













We dedicate this publication to all refugees who have lost their homes and had to build new ones. It is with this in mind that we have compiled the data, some are valued community mementos and some are new, they all, however, reflect the built environment of the current political situation.

This is a celebration of an exceptional sharing from those who have contributed their effort and knowledge, in addition to others who have undisclosed their lives.

*Geographical note: In the broadest of strokes, the context for the narratives of the refugees in Jabal Al Natheef, covering a fragment of the camp in Jordan.*

**Arini**

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STRATEGIC DESIGN IN INFORMAL CAMP  
DEVELOPMENT: INVESTIGATING THE DIMENSIONS  
OF POLITICAL, ARCHITECTURAL,  
AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

*In the case of the Palestinian Arab refugee camps -they are prevailing features of the urban structure of these states. [...] The camp cities, both small and large, can be considered an urban conglomeration in the demographic and ecological sense. [...] These cities represent a unique urban pattern, which has special features, problems, structures, and consequently requires a special classification in the study of urban societies in the Middle East."*

**Al-Qutub, 1989: 91, 107**



The legacy of the turbulent nature of politics in the Middle East can be seen in the continuous scores of refugee camps scattered around the area. These refugee camps whether formalized or not are mostly marginalized in their host society. The refugee camps community, crystallizing the geo-political stakes both on the regional and national scales, is a privileged field of investigation which makes it possible to raise many questions dealing with the relationship between refugees own socio-political dynamic, political factors and most importantly space and physical aspects.

Most of the refugee camps in Jordan are now part of the urban environment. On one hand, these clusters appear to be segregated and marginalized due the often-changing modes of control, spatial qualities and the legal status of their inhabitants. On the other hand, refugee camps are integrated in their context through the growing presence of refugees, the daily mobility of the inhabitants, and the development of commercial activities that blur the boundaries of the refugee camps -making it a part of the city. Strategic design as part of community development has become increasingly common among cities attempting to enhance the impact they want to create, social organizations try to push the social resources of camp areas. But the transformation of refugee camps into urban areas has not been adequately studied as such except in a few cases; in this project we raise questions that address the complex relationship between the refugees owns socio-political dynamic and their built environment.

Mapping Jabal Al Natheef project investigates and compiles data in the pursuit of interventions that are scenario and time based. Considering design as an open act of capacity building, we examine mapping processes as active agents of change. This presents a chance for us urbanists, architects, and designers to understand the spatial dynamics of a community -that evolved to become integrated into the economic activity and into their urban environment- consequently unlock its socio-economic opportunities.

This project introduces two phases of intensive investigation and extensive exploration.

In Phase I, which began in winter 2012, we carried focus groups, discussions and Mapping Jabal Al Natheef workshop -Autumn 2013-. At the end of this, we bring forward this publication to present the research the contributors and we have been working on. In Phase II, which begins the following winter, Arini team will continue its exploration of strategic design as an instrument engaging both material and social change; social scenarios will be coupled with novel design proposals to develop physical interventions concerned with the everyday life of the camp residents. The iterative methodologies focus on investigations of spatial, structural and material organisation, engaging in discourses of architecture and urbanism.

**Arini**

**\* Arini is a nonprofit private study and research institution; that facilitates, promotes and provides workshops in the fields of; architecture, urbanism, art and design. Led by three partners – Mohammad Aljabi, Liyan Aljabi, Heba Alnajada – Arini supports the design realm by assisting rising architects, artists and designers to achieve their full potential. It seeks out aspiring designers from around Jordan and brings them together with local and international academicians and professionals, for workshops of creative collaboration. These workshops bring forward live projects that are reflected in Jordan's urban and economic life.**





APPROACH,  
METHODOLOGY,  
GOALS  
AND  
OBJECTIVES

"Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings. We are at a point in our work when we can no longer ignore empires and the imperial context in our studies."

**Culture and Imperialism –  
1978 Edward Saïed**



Upon first encountering Jabal Al Natheef one is struck by its apparent contradictions: Sited on a hill, on one side, it overlooks the sprawling expansion of Amman. On the other side, it overlooks its historical center located in close proximity, Jabal Al Natheef nevertheless feels and is in fact disconnected and disconnected from the city center; it is often remarked that only two roads lead into the Jabal. In a similar vein, the captivating sequences of scenic views experienced on walking through the narrow alleyways and steep stairways between the densely spaced houses contrast with the state of disrepair many of these spaces suffer from, and one is left wondering whether these spaces can be described as public, and whether civic spaces exist at all. Yet, from conversations with the residents and from the encounters with the many children playing everywhere, it quickly becomes apparent that the spatial

qualities of Jabal Alnadeef can only be understood through appreciating the social processes, shared and individual histories that shaped an intriguing and highly complex environment of spaces and that define the social rules governing current uses of spaces.

Our analysis of the area known as the "upper camp" therefore comprises of seven parts: First, documentation of urban fabric, through a figure ground plan and street elevations; second, representation of the ground level as a continuous "Rossi" plan, following the conventions established by Aldo Rossi's 1972 plan of Zürich; third, typological analysis, fourth, a survey of housing typologies recorded in plans and three-dimensional representation; fifth, a series of interviews capturing the personal stories of inhabitants, what might be referred to as "storycatching", conducted in conjunction with a survey recording statistical information; sixth, an examination of shared spaces, their physical characteristics, and interpretations of their usage; and finally a detailed study of a group of houses, the network of alleyways, courtyards and interconnected rooftop terraces, in conjunction with the social relationships that have produced and are sustained by these spatial arrangements.

Our field work was accompanied by seminars and conversations on methodology, situating our work in the context of studies examining self-constructed environments in other parts of the world. To supplement this, we interviewed three critical friends on Skype and via email: Christian Schmid, professor of sociology at the ETH Zürich, Siobhan Campbell, a writer and researcher on stories of conflict, at Kingston University London, and Ed Wall, a landscape architect and researcher on informal urbanism, at the University of Greenwich. Each interview is related to one of the specific studies listed above and in this book are appended to those studies.

Appreciation and careful study of physical spaces in a context such as Jabal Al Natheef risks being accused of aestheticizing an area and community marked by grave social issues and problems. These problems, stemming from overcrowding, lack of security, widespread substance abuse and dealing, lack of investment in infrastructure, cannot be separated from the built urban fabric (see page 52-53



interview Ed Wall). Our position is one of respect towards the inhabitants, their spaces and social rules, seeking to appreciate the spatial and social intelligence that has produced striking and at times surprising spatial solutions to problems that can seem insurmountable taking into consideration the limited means at the disposal of residents. It is in this context that our choice of a cartographic methodology, the "Rossi Map", has to be seen. Aldo Rossi's 1972 map of Zürich represents, in a continuous "urban ground floor plan", the spatial experiences encountered at ground level, the topographical level changes, delineation of public streets, paths and staircases, along with floor plans of buildings, of public and private interior spaces. It appreciates monuments, landmarks and civic buildings that endure over generations, as well as commercial structures and domestic houses with shorter lifespans. In its simplicity and systematic rigor it is apparently a product of the culture that produced it, but it holds the potential to transcend its predilections. Our "Rossi Map" of Jabal Al Natheef's upper camp records 130 floor plans (pages 38-39 Rossi Map of Study Area), and provides a platform for typological studies, which examine spatial structure and subdivision of space, allocation of space to a guest room, entrance sequences, and the three-dimensional articulation of thresholds and entrances (pages 43-45 Matrix of Floor Plan Types). It is used to locate the forty-eight interviews we conducted in shared spaces and private houses, and situate these within their spatial environment. The Rossi Map contextualizes the twelve houses examined in more detail (pages 55-91 Interviews and Housing Typologies), moreover the studies of shared spaces, such as streets, alleyways, and stairways. These studies document the problematic status of such public spaces, the geometries that have resulted from the alleyways that were "left over" when private houses had been constructed and expanded, and the state of disrepair many were found in (page 92-96 Stairways). But, intriguingly, they also reveal unexpected beauty, and important roles that these spaces play for the community, such as evidenced in the children's game of hide and seek played in a network of alleyways (page 97-99 Network of Alleys, page 100-103

interview with Siobhan Campbell), and the studies of movement and traffic, hierarchies of shared spaces (page 106-107 Movement Studies).

Our interview methodology, "interviewing in place", aims to record basic contextual information, names, age, family relationships, therefore allowing for personal stories to be related. Photographs depict the interviewee and the spatial setting in which the interview took place; when the interviewee did not wish to be photographed, we of course respected their wish. Many people we spoke to showed great generosity in welcoming us into their homes, but of course we respected their wish not to enter and record areas deemed private. The interviews are centered around the information and stories related to us by the individuals and groups we spoke to, we refrain from passing judgment, though in some cases participants recorded their assessment of the space in which the interview took place. In order to support the photographic documentation. Our study aims to make heard the diverse voices of individuals, and thereby make a contribution, however small, to collective self-empowerment of the community.

