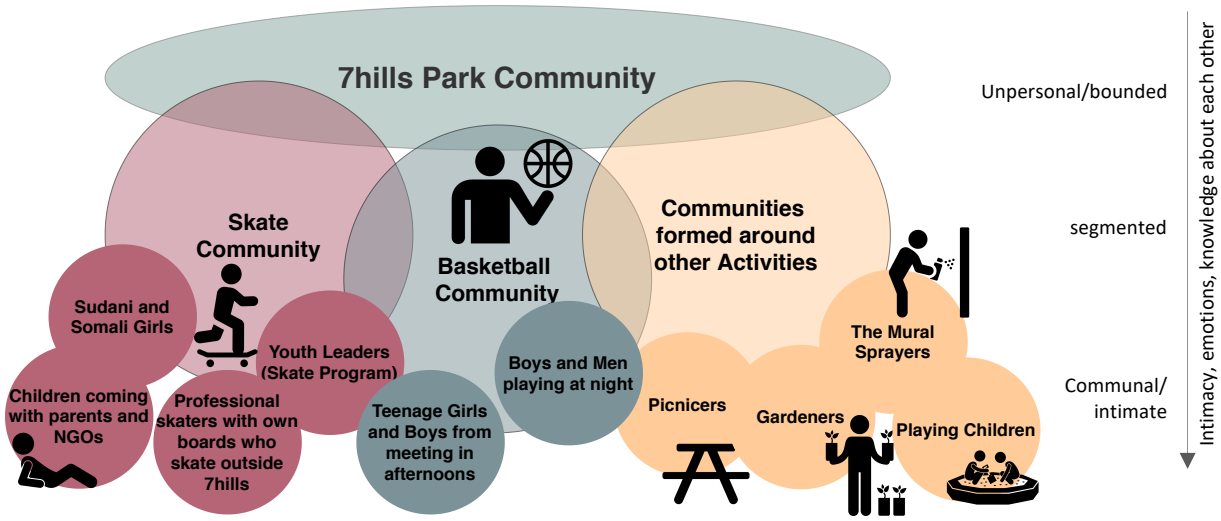


Fig. 35: Different levels of communities and relationships in 7hills

It is a collective effort that has firstly created and secondly maintained the park as it is. That means that if these communities inside and around the park did not exist, this would show physically in the decay of the park. It would lead to a lack of identification or sense of belonging by the park users, which could result in poor maintenance and destructions of the facilities, as it is the case for many other public parks. This mutual achievement itself brings a strong core of people around 7hills together, while the newcomers to the park seem to adapt quickly to this familiarity and conviviality and also actively get engaged.

4.5.4 Range of Activities for Diversity of People

> *So the first question – and I think by far the most important question – about planning cities is this: How can cities generate enough mixture among uses – enough diversity – throughout enough of their territories, to sustain their own civilization? (Jacobs 1961, 144)*

As has become clear, the activities offered in the park (or surrounding it) by the team of 7hills are of a broad range. They flexibly respond to the individual needs and wishes of the people coming to the park and are therefore constantly adapted and amended. They can be divided into sports, arts (incl. arts-related education), recreation and social activities.

Sports	Arts	Recreation	Social
Skateboarding	Murals/graffiti	Reading books	Picnic
Basketball	Photography/developing film	Relaxing on grass	Meeting people
Free play	Digital animation workshops	Watching others	Conversations
	Other art workshops	Gardening	

Table 4: Activities as observed and told by research participants

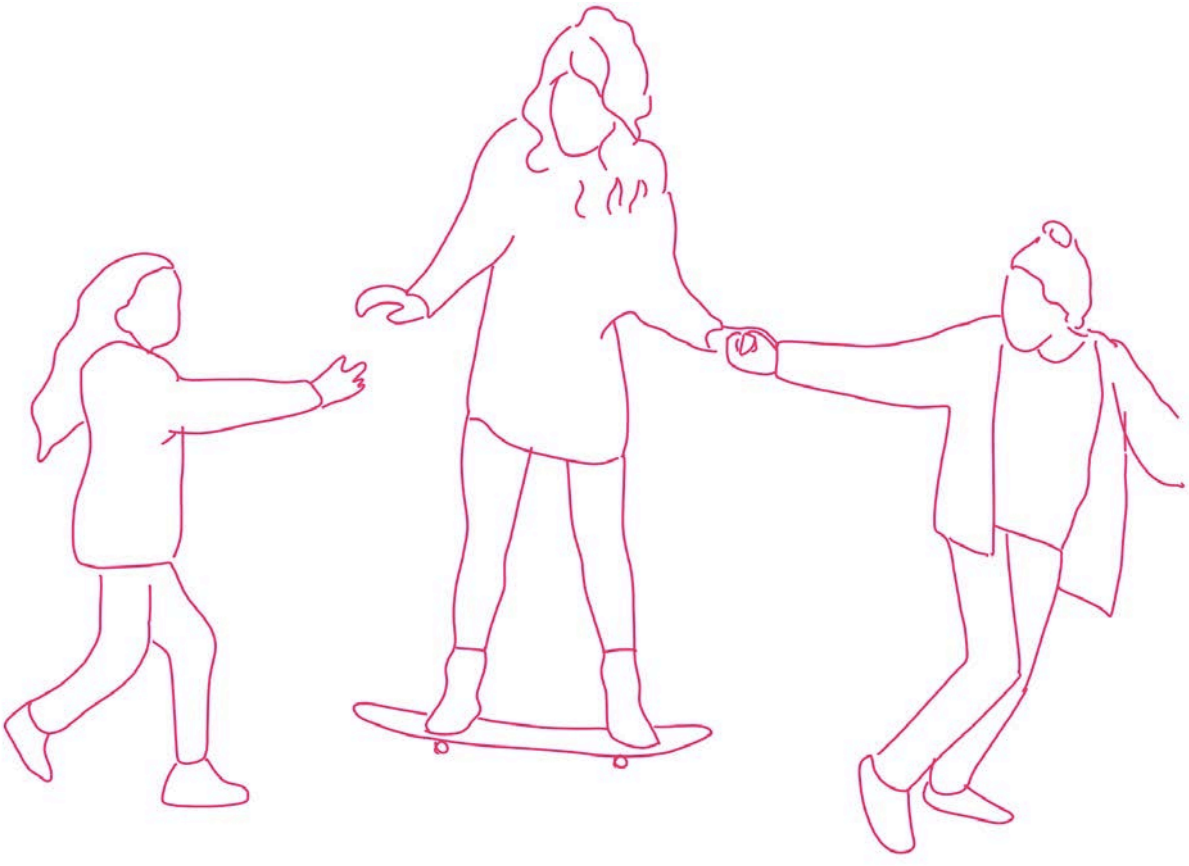
The diversity of activity offers attracts a broad range of people to the park, as possibilities for many people' interests or niches are apparent in the park. Also, the activities carried out here do not exclude any other activities. That "togetherness of place" improves the chances of a mingling of strangers with potentially different socio-economic profiles, ethnicities, and other backgrounds. Therein, certain activities, carried out by 'others' become visible to people who had not been familiar with them before. For instance, the Sudanese picnic is praised and appreciated by the other people around. A certain cultural empathy or curiosity towards the unknown can be read out of that enthusiasm. Also, Vaiou and Kalandides (2009, 18) argue that by "exposing their everyday practices in public, […] outsiders gain visibility and perhaps become less strange through contact. Their activity, coded private by locals, as well as their mere presence in that urban public space, constitutes a breach which provokes public discussion."

Throughout the research, many of the participants laid a strong focus on skateboarding when speaking about the park in general. In fact, when discussing the activities and their territories in the park, the skating area seems to be the core of the park. It is seen as the facility that the park is most famous for – probably not least because it is the element that the park project started with. Social media activities by the 7hills team furthermore advertise the skate park not only for Ammanis but in the context of an international skateboarding scene, so that it is given massive attention.

An interdisciplinary scholarship has researched the broad potentials and uniqueness of skateboarding culture (e.g. Borden 2020; 2014; Giamarino 2017; Schwier 2018; Beal 1995). Beside the aspects that have been mentioned, the sport of skateboarding generally redefines certain spaces and makes the city an "urban playground" (Carr 2010, 988). It furthermore is often connected to battles over space, especially in cities' spaces that are frequented also by other people who feel disturbed by sounds and motions of skaters around them. As the 7hills founder explains, the "relationship with skateboarding and space is extremely special". Regarding street skateboarding in Amman, the park's founder expresses that through skateboarding, the skaters add functions to certain spaces that were originally

meant for different purposes, as it is the case for Culture Street. Even though that practice requires negotiations with officials and steadfastness by the skaters, it is worth it for them, being on a constant search for new terrains. Part of the 7hills community that formed in the park, including people who learned skateboarding here, does not confine to the park as a skating area, but also goes on "street missions" on a regular basis, applying their tricks in the streets: "They go out to the streets. And we have street missions which is super cool. […] Because again, it's a skateboarding community" (7hills founder, male). The street missions also serve to attract the interest of people who see the skaters and who get curious about the activity. They try out tricks and engage in conversations with the skaters about 7hills, who actively advertise the park to them on these 'street missions': "If you have a skateboard, kids are always going to approach you and be like 'can I use your skateboard?' and so we always tell them 'come to the park, there is classes for free.' And this is one way to attract the kids to the park" (7hills founder, male).