In an environment where people have retained the power and knowledge to self-construct their own homes, the relationships between social and spatial structure are complex. This also results in complex geometries and relationships between shared spaces needed for access, and in differentiated spatial and social hierarchies. Our study of a series of alleyway, stairway, private courtyards, and rooftop spaces (page 110-119 Rooftop and Social Space Study) endeavors to relate spatial and social narratives through diagrams, annotation, and photographs. The interview with Christian Schmid aims to identify possible links to studies of self-built environments in other cultures, and to explore whether Henri Lefebvre's model of the social production of space, which emanates from a Western cultural context, can be productively juxtaposed with the highly developed cultural, social, and spatial rules and configurations that have made Jabal Al Natheef what it is today, and will continue to shape its future.

**Christoph Lueder and Alexandru Malaescu**

## APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Our project began with a question: How can we, as urbanists, designers and architects understand the interdependence between Jabal Al Natheef's built environment and its social structure in order to assist with unlocking its socio-economic opportunities?

In order to better understand how the problems that Jabal Al Natheef faces, as well as the social capital that it possesses are rooted in the characteristics of its shared spaces, private houses, and its social fabric, our approach had to be two-fold; it had to consider the built environment as well as the manifold ways in which this environment is inhabited.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project's goals and objectives are based on:

- input from Ruwwad and Arini
- feedback from various focus groups and discussions
- workshop
- interviews

#### Goal:

Documentation and assessment of the built environment and of the living conditions of Jabal Al Natheef's inhabitants.

#### Objectives:

- A. Identify social capital
- B. Outline possible physical interventions
- C. Consider strategies for coordinating and developing the resources and assets that the community and the built environment have to offer

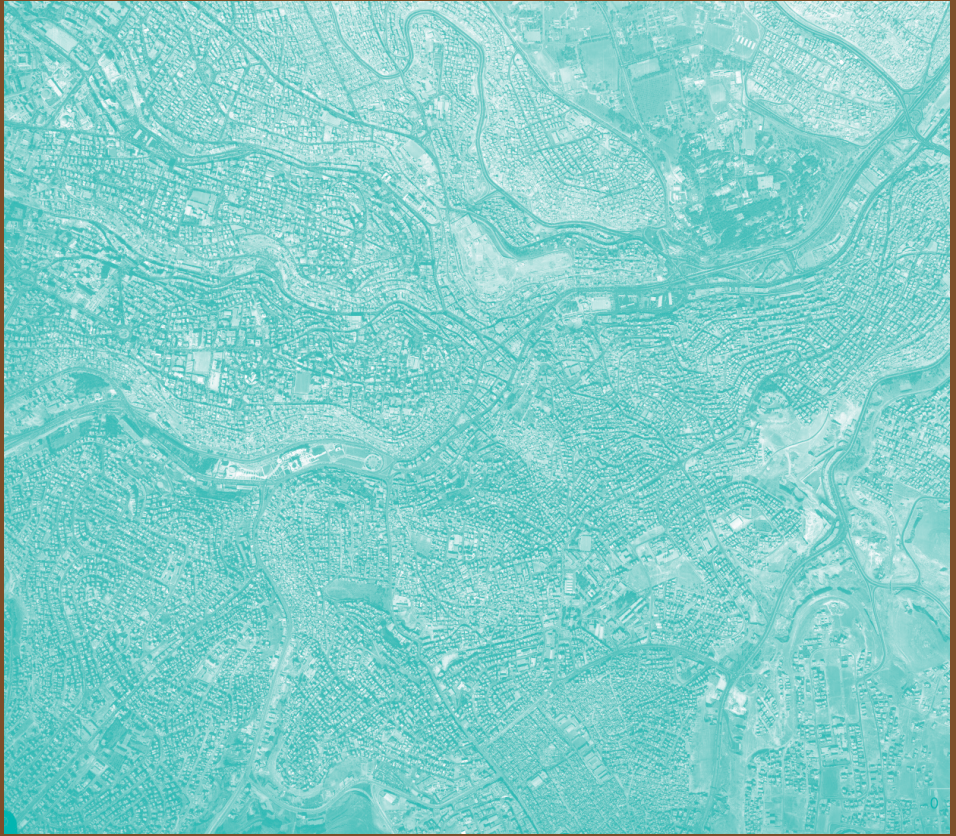
#### Goal:

Development of a framework, to be pursued in collaboration with the community, that allows to preserve existing qualities of life yet develop social capital while proposing drivers of change and progress for the future of the camp.

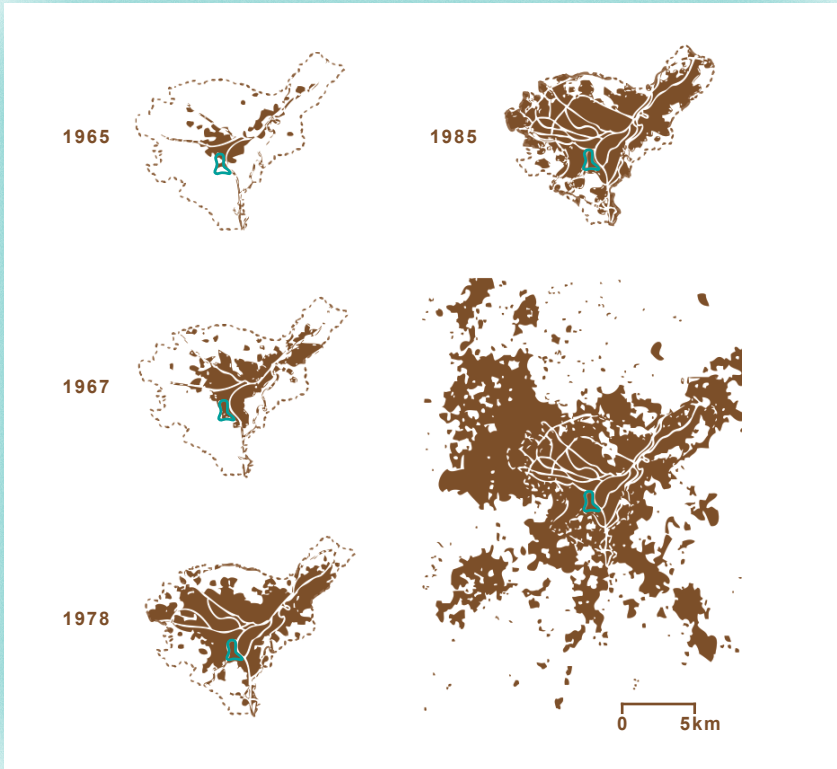
#### Objectives:

- A. Investigate urban indicators and prevalent patterns
- B. Document the socio-economic states of the inhabitants of the upper camp
- C. Develop an understanding of socio-economic conditions and their reflection on the built environment
- D. Assemble an inventory of housing types and living conditions in these houses
- E. Record the layout and the use of shared spaces
- F. Observe forms of social interaction and behavioral patterns in shared spaces
- G. Document the needs and aspirations that inhabitants have articulated during their interviews





JABAL AL  
NATHEEF  
TODAY ;  
AN  
OVERVIEW  
OF THE  
SETTLEMENT



JABAL AL NATHEEF TODAY:  
AN OVERVIEW OF THE SETTLEMENT

**Location**

This urban neighborhood in the eastern part of Amman is one of the oldest and most crowded neighborhoods in Amman. It is centrally located in the district of Ras Al-Ain, which comprises Al-Mareekh, Jabal Al Zohor and Dahet Al Haj Hasan with a total population count of 1,18232. Jabal Al Natheef is the poorest of Ras Al-Ain's four neighborhoods.

One of the reasons people came to live in this area is the Zarqa River (Sail Al Zarqa) which passed through Ras-Al-Ain to Zarqa, Jerash and ending in Jordan River. Even though the river dried out, the area remains Amman's oldest and most crowded.

During the first half of the 20th century Circassians owned the land. Nowadays, the majority

of the inhabitants are Palestinians who immigrated during the Nakba (1948). They initially lived illegally in tents in an area of the Jabal owned by a Circassian named Mohammad Amin Habjoka, therefore the land was leased by King Hussein but never given to the UNRWA. As the years passed, the refugees started to build permanent houses.

In 1955, however, Wahdat camp was established and refugees were asked to move there under UNRWA supervision. A large number of displaced but some decided to stay due to Wahdat camp distance from the city center, the main roads, transportation nodes and water spots. Wahdat camp became a legal Palestinian camp whereas Jabal Al-Natheef stayed without legal status. The inhabitants of the Jabal continued building their houses in an informal manner and living without the involvement of UNRWA, which was focused on Wahdat. At the time, people perceived it as a slum, albeit the improvement in infrastructure and living condition, most Jordanians until now see it as a slum area. In the sixties some refugees started to build real houses and in 1977 services like telephone lines, electricity, and water reached the area and as the population grew, the infrastructure expanded. Over the years refugees preferred Jabal Al Natheef due to its strategic and central location with close proximity to the downtown, the market of Al-Malek Talal and the Ras-Al-Ain which act as a connection between East and West of Amman.

#### Characteristics

Generally, the residents descend from rural Palestinian communities with agriculture related knowledge and skills, their main concern was to provide their families with shelter and food, education was not a priority. This trend, which continues nowadays, led them to work primarily as unskilled laborers. Jabal Al Natheef has a distinctive work pattern with gender appropriate jobs; men in construction, taxi driving, street vending and tailoring, women in hairdressing, secretarial work, nursing, sewing and embroidery. The community of the area still sees working women as not virtuous, although economic pressures of the past years are making women work, but it does not come as a choice rather a necessity.







## Key Characteristics

of the area:

- High Building Density
- Overcrowding
- Lack of security
- Corruption (drug, domestic violence, prostitution)
- Narrow streets
- Unskilled labor
- Conservative social structure and views held by the community
- High population density / mainly young with the average family size (5), compared to 3.4 for the national average

Lack of inclusive places for people to socially interact, a situation that has socio-economic consequences.

The inhabitants of the area have the following basic needs:

### Access to water

All households have access to water but depending on the areas in the neighborhood, some have access only once a week

### Street lighting

Light poles are not enough to lighten the whole area and many are broken and not fixed, this acts as a reason for a feel of insecurity.

### Housing

Housing is in a bad condition mainly because of their building informal nature and the prices of the rent are extremely high compared to the low income per families.

### Education

School dropout is a major issue in the area forming 16% of the student population with a higher tendency among boys. Illiteracy rate is relatively very high. Financial means is the major problem that the inhabitants face when it comes to higher education for children (high university fees).

## Social capital

Like any other neighborhood, Jabal al Natheef is divided; the map below shows the clear distinction between north and south of the area. There is an evident class distinction between the landlords in the upper area "Fouk" and the poorer camp residents "Tahet ", the south of Jabal al Natheef is perceived in a negative manner, it is where all the problems are congested; drugs. The community mainly decent from a specific area in Palestine, therefore they share a common history, culture and family structure, which provided a safety net for the inhabitants. This trait however has changed nowadays; economic deterioration led to alternative modes of living (women working a necessity and not a need).

Jabal Al Natheef's residents suffer from urban poverty, which is a multidimensional phenomenon; the urban poor live with many deprivations and daily challenges. But urban poverty is not just a collection of characteristics; it is also a dynamic condition of vulnerability or susceptibility to risks. In order to provide a richer understanding of urban poverty this site presents following to analytic frameworks:

### 1. A dynamic framework of poverty (vulnerability and asset ownership)

Vulnerability is closely linked with asset ownership; the more assets people have, the less vulnerable they are, and the greater the erosion of people's assets, the greater their insecurity. Assets can be summarized as follows:

- Labor
- Human capital: health, education skills and ability to work
- Productive assets: most important of these is housing
- Household relations
- Social capital

### 2. Multiple characteristics of poverty and its cumulative impacts:

- Income poverty
- Health and education poverty
- Personal and tenure insecurity
- Disempowerment

### Constituents

- Different actors
- Religious
- 16 mosques
- 1 church
- NGOs & Organizations
- Jordan River Foundation
- RUWWAD (Arab Foundation for sustainable development)
- Knowledge Station Information Technology
- Zawayed
- Governmental centers
- 3 Islamic centers
- Faith based NGOs
- Islamic Charity center Society
- Zakat committee
- Orphanage (one for the boys / girls)
- 4 Pharmacies
- Clinics
- 1 in the Islamic center
- 1 governmental clinic
- Schools
- 17 governmental schools to satisfy the high population density
- 1 Police Station

### Different communities

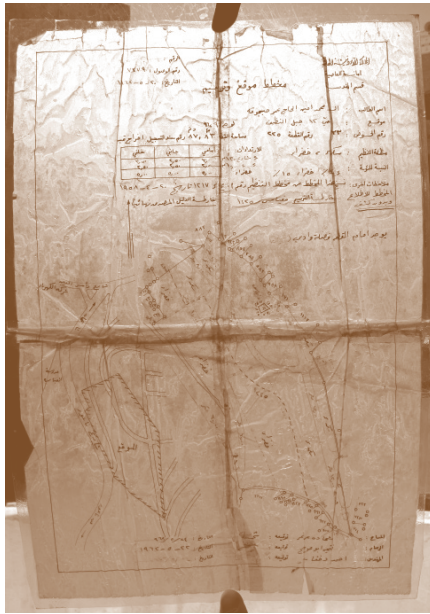
- Jordanians of Palestinian origins (1948), they have citizenship
- Palestinians from Gaza (1967), they have two-year passports
- Jordanian from Karak
- Gypsies
- Iraqis
- Philippines
- Sri Lankan
- Egyptians
- Circassians

### Different zones

- Lower informal refugee camp
- Upper informal refugee camp
- Cemetery
- Commercial Strip
- Transportation node
- Planned areas







TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW FROM JABAL AL NATHEEF, WITH HAJ YOUSEF ABU AWWAD, 20.10.2013

In 1962, the decision to evacuate and demolish Jabal Al Natheef camp area was announced in favor of Mohammad Ameen Habjoqa; the rightful owner of the land. This led the residents of the camp to sign a petition of appeal and write a letter to King Hussein in 1963 to describe the situation of the camp. In 1964 the minister of construction wrote a letter to the minister of justice pleading for the police to stop terrorizing the residence forcing them out of the area. Later that year King Hussein gave an order to provide electricity for the area and in 1975 -11 years later- he instructed the provision of sewage.

The main reason behind to the informal growth of the camp was that after the newspapers declared The Royal Will to acquire the 87 acres and 78 meters of land to develop housing units for the refugees nothing happened for 5 years hence the residents started building randomly without abiding to the Jordanian codes for building.