Beyond the nature of skateboarding and its focus on space, the fact that many interviewees stated that places like 7hills – open, free of charge, and accessible for everybody to use – are rare in Amman. Even though not explicitly stated, one can conclude that the project around the 7hills park does sharpen the perception and critical view towards the Ammanis' access to public open space, which serves purposes of recreation. Furthermore, the people who were involved in shaping the skate park have created a safe space for themselves, as they have fought for their right to be in certain other places.



5
Discussion and Conclusion

The final chapter aims to discuss and theorize the key findings that derived from the empirical research. It also serves to implicitly revisit the initially posed research questions and summarize the research.

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

The following section returns to notions that were introduced in the sensitizing concepts, particularly on micropublics, to reflect the findings from 7hills on them. Therein, it demonstrates certain limitations of the concept and suggests how it could be improved and in which way the empirical results can contribute to that.

5.1.1 Common Ground through Activity and Aims: Micropublics in 7hills

Newcomers come to the park and are (at first) 'strangers' to the others and therewith constitute part of the public realm. However, as demonstrated in Chapter 2.1, smaller parochial realms were found in 7hills, which implicate a certain intimacy and familiarity. These realms consist of people who had been strangers to each other at first, but by developing and sustaining interactions, they formed parochial realms over time. This sub-chapter discusses the means over which this parochialization was facilitated.

What became apparent in the study is the fact that rather 'external' than internal impulses bring park users together. So, rather than own personal feelings, the surroundings, i.e. the park or activities, generate interactions. William Whyte (1980, 94) refers to the effect of a stimulus uniting two strangers as "triangulation." He defines it as follows: "the process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to talk to each other as though they were not." However, with that stimulus, he refers to physical objects or sights. When we look at the elements that provoke interaction between strangers and people of different backgrounds in 7hills, we find rather human activities than physical items to play a role. That leads us again to Ash Amin's concept of micropublics.

While some come to the park for skateboarding, others come to play basketball or simply watch what is going on around them. Furthermore, the park gathers and generates common aspirations among its users, like creating or extending skate facilities, or raising attention for the 7hills project amongst Ammanis. Within these shared activities and aims, micropublics are formed. As explained by Goffman's notes about the variety of interaction circles in Chapter 2.2, interactions can overlap. Similarly, a variety of micropublics that also overlap was found in the park. This shall be briefly illustrated by an

incident observed in the field work. A boundary of a micropublic could be drawn around a group of people sitting around the basketball court watching the others play while laughing, conversating and cheering together. They constitute a micro public, in the way that they all follow the same activity and interact about it. The temporal character of micropublics becomes visible, as this boundary was blurred and erased, as soon as the game was interrupted for a break, and the basketball players engaged in conversations with the people around the court. The basketball players then formed a new sort of micropublic together with their audience, redefined by them all through shifting their focusses. The activities, the watching on the one hand, and the basketball playing on the other, thereby melted into a new micropublic.

The observations and interviews revealed that while coming together through micropublics, people stop to focus on differences that elsewhere separate them from the 'others', and divert their attention on something else, namely the commonality. The common activities moreover provoke new ways of "being and relating" (Valentine 2008, 331; Wiesemann 2011, 6), characteristics of a person that have no impact on the common activity 'vanish.'

When reflecting on and contrasting with further examples of micropublics provided by various authors, the specificity of 7hills' micropublics can be highlighted. For instance, Fincher and Iveson (2008) mention libraries as micropublics. Here, people are asked to maintain a quiet setting and therefore not to verbally interact with one another. Thus, it can be suspected that a large share of library users goes there not to encounter others but to read and be alone. 7hills on the other hand is a place that people frequent – not only, but also – in order to encounter others and socialize, generating higher interaction densities. The activities offered in the park that form the core of the micropublics in part even require interaction amongst the people doing them. When there are too many people at the same time in the skate park, it has to be negotiated who uses the boards – and the space. The same goes for the basketball court, where teams are formed, and turns are being taken.

7hills also stands in contrast to community centers. Many community centers in Amman also offer sports and recreational activities like yoga classes, free play, meditation, as confirmed by one of the interviewees (NGO 1 employee, female), briefly, "purposeful organized group activity." Thereby, they also constitute micropublics, where people come together via a shared activity, but the differences to 7hills are immense. I use the particular example of community centers that are led by humanitarian

NGOs[43], where services and help are offered to refugees. A particular interview statement from the research (NGO 1 employee, female; cited in Chapter 4.2.1) about the "organic" character of 7hills, combined with the large share of refugees coming to 7hills suggest this comparison. Jordan, and Amman itself, have a multitude of those refugee community centers. What I identify as one of the main advantages of 7hills in contrast to those centers is that "Politics of Pity" (Boltanski 1999), which are common in the humanitarian context (i.e. Naylor 2011) are not apparent in the park. These politics of pity manifest the power imbalance between 'givers', or donors, and recipients of help. In the case of Jordan, for instance, this gap exists between the employees of refugee NGOs and the refugees themselves. The park tackles those power relations simply by the fact that it is open for everybody. Donors, as determined in chapter 4.2, are either less visible since they are not in physical proximity (international skate for development NGOs, GAM), or – those who are physically present in the park (7hills team, refugee NGOs) – give attention to meet everybody in the park on equal terms. The only hierarchies perceived are temporary ones during the skate classes between those who teach and those who attend them, as the latter have to follow the rules set by their teacher. However, as the research has shown, these relations are also fluid, as former 'students' with few skills improve to eventually become teachers in the program.

The institutionalized mode of operation, rigid schedules, few co-determination possibilities, general power imbalances between employees and recipients, and the refugee status as a qualification to 'be served' make it not as open and convivial, while, in contrast, Amin sees micropublics as a way to overcome manifested patterns and hierarchies. It can be said that community centers do not achieve this, while 7hills does. Those who are elsewhere harassed or discriminated, experience recognition in the park, especially if they achieve (individual) successes – no matter which part of the society they belong to. Thereby, park users gain empowerment and strength through experiences in the park. Seemingly 'fixed' notions are destabilized through the engagement in new activities. For instance, if a Sudanese refugee who is bullied at school becomes a really good skater and is praised by the others in the park, he or she might be defined by the others – but also him or herself – over those exceptional skills. The self-confidence gained within might furthermore help that person to react differently and stand his or her ground whenever being bullied.

It has to be noted that while people mingle and have meaningful encounters through shared activities, certain effects are also achieved amongst those people that do not necessarily engage in the same

[43] The most prominent examples are the so-called Community Support Committees (CSCs), led by UNHCR. There are 25 CSCs across Jordan, centered in host communities, serving around 87,000 individuals with "educational, awareness training, recreational, sports and cultural activities" (UNHCR 2019a)

micropublic, but whose micropublics co-exist in the park. The simultaneous presence of different people leads to the "throwntogetherness of place" (Massey 2005, 150–152), while the visibility of everyday practices carried out by cultural groups that are perceived as "others" in the park makes the group less strange to others, as "visibility also means familiarisation" (Vaiou and Kalandides 2009, 12).

Theoretical Contribution

The results have confirmed the assumption by Ash Amin that micropublics bring people together on the basis of commonalities that arise and become visible when people engage in the same activity. However, I identify certain limitations of the concept.

When looking at the differences illustrated by the example of community centers, the range on which micropublics can be positioned in regard to openness, their inclusiveness, or the degree to which hierarchies shape the interaction here proves to be broad. Especially in comparison with Ray Oldenburg's concept of third places, Ash Amin's micropublics lack the detailed descriptions of characteristics and certain parameters that would enable a clearer empirical identification, assessment and comparison of micropublics. Thus, I find Ash Amin's concept to be not elaborated enough to discuss the differences between them, and I suggest a more nuanced view on Ash Amin's micropublics.

Furthermore, Amin strongly ties his concept to a convivial togetherness between people of diverse cultural backgrounds on the base of dissolving stereotypes, while the results from 7hills have shown that people do not necessarily engage in conversations about their respective cultural norms and traditions (see Chapter 5.1.4). I want to highlight that the effects of micropublics in regard to pre-given attitudes towards strangers vs. enlightenment remain limited by giving an imaginary example. In 7hills, person A might convivially interact with person B (both from different ethnic backgrounds) about the park and the activity they carry out together. However, A might uphold certain stereotypes about B's ethnic group – as person A is either not aware of B's background, or if so, considers person B as an exception instead of generalizing the attributes A perceives as positive onto B's entire group (Valentine 2008, 332). However, if person A and B engage in a conversation about their cultural practices, person A is enlightened about the respective group and might put aside certain misconceptions and stereotypes. However, Pettigrew et al. (2007) argue that the reduction of stereotypes requires closer intergroup relationships, namely the friendship between – in this case – A and B. This example furthermore hints at a general discussion about the thematization of diversity that shall be picked up in the following sub-chapter.

Amin focusses the context of micropublics on multiculturalism, or ethnic diversity in cities. However, as the particular results from Amman have shown, the concept can be expanded to include other dimensions of diversity such as age and gender. For instance, the stereotypes against young men in Amman reflect that young men, who are stereotyped and therefore discriminated in Amman and to whom behavior like whistling after women and harassing people is commonly assigned, actively engage in social activities in the park, such as giving skate classes – even without the incentive of receiving skateboard equipment. Mostly, they teach young children who might elsewhere be warned against those exact young men. In contrast, the park allows the children to form their own independent opinion about their teachers.