Study Area



Police Station



Industrial Zones



Commercial Zones





Medical Centres



Schools

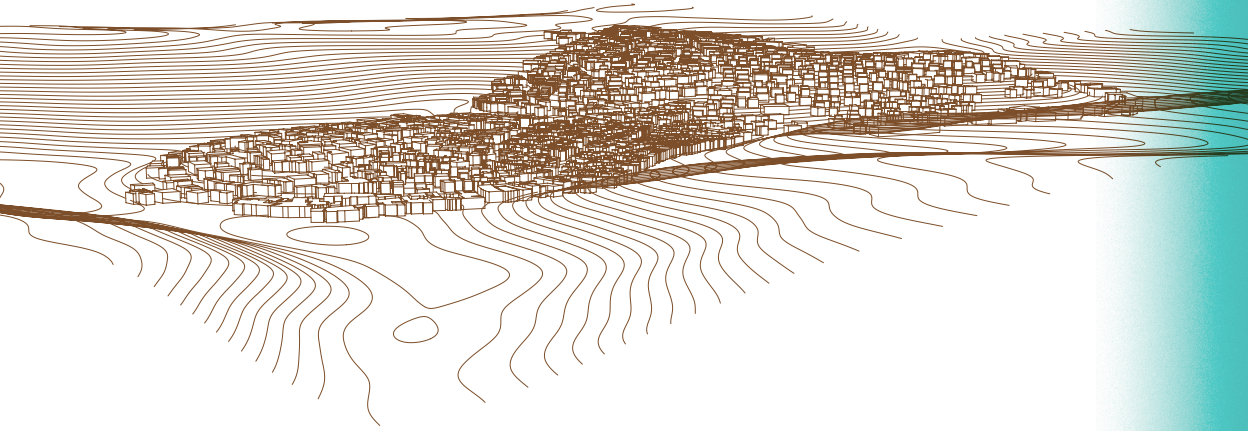


Al-Natheef Cemetery



Religious Buildings



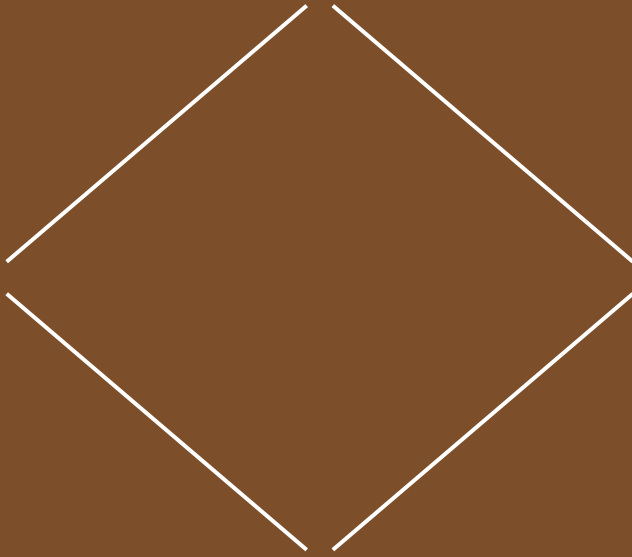


### RUWWAD AL TANMEYAH

Ruwwad is a non-profit community empowerment organization that helps disadvantaged communities overcome marginalization through youth activism, civic engagement and education. Founded by a group of business entrepreneurs, Ruwwad operates through a network of partnerships between the private sector, civil society organizations, government and local communities. It was started in 2005 by creating a "community empowerment center" with the community of Jabal Al-Natheef, an area in East Amman which lacks basic services and has a total population of around 54,000.

Ruwwad adopts key approaches in its work such as "community service", "community organizing", "psychosocial support" and "arts as learning mediums"; all aim to enable local leadership to transform available local resources into rights-based programs and initiatives.

Ruwwad has expanded its activities to include Beida and Tafilah in the south of Jordan. It also started its activities in Cairo in the area of Izzbet Khairallah, in Budrus which is rural Ramallah in Palestine, and in Tripoli, Lebanon.



STATISTICAL  
SURVEY

## STATISTICAL SURVEY

Parallel to the data collection and analysis, a statistical survey was conducted. The structured one-to-one investigation sampled 72 residents according to preselected criteria relevant to social research questions -Demographics and Patterns in Jabal Al Natheef-.

The survey combined quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to allow for comparisons between numerical data and narrative forms of analysis.

### Quantitative:

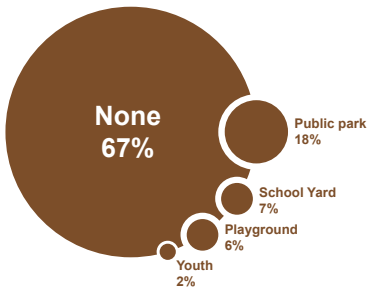
A sample of 72 inhabitants of the upper and lower camps were asked to respond to a series of questions on their social background and country of origin, on their living conditions, employment and ownership status, income, free time, and about their knowledge of and engagement with the programs undertaken by Ruwwad.

### Qualitative:

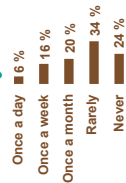
Interviewees were engaged in informal interviews, in groups and as individuals, and given the opportunity to relate their personal histories, their views on living in Jabal Al Natheef, and their hopes and aspirations.

The quantitative data was analyzed and is represented on the following pages in a series of infographics.

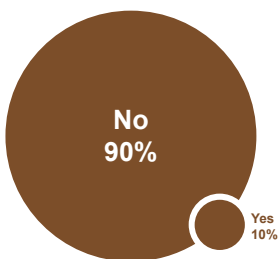
### Free time



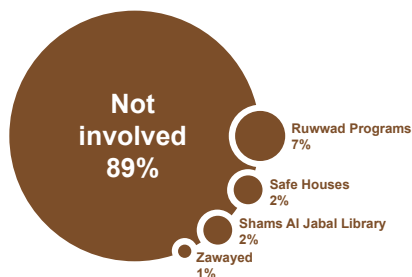
### How many times do you go out?



### Ruwwad Scholarship



### Ruwwad Programs



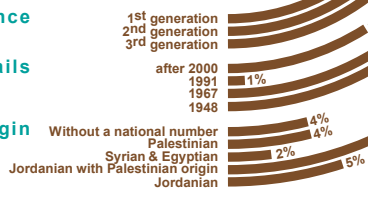




**Residence in Natheef since**

**Immigration details**

**Country of origin**



**House types**

**Building condition**

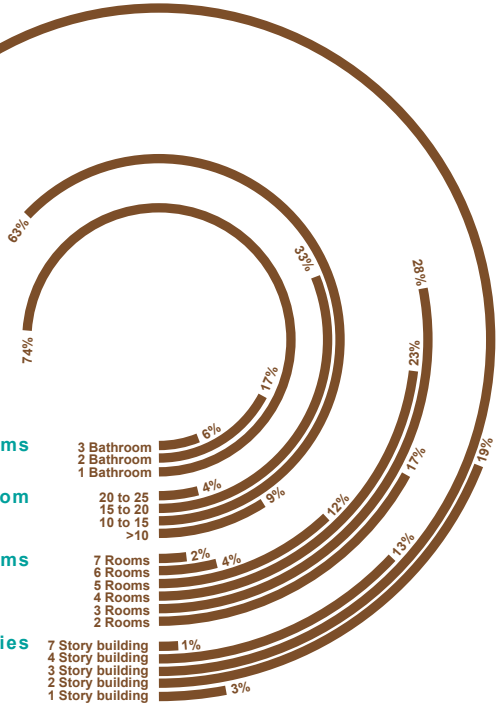


**Number of Bathrooms**

**Average area per room**

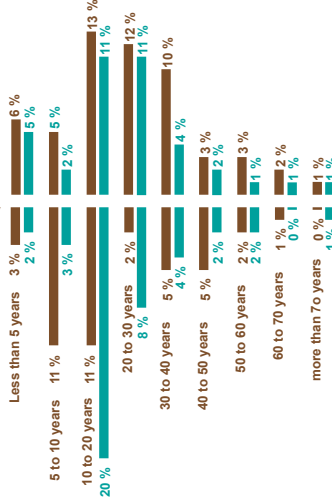
**Number of rooms**

**Building stories**

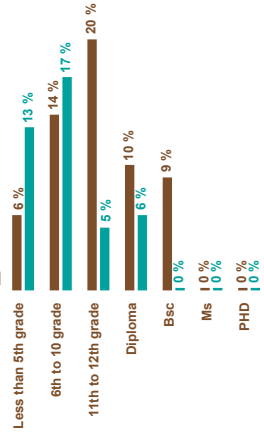


■ Male  
■ Female

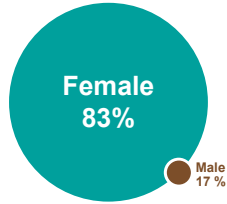
### Family members Literacy



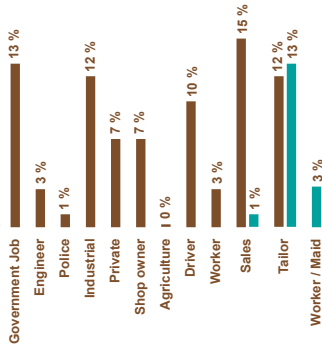
### Academic level



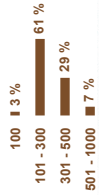
### Unemployed adults



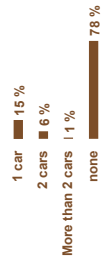
### Jobs



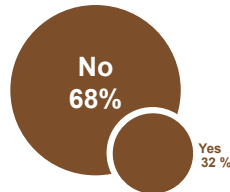
### House income



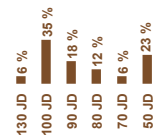
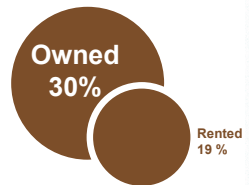
### Cars ownership



### Land ownership



### House ownership





JABAL  
AL  
NATHEEF  
STUDY  
AREA



### JABAL AL NATHEEF STUDY AREA

The mapping process of this workshop was guided by the complexities and dichotomies that exist in the area. Jabal Al Natheef's intricacy includes:

- The informal camp zone
- The formal/planned residential zone
- A commercial corridor
- A transportation hub
- A cemetery

The study area builds on this pattern, it covers the whole of informal camp, parts of: the formal/planned residential, the commercial corridor, transportation hub and the cemetery. The process collected an extensive list of contributions made by the community within the study area and the surrounding zones, and intensively mapped the tangible and intangible layers.



## CREATING COMMUNITY

BY SAMAR DUDIN

### ARCHITECTS, URBANISTS AND THE YOUTH OF JABAL NATHEEF

It's a rare moment when 35 architects, urban designers and planners step into the Mohamad Ameen Refugee Camp in east Amman to engage its residents and map its urban geography. The camp is one of Nakba's still open wounds, when 750,000 Palestinians, representing at that time the bulk of the population, were forced out of Palestine in 1948. Walk the camp's streets and you are sure to glimpse the inhabitants' innovations that infuse color and life everywhere in its neighborhoods. You're certain to feel as well the energy of the people in the cement homes, in the colorful plants that live in all kinds of recycled pots, in the narrow alleyways that checker the camp's landscape.

I walk into our regular 12:00 noon-2:00 pm Saturday Youth session, Dardsahat, a safe space for open discussion, dialogue and debate, which I, as a volunteer, first launched in 2006 in Ruwwad. Seven years in, Dardashat has become an arena where taboo questions are asked and questions about self, relationships and citizenship are explored.

Thirty five architects and urbanists are here to meet with some 70 of Ruwwad's 165 youths, all scholars of the Mousab Khorma Fund in exchange for intensive hours of weekly community service over their years of study. A majority live in Jabal Natheef and neighboring areas.

The atmosphere is tense. The architects and the scholars are akin to opposing teams. Liyan, an architect, asks, "How do you define the identity of Jabal Natheef?" The youth feel provoked. "Who the hell are you to ask? And why do you want our answers?" The architects persist. Gradually, the divides begin to shift. Some scholars begin to define their space in Natheef. "It's like a big tribe... a big family." A few add that "it's like any other place; it has the problems of any other place." The architects ask more questions: "What do you mean? How so?" Taboos quickly work their way into the discussion: "Drugs, pills, substance

abuse, school drop outs... poverty..." One young rebel architect comments: "I don't see anything different in this area. We get harassed in west Amman. We work very hard to earn a living and study. Life is tough everywhere." The scholars then split into two groups: bullies and communicators. The first shuts down, aggressively insisting that "there's nothing to be afraid of; you can walk the streets anytime...if you don't know the people, of course, you are going to be afraid... no, the drug issue is minor and pills barely exist." The communicators fire back: "We don't want to have to know all the people to feel safe...we have to be part of a gang to walk at night... we have alcoholics and drug addicts and all types of criminals on our streets." A girl says, "I can't even walk down the streets without eyes stripping me and words thrown at me... A young man sneers, "Not true!"

I wonder: Not true to whom? This is really the crux of the matter: If you are one of the neighborhood's youths, you are either part of a gang or a total outsider? And if you are a young woman, well, you had better stick to the rules or suffer constant harassment. As the conversation evolves between the architects and the scholars, "the stranger" is framed: someone who comes from another space; someone who is asking questions about our space and us. Someone who lives by a different code of conduct and ethics... The discussion ends and we all leap into action. Over the course of ten days, the architects work with a group of Ruwwad youth who live in the camp-an intense time of deep listening and long conversations. A relationship is forged. Every single architect is now a "welcome citizen." Fascinating! A few home visits and sincere banter transform a stranger to a guest. The power of relationship building is what we as Ruwwad believe in. It is what we do. Our relationships are anchored by the concrete commitments people make to each other and the action they take to fulfill them. They are a chronicle of personal narratives, a body of values and interests. We built trust by delivering on our promises, but also by admitting failure and clearly articulating the reasons for it, making of the experience a lesson learned.

For us, every new relationship is a source of knowledge and is pregnant with the possibilities of collaborative action for the public good. I often think in dramatic terms, and I see the new wave of architects as potential actors in the lives of the families who live in Mohamad Ameen and Jabal Natheef. But acting needs dialogue, monologue and choruses to structure a journey of meaning and action. The people are already asking questions: "To what end did the architect students interview us. They can learn a lot, but what do we get in return?" The challenge is to move forward and explore how we can organize the people who were interviewed into a constituency who has a collective voice and can work in teams to achieve a measurable goal. The shared experience between the architects and the citizens of the camp can become the precursor for an initiative that brings together the community and the architects to engage in mutual learning and to mobilize for change. This is Ruwwad: a platform and a vessel for such change.





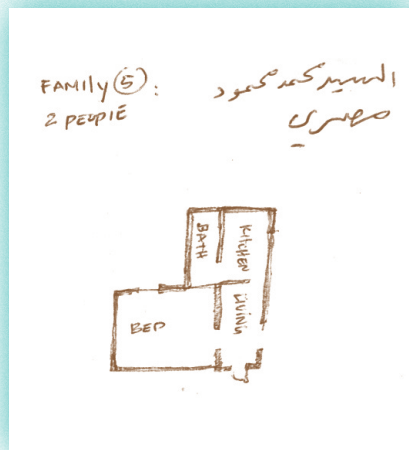
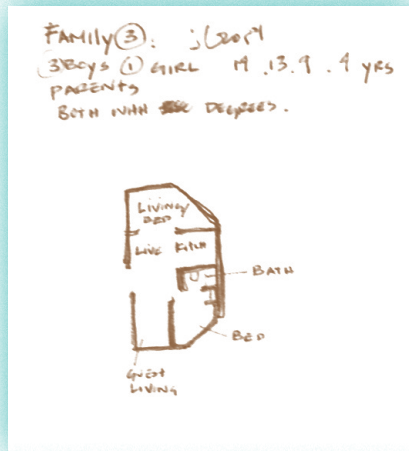
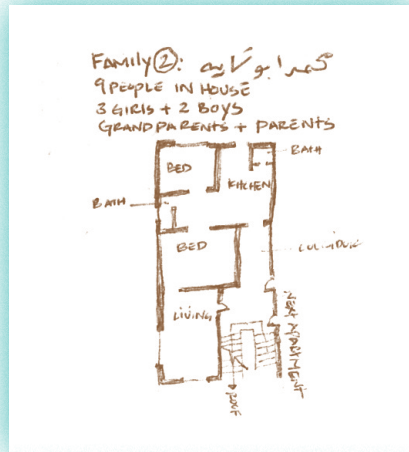




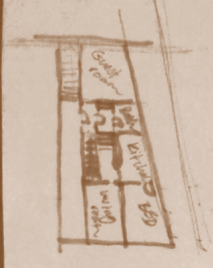
#### ROSSI MAP OF STUDY AREA

The dense urban fabric of Jabal Al Natheef has developed from small, freestanding houses, which their owners incrementally extended to accommodate their growing families and new needs. As houses grew, former courtyards were built over and the perimeter of the houses expanded at the expense of open spaces and circulation spaces between houses. Pavement and staircases in these residual spaces were only built during the last decade. A new street was cut through the camp in order to improve access for cars, ambulances and fire trucks, and now divides the upper camp, which we mapped, from the lower camp. The outlines of buildings that were removed to make space for the new street remain visible in the jagged northeastern edge to the new street. Our ground floor map records the current stage of an evolving urban fabric. It allows roads

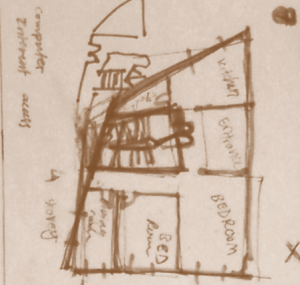
and shared spaces between houses to be considered in relation to the internal organization of houses, and to decipher the logic and the parameters of the current configuration. Our map is based on a measured survey of spaces and floor plans, during which the sketches reproduced here, were produced. The shared map drawn up on the basis of these sketches during the last stage of our fieldwork and a subsequent editing phase, adopts the graphic conventions established by Aldo Rossi and his team at the ETH Zurich in 1972. Proposals for ameliorating the problems resulting from overcrowding, such as lack of daylight, ventilation, comfortable access for older citizens, can draw on our "Rossi Map" as a reference and resource. By recording and respecting what is there already, our "Rossi Map" can assist in more precisely diagnosing problems, and in preserving some of the existing qualities within the scope of new projects.