5.1.2 Handling Difference and Multiculturalism

The empirical data has shown that people come from a total of eleven different countries of origin and four different continents. They have been socialized in different regions of the world and thereby also face different realities (challenges, citizenships, legal rights and opportunities) in Jordan. The park constitutes a reflection of the multiculturalism apparent in Amman that is furthermore visible among some of the practices and materialities in the park, i.e. by the mosaic art reflecting the traditional Arabic culture, by Sudanese food that is eaten in the park, or by the skateboarding that originates from western, specifically US-American culture. This diversity is by some explicitly appreciated, and by others not highlighted as something unique. It is even questionable, if the unfamiliarity with the respective ethnic or social background, gender or age of the other people is explicitly dealt with at all within the micropublics of 7hills.

It has been argued (e.g. Amin 2002; Amin and Thrift 2002; Isin 2002) that a way to thematize and negotiate difference is through cultural dialogue and exchange – and that the city, as the place of diversity along all axis (Wirth 1938), serves as an suitable site for that. Taking again refugee community centers or respective civil-societal organizations as a contrasting example of micropublics to expose 7hills' characteristics, they are places which actively confront their beneficiaries' ethnic or religious differences and put them in the foreground. This is for instance confirmed by a study by Hoekstra and Pinkster (2019, 237) which exposes how a Dutch community center in a multi-ethnic neighborhood fails to be inclusive and adequately address diversity. As many of those centers and organizations aim at supporting migrants' integration, difference often constitutes the key focus of the work. Sometimes, this is manifested in 'trainings' and courses that teach the immigrants the culture or codes of behavior of the host country, aiming at their assimilation[44] to the host country's culture and conventions.

[44] While host communities and arrival cities also provoke policy debates circling around the contested notion of assimilation, or the process of migrants to become similar to the host community by taking in and using their

Therein, these places relate merely to the set of characteristics a person already withholds, like skin color, ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status.

7hills on the contrary allows the people a break from those categorizations, as new personal characteristics or interests can emerge, rather than harping on about the inherited ones. In 7hills, the people's financial situation, their cultural habits, their refugee status, or their gender – in short, aspects that differentiate some park users from others and lead to their exclusion in certain contexts – are not made the subject of discussion, but rather ignored. This personal baggage of characteristics fades or almost vanishes as soon as the people step into the park. In that moment, the similarity that is between them overshadows their differences – also the ethnic or cultural ones. They are therewith granted the opportunity to break out of fixed patterns and re-define themselves to a certain extent, as Ash Amin generally ascribes as an effect of micropublics. Furthermore, as Vaiou and Kalandides (2009, 12) put it in their study of everyday practices by 'others' in Athens and Berlin, 7hills allows those people to "achieve visibility, access, recognition, communication, and eventually participation in the functions of public space, challenging strict divisions and exclusions."

Therewith, community centers can be unmasked as no eligible micropublics. According to Amin's definition, they focus too much on the pre-given set of personal features, and thereby do not allow for cultural displacement and destabilization. Simultaneously, Amin's description of micropublics fit well to describe what takes place in 7hills – a new common ground is formed and engaged in that overshadows those inherited features. In this context, I would also like to mention Lyn Lofland's notion of "civility towards diversity" (1989b, 464–65) as one of the key characteristics of the public realm. It implies rather indifference towards diversity than the specific appreciation of it, which results in the fact that everybody is treated universally equal, as it is the case in the park.

It can therefore be suspected, as Gill Valentine (2008) has also argued that this civility does not necessarily mean that prejudices against the different groups are changed; in fact, manifested values may remain the same throughout those encounters. Albeit indifference to ethnic or cultural difference can be identified on those encounters, differences remain in reality, even if overshadowed during those encounters. Also, it is important to note challenges that diverse groups of people face alongside their potentials. About intercultural communities in specific, Ian Grand (1999) summarizes,

customs and culture, this approach has failed to address and re-enforced crucial power imbalances. Moreover, it has trivialized migrants' respective experiences with racism and discrimination, as well as it seeks to abolish all cultural diversity. Assimilation can therewith be seen as the opposite to multiculturalism. Although apparent in many cities or countries of large migration influx, such as Jordan, I did not witness explicit calls for immigrants to assimilate to the Jordanian or Arabic culture throughout my research.

> *We must ... come to processes of learning how to collaborate, how to be together, both in our difference and in our unity. There is work to be done in which we hold the cultural differences in community and communication as both basic problematics to be worked out and opportunities for enrichment. Groups and communities coming together can be seen as places of emergence, creation and transformation. In this work we are concerned with the creative emergence and enlargement of the human spirit. The social and cultural psyches of persons are both held and worked with. Difference is celebrated and overarching commonalties participated in. In doing this work, we would not assume an a priori ability of individuals to be able to function well in groups or communities, nor an easy and smooth development in the life of groups and communities themselves. Rather there would be an ongoing learning and becoming, a practice of defining ourselves as communities. And it is on this note that I find possibility and hope. (484)*

This "learning" took place in 7hills as well, as it was reported that in the beginning, prejudices and racism were apparent that over time gradually disappeared. During my observation I did not witness any behavior or statements like that, as the people present in the park during my fieldwork had already learnt about the commonalities that connect them with the other park users. While 'overarching commonalities' are participated in through micropublics, difference is not largely celebrated and by most park users ignored.

To sum up, the diversity apparent in 7hills is rather a subtle underlying theme that is not explicitly addressed, while on the contrary, as Amin (2002: 970) argues, within micropublics like community centers, community gardens, youth clubs or neighborhood watch schemes, difference is actively negotiated. In 7hills, people put effort on focusing on commonalities while they ignore the differences. This phenomenon has also been discovered in other studies of encounters forming around micropublics as well, as for instance in study by Susanne Wessendorf (2014, 75–101), that examined encounters in the parochial realm of a super-diverse neighborhood in London. Returning to the example of community centers and the landscape of potential micropublics in Amman, 7hills seems to be one of the few places where this indifference is apparent. There are also numerous civil-societal organizations or humanitarian NGOs that invite refugees to critically and fruitfully discuss those cultural barriers, differences and stereotypes against strangers – instead forcing them to assimilate. Those particular places certainly have their *raison d'être*.

Skateboarding (almost) does not reflect any park user's cultural background, but still forms the most dominant activity in 7hills. By engaging in a foreign activity together, that most park users cannot claim to have 'inherited', a new common ground is formed, 'new attachments' are made and the discussion of one of the groups being superiorly connected while others are forced to assimilate to 'their' activity is not apparent. Except for the few western skaters that come to the park, all parties engage in a culturally foreign activity, which moves potential expectations, power relations and the notion of

assimilation out of the way. Skateboarding thereby provokes a specific form of “cultural transgression” and sets a comparatively enhanced opportunity to break out of fixed patterns, as new terrains are discovered together.

More and more scholars call for the need to address the diversity in multicultural cities. In regard to planning, and in a similar manner, Leonie Sandercock (1998; 2003) calls for postmodernist approaches to urban planning, in which – despite the extra effort – diversity is addressed and the needs of often marginalized communities are included. This planning envisions a “Cosmopolis” that bases on the “genuine acceptance of, connection with, and respect and space for ‘the stranger’ (outsider, foreigner), in which there exists the possibility of working together on matters of common destiny” (Sandercock 1998, XIV). To sum up, 7hills is a starting point in the city of Amman for this paradigm change. Its successes are known in the municipality and, as the GAM employee revealed, the concept should be copied and applied throughout the entire city. Through the governance model of 7hills, new paths can be taken towards the goal of “Cosmopolis”.

5.1.3 The Risk to Romanticize Public Space

This section serves to clarify five conceptions that might derive from the findings that should be interpreted cautiously. While the findings from 7hills are largely positive in regard to encounters in the public or parochial realm, limitations of the park have to be highlighted, in order to prevent rash idealizations of the empirical case study and parks in general.

The first caution required lies in generalizing parks and reflecting findings from 7hills on public space in general. The users of 7hills complained largely about the general lack of public space in Amman. When they elaborated on that issue, they referred specifically to neighborhood parks such as this one, while excluding transit spaces (sidewalks etc.), markets or plazas from their definition. And many authors cited in the thesis demand to differentiate between types of public space, saying that public space per se does not guarantee meaningful encounters between people. Public space can also be a neglected sidewalk with gangs standing on the sides who harass people that walk by; or it can be a large city square surveilled by security cameras resulting in the fact that nobody feels comfortable here; or it can be a park which certain groups have appropriated to the extent that they will not accept other groups and exclude them from the space. Also, when sticking to the concept of specifically neighborhood parks, it has to be emphasized that some people go to parks to be alone, “or even anti-social” (Amin and Thrift 2002, 137). However, obstruction of interaction was not so much the case in 7hills, as – with all its characteristics – it is rather a park that provokes social interaction.

So, a nuanced view is important in order to understand that the success of 7hills as bringing people of different ethnic backgrounds, age groups or gender together does not merely lie in the fact that it is a public space. What makes it special and 'successful' are the many specifies around the park, i.e. the activities, the spatiality (openness and visibility), the park's governance model and citizen participation, and the fact that the park is not a transit space but a place that people frequent only with an intention. Also, through the activities, as the previous section has shown, a community has arisen that strongly identifies with the park and most users. That is why the results of 7hills park cannot be generalized and do not reflect findings about public space in general, but rather about a very unique type of park, strongly tied to the initiative and project around it and the communities which have formed within the park. A merely spatial perspective, and this became clear throughout the thesis, is hard to apply on 7hills.

The second threat of misconception which was identified focusses on the type of contact of strangers and the exchange that is generated, already discussed in Chapter 5.1.4. It is important to look closer at the content of interactions in the park. Are difference and diversity really the subject here? Do people educate themselves about 'others', their cultures and traditions, their migration histories, their way of life, their values? The answer is no; difference and diversity are almost not at all thematized or negotiated in the park. Only one statement that proves differently appeared throughout the interviews of park users, when being asked what changed with him engaging in the skate program as a youth leader: "I know more about refugees and I have a background of what refugees face here and what skateboarding means to them." (YL 1, male, 18) As far as other observations and interviews revealed, nobody else in the park engages in conversations about the apparent multiculturalism, while only few people know about the respective backgrounds of the others. In fact, the multiculturalism is merely recognized and celebrated from the outside, i.e. municipal planners, NGOs and media articles, than by the park users themselves. It was observed that park users to a much bigger extent talk about the activities that are executed together. Those results implicate that the difference between the park users is completely overshadowed by their mutuality, which the park with its dimensions brings to the surface. The park therewith forms a sphere, in which all other personality features do not matter. However, it is questionable, if this a sustainable solution in regard to the overall aim to reduce stereotypes in Jordan, foster intercultural exchange, get acquainted with the stranger through cultural enlightenment.

The third potential misconception I would like to discuss is the assumption that the park has an impact also outside of its gates, for instance on the societal tensions among Jordanians. Thereby, I return to the question of sustainability posed above. By the safe space found in 7hills, the park users, especially

those who belong to marginalized groups in Amman, are given the illusion of a world and conviviality, which does not exist outside of the park gates. In 'reality', as soon as they leave the park and its community, Sudanese refugees are again discriminated, girls and women are harassed by men while children act restrained towards one another, hierarchies and segregations between socio-economic classes exist, young Arabic men will not be granted access to certain other spaces. For instance, the oftentimes discriminated young Arabic man is not confronted by exclusionary practices in the park, but still in numerous other places in Amman. With the park, young men have been given the opportunity to create and stay in a safe space with own rules and logics, without fearing to be denied access or without having to come in the company of females, so that they are accepted. As one of the park users, who is close friends with many of the other young men in the park tells about his friends, "I think they broke out of it by skating, because somehow ... they didn't want all that. All that macho posturing." (ES, male, 22) However, as soon as these young men look for variation in activities elsewhere than inside the park, they face those stereotypes again.

This is supported simply by the fact that 7hills has existed for six years already and still, experiences of racism and gender-specific harassment (occurring outside 7hills) were told in the interviews, probably carried out by those who are not part of the 7hills community. This suggests that 7hills embodies an exceptional space, a hybrid of a real and imagined utopian space, differing from its surroundings, as Edward Soja's concept of the Thirdspace also implies. Only by multiplying projects like 7hills across the city and thereby reaching more people, wide-ranging cohesive effects for the (fragmented) society could be achieved.

Tightly connected, the park bears the dangers of fueling hopes that remain unfulfilled. For example, if a member of a marginalized group is given the opportunity to participate in designing an urban neighborhood park through the collaborative approaches of the 7hills team, he or she might benefit from it by learning how to claim space, how to express certain visions and goals. However, as long as the Jordanian government does not grant them citizenship, they remain excluded in the 'real world' outside the gates of 7hills and the park again manifests as an 'exception.'

Fourthly, I want to clearly expose the limited extent to which an intermingling occurs. Not all groups of the Jordanian society mingle in 7hills, not least due to the fact that people are more likely to engage with people with commonalities and overlapping everyday realities (Carr 1992). It is therefore not very surprising that members of the royal family do not become friends with members of underrepresented and structurally discriminated refugee groups. Firstly, because members of the royal family and generally those people of a higher socio-economic status were rather seldomly seen in the park, as

reported by interviewees. Secondly, rapprochements occur gradually and, in most cases, only to the extent that people enjoy their convivial interactions inside of the park but do become friends 'outside the park.' It also has to be noted that a few people do not strive to become part of the parochial realm but prefer to remain socially distant.

The fifth, and conclusive clarification is that the 7hills park is unique in its design, the collaborative governance approach, the 'management' by an NGO that has certain goals beyond the creation of a park and is aware of the partly unsatisfactory situation of urban refugees – but also in its spatial and societal context. They work towards making the park a space of peaceful and convivial togetherness. It can under no circumstances be argued that the exact same means of the park would 'function' equally well in other contexts that are affected by societal fragmentation and cities that had been shaped neoliberal urban planning.

5.2 Conclusion: Micropublics' Contributions to Meaningful Encounters between Strangers

This study has examined the way in which a public neighborhood park serves to foster meaningful encounters between strangers and people of different ethnicities, ages and genders in the diverse city of Amman. This sub-chapter aims to sum up key findings and therewith respond to the research question "How does the 7hills Park in Amman foster meaningful encounter among different social groups and individuals?". In addition, it attempts to draw lessons from the case of 7hills for the future planning of multicultural cities and neighborhood park projects.

First of all, I would like to re-emphasize the context of the empirical case study that exposes the uniqueness of the 7hills park. Jordan has experienced several large waves of migration influx throughout the previous century. They led to a diverse Jordanian population, with large shares of refugees from Palestine, Syria and Iraq. Today, its society is influenced by racism against People of Color, structural discrimination against underrepresented refugee groups, tensions between Syrians and Jordanian host communities, the discrimination and (spatial) exclusion of Arabic young men, the harassment of and whistling after young women in Amman's streets, and general stereotypes due to a lack of knowledge about the 'others.' The emergence of 7hills furthermore followed decades of profit-oriented neoliberal urban planning which resulted in mega projects like Abdali or the emergence of shopping malls alongside other semi-public spaces. Truly public and open green spaces have meanwhile vanished or decreased in quality, leading to research respondents' perception of them being unsafe. Furthermore, Amman was influenced by urban development models that were applied in western countries in the mid-20th century. As a result, the city became entirely car-oriented. Today,

large multi-lane connecting roads separate neighborhoods, leaving few possibilities for pedestrian traffic that could result for instance in casual sidewalk encounters between neighbors.

7hills sets an antipole to all of this. Rather than merely a ‘successful public space’, 7hills embodies a unique project, realm, and microcosm, in which the issues named above are not apparent. This is due to four different dimensions, whose key factors that contribute to encounters between strangers shall briefly be summarized.

Spatially, the park’s visibility radiates a general openness and raises people’s attention and interest, while adding to a perceived safety of the park. Its central geographical location in Amman ensures improved access, so that people from different neighborhoods of Amman – and even beyond, as it is the case for refugees coming from Jerash Camp – come together here. Furthermore, the park is comparatively small, which enables the physical proximity of all park users and contributes to encounters. In regard to the park’s governance model, low hierarchies and locals’ co-determination possibilities foster a sense of ownership, broadly shared goals and the sustained engagement among the park users. These factors contribute to the conditions and quality of the park, its users’ regular visits that enliven the space, and the way they present it to outsiders. Additionally, they provide the park users with a sense of belonging. Through the democratic interplay of all actors and the citizen participation, the park has from the beginning conveyed that personal attributes that matter outside of its boundaries do not constitute the base of judgement inside of the park. Instead, they are either ignored or constructively ‘dealt with’ – from citizenship to language and culture, to expertise regarding skate park construction to gender and age. Culturally, the park reflects both, a cultural destabilization that allows new common grounds for encounters to emerge, and the tolerance and even appreciation towards those who hold on to their cultural traditions and actively make them visible in the park. Socially, the initial clarifications that racism and tensions are not tolerated in the park in the park achieved a general openness and tolerance amongst the park users towards ‘others. Moreover, the users’ individual development regarding encountering people on other grounds than those that matter outside the park, added to that. Also, the fact that park users themselves have initially been welcomed warmly by other park users provokes them to pass this openness on. Throughout the dimensions, especially the last one, the 7hills team applies a casual and ‘nonchalant’ way. Thus, they do not fear risks and are open towards actors and their particular requests approaching them from the outside. This ease it generally rare in the context of Amman’s other micropublics, as community centers are funded either by governments or highly institutionalized humanitarian NGOs. Those circumstances pressure them to apply rigid rules like a certain composition of citizenships among the beneficiaries.

In this park, and shaped by all those characteristics, the users form small micropublics around activities and projects that generate meaningful contact between the park users, which "actually changes values and translates beyond the specifics of the individual moment into a more general positive respect for – rather than merely tolerance of – others" (Valentine 2008, 325). These encounters actually go beyond the goals of mere 'respect' and 'tolerance', as certain relationships have arisen out of it, for instance, meaningful acquaintanceships within communities and even friendships – across different age groups, genders, and ethnicities. The park community partly bases on its' members large degree of identification with the park and other members. In the case of 7hills, a public park, typically used as an example for a spatial typology in the public realm, went from an unused space, neglected by the municipality, to a parochial space, providing a 'second home' for many of its regular visitors.

5.2.1 Implications

The findings from 7hills show it as a successful example for a public park with broad acceptance amongst its diverse users, its neighbors, the municipality, and amongst actors in the NGO sector. The following section shall show, what can decision makers and practitioners in the field of urban development can learn from 7hills, and which implications can be drawn out of this unique park project.