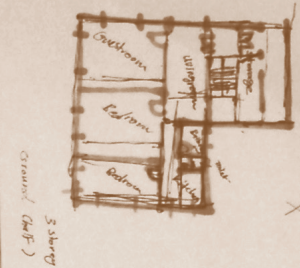
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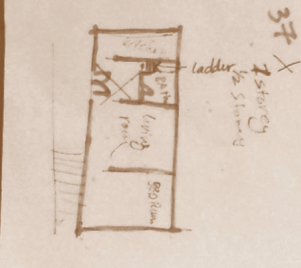
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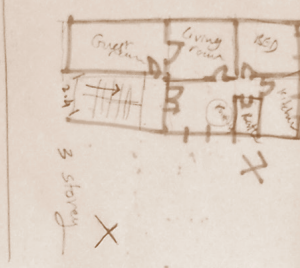
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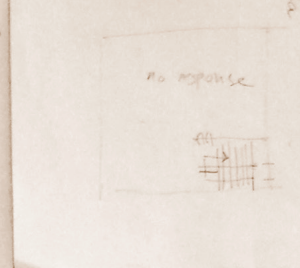
3 storey (4th F)



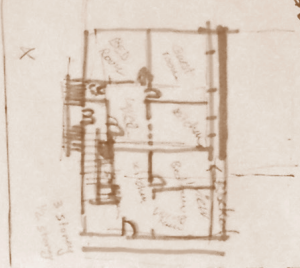
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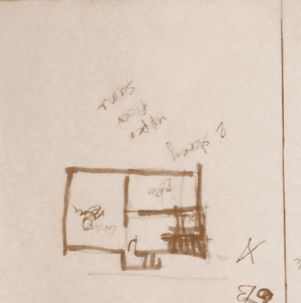
3 storey



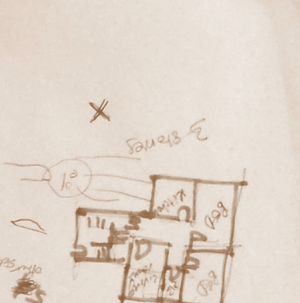
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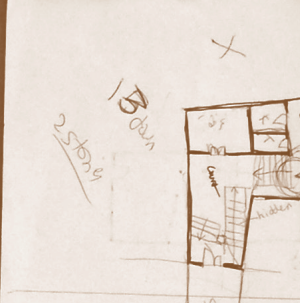
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3 storey



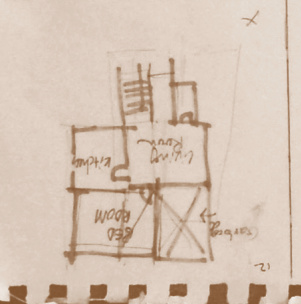
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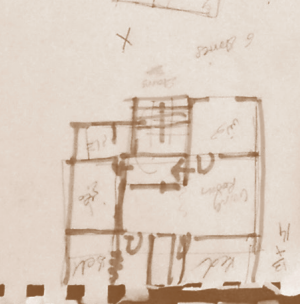
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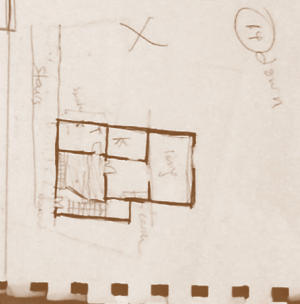
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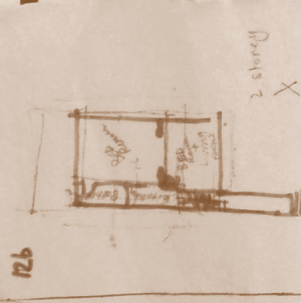
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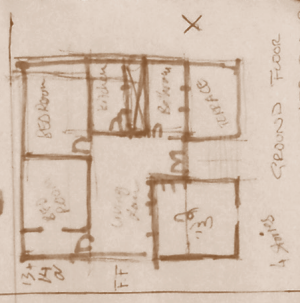
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3 storey



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GROUND FLOOR ON OFFICE PAPER



3 storey



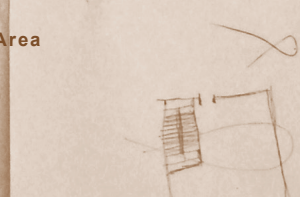
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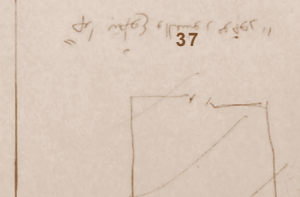
3 storey



3 storey



3 storey



3 storey

Rossi Map of Study Area









Abu Mohammad

Al Mukhtar Farah

Taha Awwadeh

Sawsan

Abu Mazen

Um Fayez

Mohammad Hamed

Mukhtar Waleed

Abu Awwad

Abdulrahman Jamal



Hiyam al Shafi

Sana

Samia

Firas Kharouf

Um Muhammad

Rakan

Um Saif Abu Awwad

Fatima's House

Mohammad Abu Awwad

Hadieh - Um

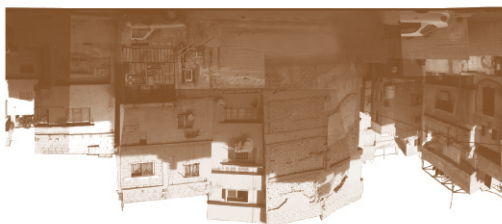
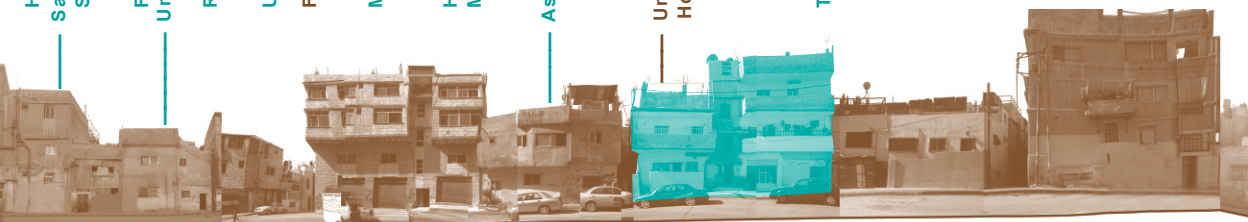
Mohammad

Asma

Um Hussein

House

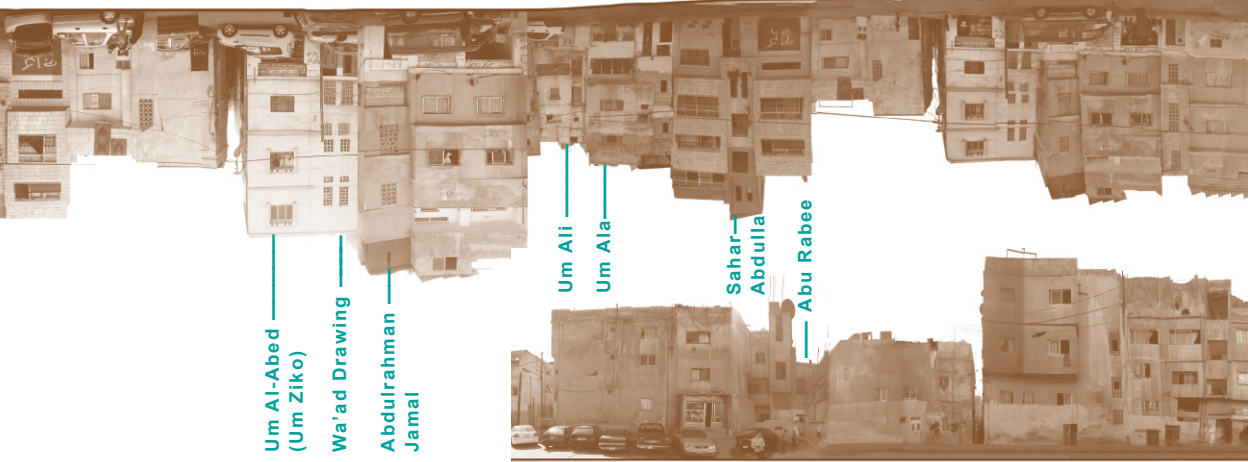
Tahani Abu Awwad







Wadfaa



Um Al-Abed  
(Um Ziko)

Wa'ad Drawing

Abdulrahman  
Jamal

Um Ali

Um Ala

Sahar-  
Abdulla

Abu Rabee



Um Hussein

Um Hanin

Um Talal House



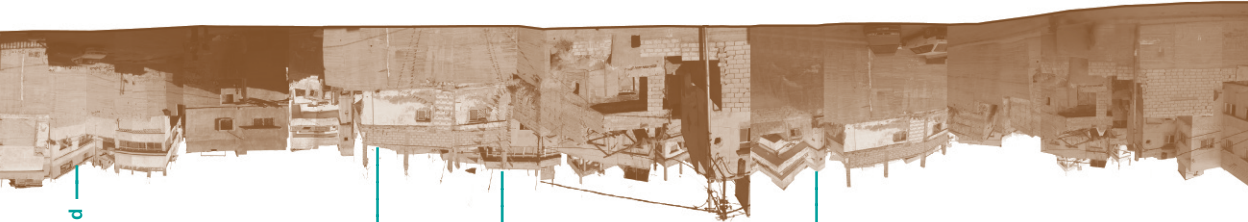
Ahmad Ibrahim  
Abu Arar







Muhammad  
and Nihad



Um Ahmad

Deebbeh

Fatima

Um Mohammad

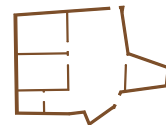
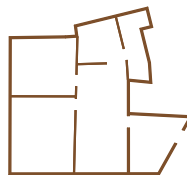
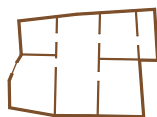
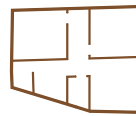
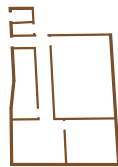