The Potentials of Citizen Participation

One thing that immensely adds to the park's popularity, is the fact that the community, or the people who want to engage, are allowed to co-determine about its development. This deliberative governance is widely praised by scholars and is ascribed large potentials. For instance, John Dewey idealized cities' neighborhoods as places of face-to-face-democracy (quoted in Mattson 1998, 4), while Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, in their book "Cities: Reimagining the Urban," elaborate on citizen participation as a key element of the "Democratic City" (2002, 154). They discuss concrete strategies to make cities and planning more democratic and mainly argue that citizen participation and deliberative planning can catalyze democratization, even beyond the local scale.

The 7hills park has been planned and still runs and adapts under a participatory and inclusive governance model instead of being directed by state-driven, universalist approaches. Agency is handed from municipal actors (GAM) to a small NGO (7hills) to individuals (park users), whose views and opinions are often left unexpressed – even in citizen participation procedures. This resembles Soja's Thirdspace, where "everything comes together" – in this case people who with different experiences and backgrounds. The "real and concrete", embodied by the municipality, institutional frameworks and regulations, and the "abstract and imagined," expressed by the park users, their aspirations and

individual spatial perceptions. In order for this coming together of two opposing poles not to result in a collapse, they are mediated through the 7hills NGO. The assumption can be made that this governance model reflects the category “partnership” on Sherry Arnstein's (1969, 217–21) “Ladder of Participation,“ as power is redistributed through negotiations of citizens and powerholders. In 7hills, everybody is welcome to approach the 7hills team with visions, ideas, or concerns in regard to the park equipment and other spatial features. That includes children, structurally-discriminated refugees and those people who are simply not aware of options to engage in urban development. This occurs in a low-threshold manner, which is important, because as Phillips et al. (2014) note, people hold unequal abilities and articulation skills to engage in processes of urban co-production. Furthermore, the park users are encouraged to engage in hands-on works in the park, like constructing new or adapting existent facilities.

What is interesting in this governance model is that the 7hills NGO plays a mediating role – between the park users whom they encounter regularly on the ground and the municipality. They furthermore filter the users’ concerns, communicating only some of them with the municipality: “And sometimes, because of the bureaucracy also, we sometimes tend to do guerrilla urbanism” (7hills founder, male). For instance, the needs of one of the youth leaders were met by the 7hills team directly by allowing him to implement a garden in the park. Little interventions like that are not asked permission for. So, while for some concerns and wishes, they spring into action themselves, for others, they approach the municipal planners, to communicate these needs of the park users. The latter occurred after the concern and wish by the park users was expressed to implement a fitness or work-out area, which the NGO 7hills communicated to the municipal planners. This particular concern was taken seriously as it was embedded in the municipal redesign plan in 2016.

A consequence of engaging park users in the planning process is their large identification with the park, which in turn can have positive effects on its maintenance. Those, who perceive a sense of belonging and ownership over a space are likely to take responsibility for it, for example by picking up trash. This is also reflected by Jane Jacobs (1961, 95), stating that “neighborhood parks themselves are directly and drastically affected by the way the neighborhood acts upon them.“

Fig. 36: Poster from May 1986 protests in France (Source: Letterform Archive 2018), volunteers engaging in the construction (Source: Confuzine 2019)

Besides, locals offer valuable neighborhood-specific knowledge. In the context of Amman, globally-operating NGOs like GIZ are given agency to design and plan local parks. Due to increased global policy mobilities, universalist planning approaches are circulated in the global context that the stakeholders operate in. Thereby, the local context is often neglected. The needs of the neighborhood can be met only by assessing them in participatory planning or construction processes. The manager of 7hills' skate program notes, "From this community, you can build stuff and develop these public spaces bottom-up. And by working with the community you can really look into what these people want and need, and from this, you can really start developing a public space!" (Zaatari Radio 2020) The quote highlights how successful the 7hills park actually meets the park users demands.

Furthermore, Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift highlight the need for making the 'officials'" learn from these community-based, democratic approaches of planning. They refer to it as "the institutionalization of effort so that the gains may be sustained" (Amin and Thrift 2002, 143). And the founder of 7hills aligns with that, stating that "the idea is to create this model for the city to kind of follow" (7hills founder, male). Therefore, I suggest general power shifts in the planning of places of encounter for the neighborhood – from global and municipal planning institutions towards the locals, specifically the actual park users.

Encounters in Public Space require Activity Offers

What the results have shown is that especially through micropublics – or the shared group activity – the 7hills park achieves to provoke meaningful encounters and interaction between people. Without the skating area, the basketball court, and the regular classes, construction projects, workshops or

events organized by the NGO, the park would firstly remain empty and unused. Secondly, the people who would still come to the park, would not be able to relate to a stimulus and meet each other on a new common ground. The founder of 7hills told that there are many small plots like 7hills in Amman, areas that are actually assigned to be parks, “but they are just not activated.“ This activation works only through the people who are attracted by the excessive offers in 7hills.

Thus, I suggest neighborhood parks to be equipped with facilities that enable and provoke certain activities – from table tennis tables to badminton nets, to areas for gardening, to walls that can be spray-painted. There are numerous other examples, in which little financial investment can result in large social effects. Furthermore, I suggest the ‘curations’ of those spaces through (civil-societal) actors that adequately represent the neighborhood, as the 7hills NGO. This works only if this actor does not territorialize the entire space without leaving opportunities for people who do not want to engage in the proposed micropublics. Through those actors, instructive offers could introduce the park users to foreign or until then unknown activities, might result in similar successes as they did in 7hills. Sometimes, this subtle guidance is needed in order to awaken the citizens’ motivation to engage in certain activities and try out new things – “to break out of fixed patterns”.

5.3 Considerations and Limitations of the Study

In the following, I would like to elaborate on key issues that impacted the research and limit the generalizability of the results. These are language barriers, the size of the sample, and the ever-changing nature of the case study.

As already highlighted in the methodology chapter, in which I mention particularly methodological considerations, language barriers existed in the fieldwork. For the majority of the park users, Arabic – a language I do not speak – is the mother tongue. That brought up two problems. Firstly, only three of the eleven in-depth interviews could be carried out in the native language of the participant. The others responded in English, their second language, which implies that their vocabulary was partly limited. Therefore, responses might not necessarily reflect exactly what the person would have aimed to express. Also, the questions had to be posed in simple vocabulary, so that the interviews generally reached only a certain depth. Secondly, the sample of participants for the in-depth interviews was limited, as many of the park users could not speak English at all. As a result, certain groups such as female skaters or young children are underrepresented in the sample of semi-structured interviews, and could only be questioned through Arabic surveys. Another issue, closely connected to the previous one, is the size of the sample from the quantitative survey, which is too small to be reliable. If more

time had been spent in the field, more people could have been reached; for instance, those, who were not there on the days that I went to the park.

Another concern is the comparatively short period of fieldwork of two weeks only, on which the research bases. The park undergoes constant changes like the adding of facilities, changes in the composition of users, plans by the municipality. Therewith, the results reflect almost a brief snapshot embedded in the overall developments of the park. Of those developments, only one of the many states could be examined. In fact, throughout and after the fieldwork, aspects were brought up that I wanted to follow, but regarding capacities, could not. One of those aspects was the COVID-19 pandemic and the government's strict measures that included a total lockdown and a week-long curfew, shortly after I had left the field. That led to the temporary closing of the park. The pandemic slightly invalidates the research's result regarding flat or non-existent hierarchies in the park's organization, due to the strengthening of the role of the 7hills NGO who actively had to control the access to the park by closing it. Also, when the skate program resumed after the nationwide lockdown beginning in March was gradually eased, as told by one of the research participants who I was still in touch with, strict rules were issued by the team, which exposed their role and emphasized hierarchies.

Generally, the 7hills park is with its characteristics and within its context very unique, which challenges its generalizability. Jane Jacobs (1961, 90) even reflects on the uniqueness of parks in general, saying "In certain specifics of its behavior, every city park is a case unto itself and defies generalizations. […] And they also receive differing influences from the different parts of their cities which they touch." Aspects that might have contributed to the success of this park but are potentially not apparent elsewhere are the fact that 7hills' context is a city with few public neighborhood parks and little 'competition', the inclusivity of the park embedded in a landscape of discriminatory and exclusionary spaces, the overall lack of activity offers for young people elsewhere in Amman, the new 'terrain' of bottom-up park initiatives by individuals. Simultaneously, I claim that certain elements from 7hills that have proven to contribute to conviviality and togetherness in the park are applicable elsewhere; for example, the shared focus on the same activity or the participatory planning approach. Thus, it is at least worth testing lessons learned from this park in other contexts.

5.4 Outlook

This research has brought up several questions in need of further investigation. For instance, I recommend further data collection on neighborhood parks in Amman in a quantitative research design. Many of the research participants complained about a lack of neighborhood parks, while the

GAM employee states that there are numerous projects like 7hills and that she “can count hundreds of projects that were done in the same way as their way in Samir Rifai” (GAM employee, female). To achieve clarity here, I suggest a mapping of neighborhood parks, also in order to spatially identify areas in Amman that lack this typology.

Another aspect that could not be followed upon in the scope of this study and due to language barriers and the explorative research design is the connection between micropublics in 7hills and the individual’s reflection towards reducing stereotypes about ‘strangers.’ In which way is the interaction generated in micropublics – so, with an activity, rather than the difference and multiculturalism as the focus – sustaining in a way that stereotypes are reduced? Existent theories in that regard could be tested here. In this research, I propose a distinctive view on children’s and adults’ stereotypes, as unfortunately, the results of this thesis mainly reflect children’s or young adults’ views on the other park users, while their parents and other adults in the park denied being part of the research.