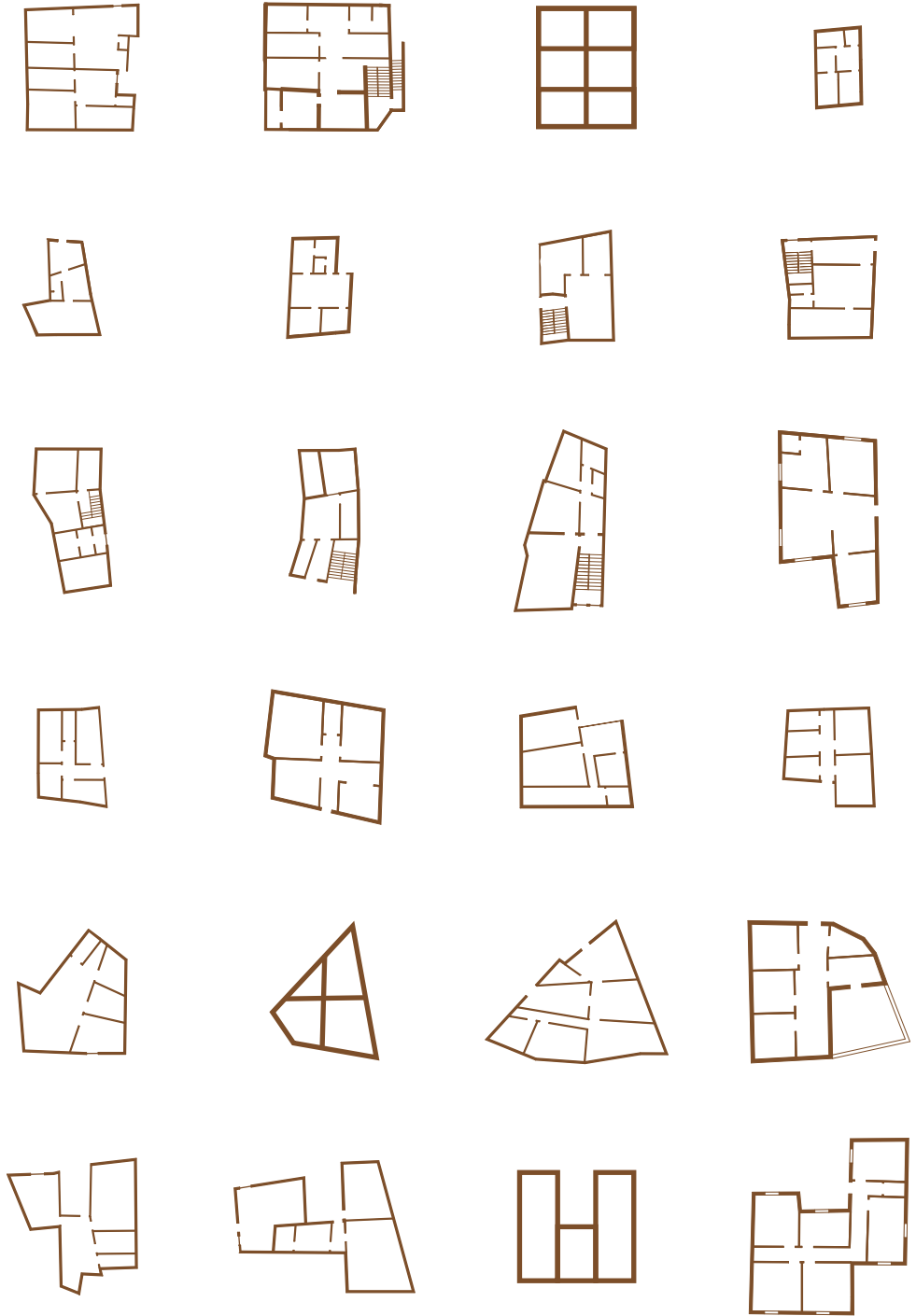
## MATRIX OF FLOOR PLAN AND THRESHOLD TYPOLOGIES

The self-constructed houses of the upper and lower camp were conceived without involving architects but not without recourse to architectural history. Inhabitants drew on their knowledge of the spaces and houses they had inhabited in the towns and villages they came from. Typological studies can capture the spatial structures that were remembered, adapted and applied during construction, as well as the solutions that had to be found in response to new problems that were encountered. The typological studies firstly examine spatial subdivision and structure, secondly, the size of guest rooms relative to total floor plan area, thirdly, the various types of entrance sequences, and finally, three-dimensional articulation of entrances and threshold spaces.

FLOOR PLAN TYPOLOGY STUDY ACCORDING  
TO SPATIAL SUBDIVISIONS:

Because Informal settlements are often areas of uncontrollable high density which adjusts quickly to the collective need and wants without paying regard to dominant law and order, most of the floor plans are of irregular shape. Typically the houses range between those of 2 rooms, or 3 rooms, with a few having 4 rooms, but never more than that.

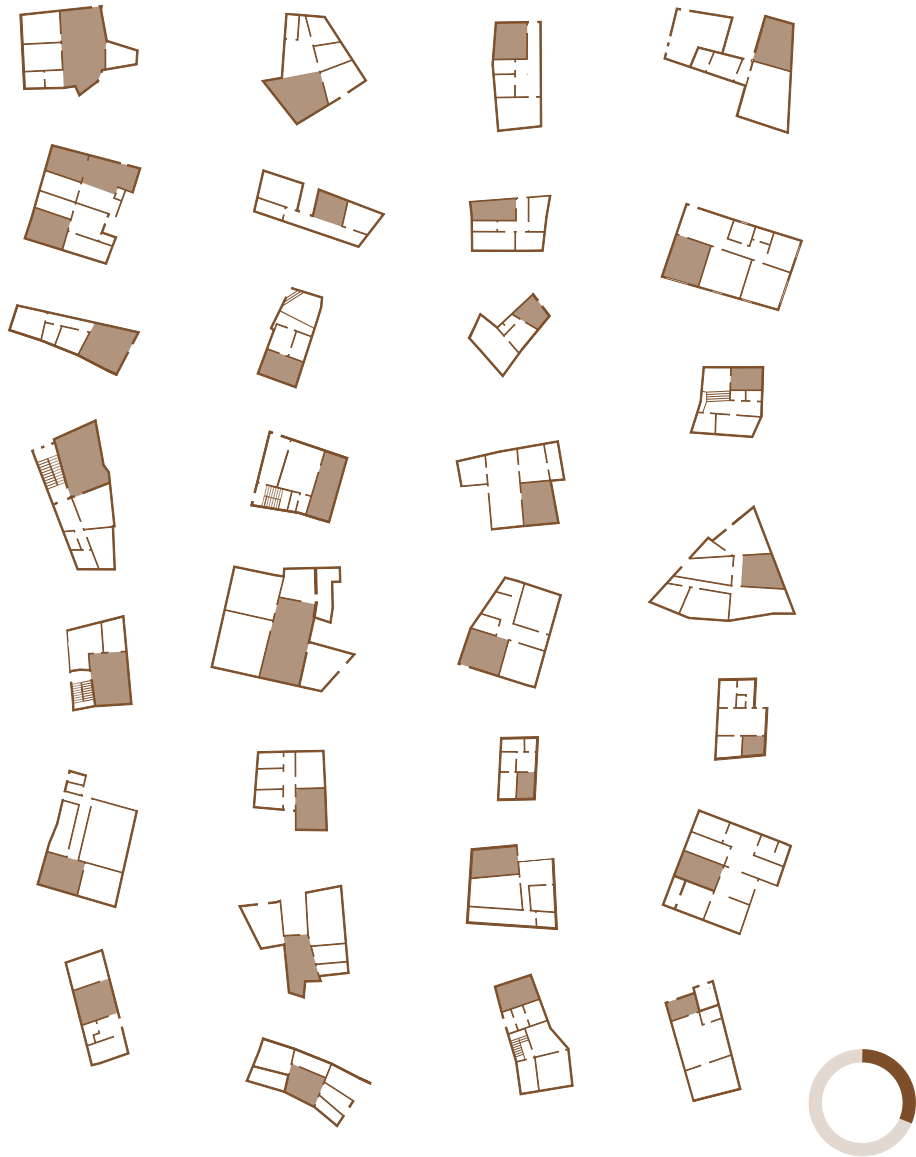






FLOOR PLAN TYPOLOGY STUDY ACCORDING TO THE  
PERCENTAGE OF SPACE ALLOCATED TO THE GUEST ROOM:

The distribution of area among the rooms mostly takes into consideration the need for a guest room to socialize. Even though the area of the floor plans is highly condensed and barely enough for the family to comfortably live in the house, the ratio between the floor plan surface of the guest room as opposed to the rest of the house, a 1:4 the importance accorded to both hospitality and representation.