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Appendix

Consent Form
List of Interviewees
Survey English
Survey Arabic
Survey Responses
Atlas.ti Overview of Codes

CONSENT FORM

Consent form to participate at a master thesis' research

Who I am:
I am Aline Fraikin, master student of urban and regional Planning at Technical University Berlin. My thesis focuses on the 7hills park in Amman and its role on the social life of its users.

How information will be used:
All collected data will be used for scientific purposes only and as explained by the researcher before the interview.

Data protection:
Data will be used scientifically at the university, and will not be shared with other parties without the consent of the participants. Moreover, real names and identifying information will be anonymized to protect the participants in any part of the written report. The researcher will not share your individual responses with anyone other than the research supervisors.

What are your rights:
Participation in this study is on a voluntarily basis. Thus, each participant has the right to withdraw or leave the interview at any time he or she wants. They also have the right to get in touch to hear more about the results and process of the study.
If you want to get to know more about the project, please contact me:
fraikin.aline@gmail.com, (+49 175 835 6993).

I have read the previous information and do not mind participating in the study.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Acronym used in text	Field of knowledge, role for empirical subject
7hills founder, male	Founder of the skate park and NGO
ES, male, 22	Perspective as an outsider and a friend of many of the park users; insights of developments of 7hills after the fieldwork and during COVID-19 lockdown
GAM employee, female	Getting to know the circumstances under which 7hills could be planned/was "handed over" to Zakaria
NGO 1 employee, female	NGO working with refugees, running two community centers and collaborating with 7hills
NGO 2 employee, male	NGO working with the Sudani community and collaborating with 7hills
UN Habitat employee, female	institutional level of collaborative park projects and the interface of refugee migration / city planning
YL 1, male, 18	Social media manager of 7hills, youth leader
YL 2, male, 16	Youth leader for skate classes
YL 3, male, 21	Youth leader from Finland substituting Kas (one of leaders)
YL 4, male, 24	Youth leader from the early days of the park, now living in England
Skate for Development NGO employee, female	Context of skateboarding for individual development

SURVEY ENGLISH (PAGE 1)

Gender:	Age:
Employment/school:	I live with _____

1. Where are you from? (since when in Jordan?)

   _____

2. In which neighborhood do you live? How do you **get here** (car/bus/walk)?

   _____

3. what does it mean to feel 'at home' somewhere? How do you experience that living in Jordan/Amman?

   _____

4. Where do you usually **meet friends**? (outside/in cafés/streets?)

   _____

5. How **often** do you come to this park?

   _____

6. How do you **know about the park** (friends/neighbors/organizations)?

   _____

7. How do you use this park? (skate/basketball/chill/meet friends/… ?)

   _____

8. Why is what you do here **important** to you?

   _____

9. Have you ever given or received a skate class? How was it?

   _____

10. How has the park **changed** since you first came here? If yes, how?

    _____

11. What does 7hills park mean to you?

    _____

SURVEY ENGLISH (PAGE 2)

	☺ Very much	Mostly yes	Mostly no	☹ Not at all
Did you help building/designing the park?				
Do you feel safe and secure here?				
How welcoming do you find this park?				
Do you identify with the space?				
Do you get mad when you see a person destroying things or throwing trash here?				
Do you have any friends here?				
Are those friends all from the same background as yours (origin, place of residence, gender)?				
Do you feel as part of the community here?				
Do you feel like the others understand you here?				
Are the others here willing to help out if you had an issue with something?				
Do you give back to the park somehow – by picking up trash, repairing things, giving skateboarding lessons?				
Do you trust the other people in the park?				
Would you offer the others your help, by teaching them something, lending a skateboard, etc?				

Thank you for your time! / Shukran!

SURVEY ARABIC (PAGE 1)

مسح لدراسة جامعية

العمر:	الجنس:
أعيش مع:	الوظيفة/ الصف المدرسي:

1. من أين أنت (من متى أنت في الأردن)؟

_____

2. أين تسكن؟ كيف تأتي إلى هنا (سيارة، باص، تاكسي، تمشي)؟

_____

3. ما معنى شعور "البيت"؟ هل هذا الشعور موجود في عمان؟

_____

4. أين تلتقي بأصحابك (البيت، في الخارج، المقهى...)؟

_____

5. هل تأتي إلى هذه الحديقة كثيرا؟ كل متى؟

_____

6. كيف عرفت عن هذه الحديقة (جيران، أصحاب، منظمة معينة)؟

_____

7. ماذا تفعل هنا في الحديقة (تزلج، كرة سلة، تلتقي بأصدقاء)؟

_____

8. ما مدى أهمية الحديقة لك؟ ولماذا؟

_____

9. هل سبق أن أخذت درس تزلج أو أنت اعطيت درس؟ ما كان شعورك؟

_____

10. كيف تغيرت الحديقة منذ أول ما كنت تعرفها؟

_____

11. ماذا تعني لك الحديقة والتزلج؟

_____

SURVEY ARABIC (PAGE 2)

	☺ كثيراً جداً	كثيراً	نوعاً ما	☹ أبداً
هل ساعدت في بناء الحديقة؟				
هل تشعر بالأمان هنا؟				
هل الحديقة مرحبة بالناس؟				
هل تشعر أنك مرتبط بالمكان؟				
هل تنزعج إذا رأيت أحد يوسخ أو يخرب المكان؟				
هل لديك أصدقاء في الحديقة؟				
هل أصدقائك في الحديقة من نفس بيئتك (مكان السكن، البلد، الجنس)؟				
هل تشعر أنك جزء من المجتمع هنا؟				
هل تشعر أن الأخرين يتفهمونك هنا؟				
هل الناس هنا تساعد الأخرين عند الحاجة؟				
هل أنت تحاول أن تفعل الخير للحديقة (تنظيفها، إعطاء دروس تزلج، إصلاح أشياء في الحديقة)؟				
هل تثق في الناس هنا؟				
هل تقبل على مساعدة الأخرين (إعطاء دروس، إعارة لوح التزلج...)؟				

شكراً لتعاونكم

SURVEY RESPONSES

Case	gender / age / other info	1. where from? Since when in Jordan?	2. where do you live	2b. How get here	3. what does "feeling at home" mean?	3b. Is Jordan/ Amman that to you?	4. where do you meet friends?	5. how often come to this park?	6. how do you know about park?	7. how do you use park?	8. why is that activity important?	9. have you given/ received a skate class? How was it?	10. has the park changed since you first came here?	11. what does 7hills mean to you?
1	11, lives with family	born in Jordan	Jabal Al Weibdeh	walk	feeling well	yes	school and skate park	3 times a week	friends	skate	very important, because I skate in it	yes, it was very well	nothing changed except for the painting/murals changes	everything!
2	24, m, university student	born in Denmark, in Jordan since some weeks	Jubeihah	bus	that I can relax and be myself		university and skate park	2-3 times a week	organization "SkatePal"	skate and chill	to learn Arabic and to meet people	both, it was wonderful	nothing changed	place to be and hang out
3	14, f, lives with mother, goes to school, "Ramla"	born in Somalia, came here 11 years ago	2nd circle	walk	yes, sure, I feel that every day	yes, sure, I feel that every day	outside	2 times a week	friends	skate and basketball	it's very important because I love it	yes, given, it felt very good	nothing changed	something so important for me
4	21, m, university student, lives in shared flat	born in Germany, came here 1 month ago	Jabal Amman	walk			skate park	4 times a week, as often as possible	social media (instagram)	skate	because I love it	yes, it was nice, but in Germany	nothing changed	the place to be
5	19, m, high school, lives with parents	born in Bangladesh, has lived in J. all his life	Jabal Al Weibdeh	walk	warm, amazing		outside	3 times a week	friends	basketball, chill, meet friends	spending the extra time meaningful instead of wasting it	no	adding the basketball court	warmth, happiness
6	29, m	born in Jordan, all his life		walk, scooter	skating means home		skate park, Shmeisani	every day	Zakaria	skate and meet friends	love skating	yes	small changes	fun
7	18, m, college student LTUC, lives with family	born in Spain, came here 14 years ago	Jabal Al Hussein	walk		living in Jordan is quite hard	outside, in cafés, bars	too often	looking up skateparks on Internet	skate	improving skills and having fun	yes, sometimes	paintings/murals	a place to meet friends and spend a good time
8	15, m, 8th grade, family	born in Jordan, all his life	Jabal Al Qussor	walk		yes	outside	every week	certain organization (3rd option)	skate	beautiful	no	(incomprehensible)	amusement
9	15, 9th grade, f	born in Jordan	Jabal Al Qussor			yes		every week		skate		yes		fun
10	15, 9th grade, lives with family	born in Jordan	Jabal Al Qussor	walk	feels good	yes	outside	every week	certain organization	skate	beautiful park	good	yes	part of my life
11	16, m, 10th, lives with family	born in Jordan	Jabal Al Qussor	walk		yes	outside	every week	certain organization	skate	beautiful park	no	yes	beautiful, good
12	14, 9th, lives with mother	born in Saudi Arabia	Jabal Amman	walk		yes	outside		certain organization	meet friends	It's very important to me	yes, gave, I was extremely happy	no	it's very important to me
13	17, m, 10th grade, lives with family	born in Sudan, since 6 years	Jubeibah	walk		yes	at home, outside	everyday	alone	skate	very good	a lot, gave	yes, for the better	it's important because it's my sport and I love it
14	14, f, 8th grade, lives with family	born in Sudan, since 2015	Jabal Amman	walk	security and comfort, best feeling in the world	yes	outside	2 times a week	certain organization	everything	very important	yes, gave, I felt happy and proud	a lot of things changed	means everything beautiful
15	18, m, 12th grade, lives with family	born in Jordan	Jabal Amman	walk		yes	outside	once a week (Thursday)	from a friend	meet friends	very important because I meet my friends here	yes, I took a lesson and it felt great	yes, a lot	it means a lot to me
16	18, m, lives with family	born in Palastine	Jabal Al Hussein	walk	family		outside	2 times a week (Thursday and Saturday)	friends	skate, basketball	happiness	no	things got reinforced	a lot
17	12, f, 6th, lives with her mother and sister	born in Somalia, since 6 years		walk	in Amman		outside	sometimes	certain organization	skate	because it teaches me good things	I took a skating lesson and I was very happy	nothing	it gives me self-confidence and social status
18	f	born in Palestine	South Marka	taxi	Home is a beautiful thing and exists in all countries		in skating park	2 times a week (Tuesday and Thursday)	club	meet friends, play basketball, skate on my board	the park is one of the most important things in my life because I suffer from a psychological condition	no	it hasn't	it's one of the most important things in my life because I do things and practice hobbies that I like
19	18, m, senior high school student, lives with family	born in Syria, came here 10 years ago	walk		yes		outside, in Cafés, streets	2 times a week	friends	basketball	practice opportunity (plays in basketball club)	no	I don't know	
20	20, m, visits an English course	born in Sudan, came here in 2013	Jabal Al Hussein	walk			outside	2 times a week	friends	basketball	I love it	met and made friends	a lot	
21	23, f, intern at UNICEF, lives alone	born in California (USA), came here four months ago	Jabal Al Weibdeh	walk		the Sawiyan Community gives that feeling	7hills, Jesuit Center, cafés	2 times a week	organization Sawiyan	at first as a volunteer for Sawyian	it creates community	yes, fun!	adding the basketball court, now we can sit and play	it's a place to hang out and create a community. The park is therapeutic
22	25, m, High school, Lives with friends	born in Sudan, since 2013		walk	Home is a place where you feel isolated	This feeling is everywhere in Amman	outside, in Cafes	once a week (Saturday)	friends	play basketball	making new freinds	no	yes, it has and still changing by building new play fields	enjoying the holiday, and meeting friends in a chilled atosphere
23	15, f, lives with family	born in Sudan, since 1,5 year	Jabal Al Weibdeh	walk		yes	outside	3 times a week (Saturdays, Teusdays, and Thursdays)	neighbours	play basketball, skate	I don't know	yes	I don't know	it means a lot to me
24	13, m, 7th grade, lives with family	born in Syria, since 2013	Alshmesani	walk		no	outside	every week	friends	play basketball	no	no		sport
25	25, f, graphic designer, lives with family	born in Palestine	Jabal Akbarah, Amman	walk, with car		yes	outside	once a week (Saturdays)	friends	play basketball	it's very important	yes, I felt happiness, love, and friendliness	it has changed for the best	love
26	17, m, 10th grade, lives with family	born in Jordan	Shmesani	trasportation, walk, car, taxi		no	outside or at home sometimes	not very often	friends	play basketball, skate, meet friends	I want to win and make friends	no	it was beautiful	something fun and great
27	18, m, 10th grade, lives with family	born in Syria, since 7 years	Shmesani	walk		no	home, outside, cafe	not very often	friends	play basketball	along with friends it's very important because it's for amusement	I give lessons	I know it since not so long	a fun place
28	19, 10th grade, lives with family	born in Sudan, since 6 years	Jabal Hussein	taxi		yes	outside	once a week (Saturday)	friends	play basketball	because I learn skating and a lot of things	yes I took a lesson and gave a lesson	it changed in basketball	I meet friends

Case	gender / age / other info	from _____	did you help building/designing the skate park?	do you feel safe and secure here?	how welcoming do you find this space	do you identify with it?	do you get mad when you see a person destroying stuff?	do you have any friends here?	are those friends from same background as you? (Gender, place of residence,	do you feel as part of the community here?	do you feel like the others understand you here	are the others willing to help you out if you had an issue with sth?	do you give back to the park somehow?	do you trust the others in the park?	would you offer the others your help?
1	11, lives with family	born in Jordan	1	4	4	4	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	2	4
2	24, m, university student	born in Denmark, in Jordan since some weeks	1	4	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	4	3	4	4
3	14, f, lives with mother, goes to school, "Ramla"	born in Somalia, came here 11 years ago	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	4	3	4
4	21, m, university student, lives in shared flat	born in Germany, came here 1 month ago	1	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	19, m, high school, lives with parents	born in Bangladesh, has lived in J. all his life	1	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	4
6	29, m	born in Jordan, all his life	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	1	3	4	3	4
7	18, m, college student LTUC, lives with family	born in Spain, came here 14 years ago	2	4	4	2	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	4
8	15, m, 8th grade, family	born in Jordan, all his life	1	3	3	1	3	1	3	3	3	1	3	1	3
9	15, 9th grade, f	born in Jordan	1	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
10	15, 9th grade, lives with family	born in Jordan	2	3	4	4	4	2	2	4	3	3	3	4	3
11	16, m, 10th, lives with family	born in Jordan	2	3	3	2	3	1	3	3	1	3	3	1	3
12	14, 9th, lives with mother	born in Saudi Arabia	1	4	4	2	4	4	2	4	2	4	4	2	4
13	17, m, 10th grade, lives with family	born in Sudan, since 6 years	3	3	4	4	4	2	4	2	1	3	4	1	4
14	14, f, 8th grade, lives with family	born in Sudan, since 2015	2	4	4	3	4	4	2	3	3	4	4	4	4
15	18, m, 12th grade, lives with family	born in Jordan	2	4	4	3	4	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	4
16	18, m, lives with family	born in Palastine	2	3	4	4	4	4	2	4	2	4	3	3	1
17	12, f, 6th, lives with her mother and sister	born in Somalia, since 6 years	1	2	3	3	4	4	2	2	2	2	4	2	3
18	f	born in Palestine	1	4	3	4	4	4	2	3	4	3	2	4	2
19	18, m, senior high school student, lives with family	born in Syria, came here 10 years ago	1	3	4	2	3	4	1	2	3	3	1	3	3
20	20, m, visits an English course	born in Sudan, came here in 2013	1	4	4	4	1	4	1	4	4	4	4	3	4
21	23, f, intern at UNICEF, lives alone	born in California (USA), came here four months ago	1	4	4	4	3	4	1	4	3	4	4	4	4
22	25, m, High school, Lives with friends	born in Sudan, since 2013	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
23	15, f, lives with family	born in Sudan, since 1,5 year	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
24	13, m, 7th grade, lives with family	born in Syria, since 2013	1	3	3	2	2	2	4	1	1	2	1	2	2
25	25, f, graphic designer, lives with family	born in Palestine	2	3	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	4
26	17, m, 10th grade, lives with family	born in Jordan	1	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2
27	18, m, 10th grade, lives with family	born in Syria, since 7 years	1	2	1	2	4	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2
28	19, 10th grade, lives with family	born in Sudan, since 6 years	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	2	3	3	4	3	4

ATLAS.TI OVERVIEW OF CODES

Color	Name	Frequency	Density	Groups	Description of the code
○	7h as a Lab to experiment	15	4	POLITICAL: Governance	Alternative forms of empowering minority groups through e.g. participation
○	7h: "Everybody gets along"	3	3	SOCIAL: Relationships	Descriptions about the types of relationships (friendships, casual contact, etc)
●	7h: "Rules"	18	2	SOCIAL: Conviviality, SOCIAL: Social Tensions	Anything related to social „misbehavior" in the park and rules that Zakaria or the youth leaders have put up
●	7h: Benefits of the Youth Leader Program	15	0	POLITICAL: Governance, SOCIAL: Individual Development	descriptions of the youth leader program where young teenagrers teach other children skateboarding in 7hills park
●	7h: Central Location of the Park	5	3	SPATIAL: Macro	geographical location of the park within the city of Amman
○	7h: Challenges: Unsocial Behaviour	5	4	SOCIAL: Social Tensions	examples of unsocial behavior and challenges leading to fights or hostile situations
●	7h: Communcation/Interaction/Negotiations	24	4	CULTURAL, SOCIAL: Conviviality, SOCIAL: Individual Development	interaction happening in the park (between whom, how, etc)
●	7h: Community	45	13	SOCIAL: Conviviality, SOCIAL: Relationships	Statements hinting at a sense of community being apparent in the park
●	7h: Construction by a Variety of People	14	7	POLITICAL: Governance, SPATIAL: Micro / Design of Park	The initial construction process of the park and recent repairs/additions to the park
●	7h: Cross Generational Users	7	1	SOCIAL: Conviviality	Statements about the different age groups amongst the users and people coming to the park
●	7h: Destructions taking place	4	3	CULTURAL, SOCIAL: Social Tensions	observations and statements about behavior where somebody would destroy the park
○	7h: Empowerment for the children	12	2	CONTEXT: Political Situation of Refugees in Jordan, POLITICAL: Governance, SOCIAL: Individual Development	Alternative forms of empowering minority groups through e.g. participation
●	7h: Financing through Donations	11	0	POLITICAL: Governance	statements about donations and partner NGOs or private people who donate equipment and money for 7hills
○	7h: Friendships	5	1	SOCIAL: Relationships	Descriptions about the types of relationships (friendships, casual contact, etc)
○	7h: Friendships beyond borders of park	6	1	SOCIAL: Relationships	Descriptions about the types of relationships (friendships, casual contact, etc)
●	7h: Functions/Activities in the Park	32	0	ACTIVITIES	mentions of functions and activities that people do in the park
●	7h: Future Plans of Extension and more skate parks	16	0	SPATIAL: Macro	Future aspirations or visions about the 7hills park
●	7h: General Info	19	0		General information about the park
○	7h: Local Governance	6	0	POLITICAL: Governance	Alternative forms of empowering minority groups through e.g. participation
●	7h: Mixing of Genders	11	1	SOCIAL: Diversity in the Park	Gender issues that appear in the park
●	7h: NGO Partnerships	21	0	POLITICAL: Governance	Statements about the partnership of 7hills and refugee-related NGOs in Amman
●	7h: Not Designated Refugee Project	5	0	CONCLUSION	Statements about 7hills being a place where many refugees go to, but which is not a refugee-related institutionalized NGO
●	7h: Openness / Accessibilty	20	3	SOCIAL: Conviviality, SPATIAL: Macro	descriptions about the access to 7hills park (incl. for newcomers) and the character (open and welcoming/closed)
○	7h: Participatory Planning / Construction	9	6	POLITICAL: Governance	Alternative forms of empowering minority groups through e.g. participation
●	7h: Planning	28	0	POLITICAL: Governance, SPATIAL: Micro / Design of Park	Everything connected to the process of planning the 7hills park (actors involved, experienced made, governance)
●	7h: Positive Attitude/Opinion about Park by Users	16	1	SOCIAL: Conviviality	Positive (partly abstract) emotions and expressed and associated with about the 7hills park
●	7h: Positive Image	4	0		Statements about 7hills from people who do not frequent the park (regularly); image of the park to „outsiders"
●	7h: Safe Space	10	2	SOCIAL: Conviviality	Statements about the park as being a safe space in various contexts: safe from car traffic, from racism, from harrassment
●	7h: Specifities	11	0	SPATIAL: Micro / Design of Park	Things that get highlighted as unique about 7hills
●	7h: Users feel Ownership and identify with Park	9	3	SOCIAL: Conviviality, SOCIAL: Individual Development	Statements that reveal a certain ownership, responsibility and identification with the park
●	7h: Users of the Park	56	4	SOCIAL: Diversity in the Park	The different user groups and people frequenting the park
●	7h: Week Schedule	11	1		the schedule of skate classes and NGOs time slots in 7hills park
○	7h: Zakaria as they key person	3	0	POLITICAL: Governance	examples of park founder being a central figure in the project of 7hills, networking activities by him
○	7hills: Users traveling distances to get here	4	1	SPATIAL: Macro	Statements about the distances and modes of mobility, including routes from home to the skate park
○	7hills: Users who can walk here	4	2	SPATIAL: Macro	Statements about the distances and modes of mobility, including routes from home to the skate park
●	Amman/Jordan: Public Park Development	31	2	CONTEXT: Amman's Public Space	Policies and visions pursued by governmental and municipal institutions regarding the development of public parks
●	Amman: Few Public Spaces outside the center	28	4	CONTEXT: Amman's Public Space	The presence/scarcity of public spaces in Amman
●	Amman: Heterogenous Population	5	0	CONTEXT: Diversity	Descriptions of the various backgrounds of people who live in Amman
●	Amman: Long Distances and Weak Tramsport System	2	0	SPATIAL: Macro	Statements about the distances and modes of mobility, including routes from home to the skate park
●	Amman: Meeting Points Beyond Parks	28	0	CONTEXT: Amman's Public Space	Places that people frequent to meet friends and encounter people
●	Amman: Neighborhoods	12	3	SPATIAL: Macro	mentions of the different neighborhoofs in Amman
●	Amman: Residential Segregation	7	1	SOCIAL: Social Tensions	Aynthing related to residential segregation of the city of Amman according to categories of ethnicity, wealth, cultural background
○	Challenges for partnership GAM - 7hills	10	0	POLITICAL: Governance	collaboration challenges that occur in the partnership of the 7hills NGO and the GAM
●	Discrimination against Minority Groups	12	0	SOCIAL: Social Tensions	general statements about discrimination experienced, observed or witnessed that goes against particular people/social groups
○	Experiences with Racism at School	1	0	CONTEXT: Political Situation of Refugees in Jordan	The experiences made and statements about refugee children attending school
○	GAM critizising 7hills	9	0	POLITICAL: Governance	negative statements about the park from GAM
○	GAM's redesign approach for 7h	6	0		incident in which the GAM wanted to redesign the park and regarding miscommunicatiosn between 7hills and GAM
●	High Relevance of Sports for Individual and Social Well-Being	5	0	SOCIAL: Individual Development	The benefits that sports bring along and the relevance of sports expressed by people
●	Jordan: Governmental Refugee Policies	9	1	CONTEXT: Diversity	Policies issued by the Jordanian goverent regarding refugees (work permits, residency etc)
●	Jordan: Tensions between Host Communities and Refugees	7	5	SOCIAL: Conviviality, SOCIAL: Social Tensions	Statements about the tensions in Jordan's society
●	Jordan: Weak Economy	2	0	CONTEXT: Political Situation of Refugees in Jordan	Issues related to Jordan's economy: infrastructure/labour market/...
●	Mingling of different Groups	28	2	SOCIAL: Conviviality, SOCIAL: Relationships	The co-presence/mingling of different social groups or individuals with different backgrounds
○	Municipal Motives and Goals in Park Development	6	0	POLITICAL: Governance	GAM's statements about goals and future aspirations for the park
○	Municipal Responsibilities in 7h Park	2	0		what is the role of GAM for the Samir Rifai park? What do they pay?
●	NGOs	11	2	POLITICAL: Governance	general statements about the work of NGOs
●	NGOs pursue Community Building	7	0	POLITICAL: Governance	Community-building concepts/programs in the context of refugee NGOs in Amman
●	NGOs: Program and Activities	9	0	POLITICAL: Governance	The prorgams and activities that NGOs offer to urban refugees living in Amman
○	No contract for Responsibilities in the Park	15	0	POLITICAL: Governance	proofs and statements about the (legal) nature of the partnership
●	Public Spaces against Prejudice	12	5	POLITICAL: Governance, SOCIAL: Conviviality	Statements that proof that public spaces can serve to fight prejudices and promote meaningful encounters between strangers
●	Racism against Sudanese and Somalis	6	2	SOCIAL: Social Tensions	Discrimination that bases on racist categories against another individual/social group
○	Refugee kids not attending school	4	0	CONTEXT: Political Situation of Refugees in Jordan	The experiences made and statements about refugee children attending school
●	Refugees: different rights for "minoritiy refugees"	10	0	CONTEXT: Political Situation of Refugees in Jordan	statements from / about minority refugees (Yemeni, Sudanese, Somali)
●	Refugees: Everyday Life	11	0	CONTEXT: Diversity, CONTEXT: Political Situation of Refugees in Jordan	Work, school, or other activities that belong to the everyday routines of urban refugees in Amman
●	Refugees: Iraqi	3	1	CONTEXT: Diversity	Statements about Iraqis living in Jordan and using the park
○	Refugees: No Sense of Home	1	0	CONTEXT: Political Situation of Refugees in Jordan, SOCIAL: Social Tensions	Expressed feelings by refugees about feeling as if they are at home in Jordan or feel like guests
●	Refugees: Sudanese	14	2	CONTEXT: Diversity, CULTURAL	Statements about Sudanese refugees, as they get mentioned apart or sometimes even in opposition from other groups of refugees
●	Refugees: Urban	6	6	CONTEXT: Diversity	Statements about urban Refugees in general
○	Refugees: Waiting to be resettled	2	0	CONTEXT: Political Situation of Refugees in Jordan	Expressed feelings by refugees about feeling as if they are at home in Jordan or feel like guests
●	SB as a foreign/western culture	2	0	CULTURAL	Anything related to the topic of culture and potential cultural backgrounds or even differences
●	SB: before 7h came, there was only street skating in Amman	8	0	CULTURAL	Statements about skateboarding in the streets of Amman
●	SB: Benefits Beyond Learning SB skills	15	0	SOCIAL: Individual Development	general benefits that children gain in skateboarding expect for learning the sports
●	SB: SB in Middle East has short history	8	0	CULTURAL	Skateboarding as a relatively young sports in the Middle East
○	Strict Regulations for Public Parks	1	0		statements about the requirements for public parks enforced by the GAM
●	Theory: Meaningful Contact/Relation Types	5	4	SOCIAL: Conviviality	Descriptions about the types of relationships (friendships, casual contact, etc)
●	Theory: Micro-Publics	7	0	SOCIAL: Conviviality	initial proofs for Ash Amin's concept of Micro-Publics
●	UN Habitat has Public Spaces for Social Cohesion Project	8	4	CONTEXT: Amman's Public Space, POLITICAL: Governance	UN Habitat's Project to foster social cohesion in host communities by creating public parks