Firas Ihsan Al-Kharouf Guest Room



Hajjeh Nimeh Saleem Guest Room

Entrance is through the courtyard



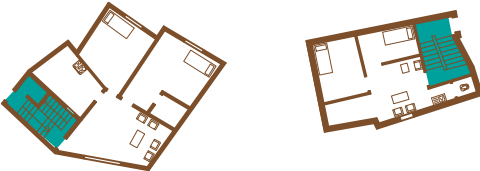
Entrance is direct to livingroom with terrace



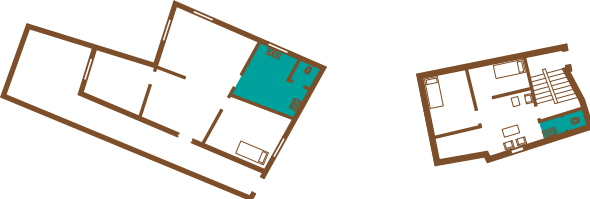
Entrance is direct to corridor without terrace



Entrance through staircase without terrace



The bathroom is in the kitchen zone



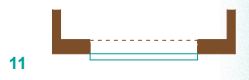
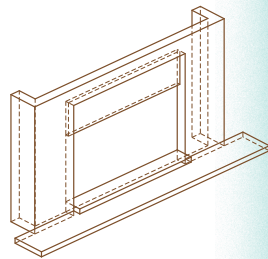
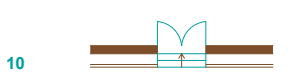
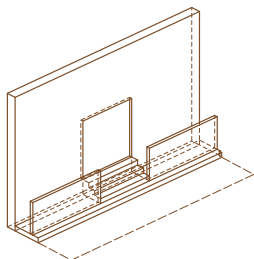
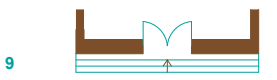
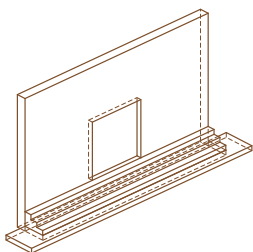
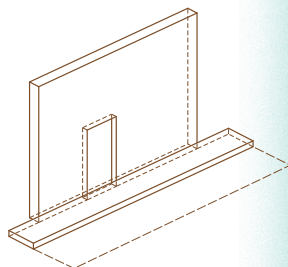
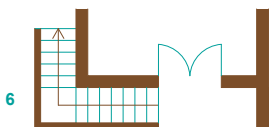
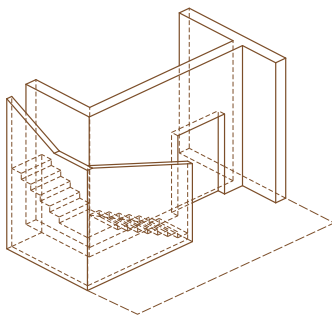
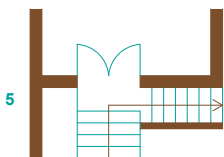
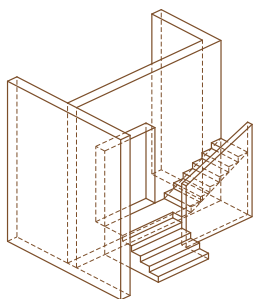
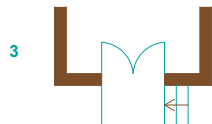
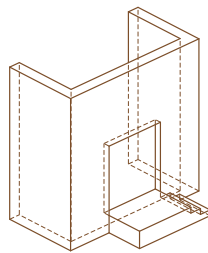
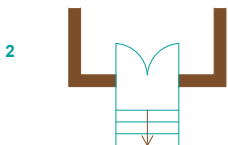
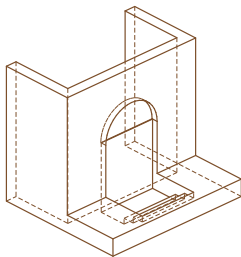
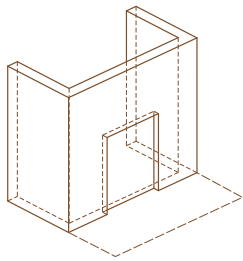


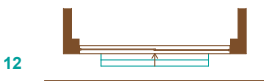
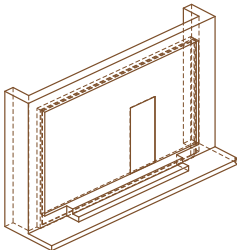
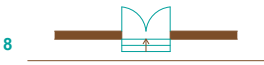
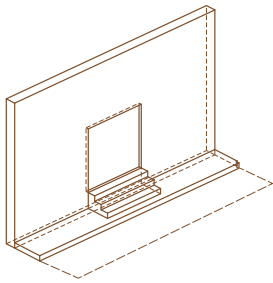
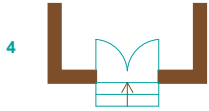
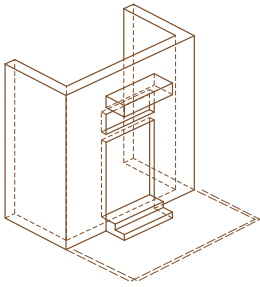
### ENTRANCES TYPOLOGIES

A drawn analysis of entrance typologies and their relationship to other circulation elements within the camp area -stair, alleys and platforms.









TRANSCRIPT OF AN EMAIL INTERVIEW  
WITH ED WALL, LONDON,  
UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH, 20.10.2013

Question: Would *self-built* settlements be a better term than informality? What exactly is *informal* about a settlement such as Jabal Al Natheef?

Ed Wall: The term *informal* is frequently used by urbanists, from architects to politicians, when they are confronted with houses, spaces and settlements that do not follow conventional legal or planning processes. In these instances the informal is defined by its relation to a formal system rather than through its own inherent qualities. The term *self-build* is more appropriate in some cases, however, not in all. For example, in cities like Cairo, some informal settlements are being built by developers and they are defined as *informal* because the land is not zoned for building on. Many of these buildings are multi-family dwellings several floors high and are not built by the families who come to inhabit them. This suggests that different terms need to be found different conditions and ways of making the city. The careful consideration of how buildings and settlements are described is important so when terms are either inaccurate or divisive then new terms must be found.

Q: Regarding the uniformity of the urban typology, unplanned communities rely on a completely different relationship of public/private spaces. How does it relate to any social difficulties?

EW: All social spaces are defined through rules -whether these are social or legal constructs. These rules, like the material forms that constitute these spaces, provide a structure for individuals and groups to engage. Public and private spaces may manifest differently, but difficulties are usually resolved through relations of power. These exist in both planned and unplanned communities.

Q: Do you agree that there is a worrisome tendency to aestheticize the physical reality of these places, and also to ignore



the living conditions there in an attempt to come up with a novel way of looking at urban phenomena?

EW: Yes. These aesthetics can be appealing to urbanists who are overexposed to their own banal surroundings and who seek out alternative forms and images. However, by focusing on the merely the visual the innovative relations and interactions that make many of these unplanned spaces are overlooked.

Q: There is no doubt that these new cities will continue to grow and will increase in density over time. Do you think the government should privatize these dwellings by issuing titles?

EW: This is a difficult question. I would ask who will benefit most from the privatization of these dwellings or the formalization of the informal. Many conditions of informality highlight disparities that of power, economies or opportunity. When processes of formalization occur these changes should address these inequalities rather than exasperate them.

Q: Landscape, in Jordan, is usually an afterthought, a plane that gets conquered by human intervention. The need for shelter is more important than establishing a dialogue between what gets built and where it gets built. How a landscape urbanism would function in informal settlement upgrading, or as a pre-emptive design solution?

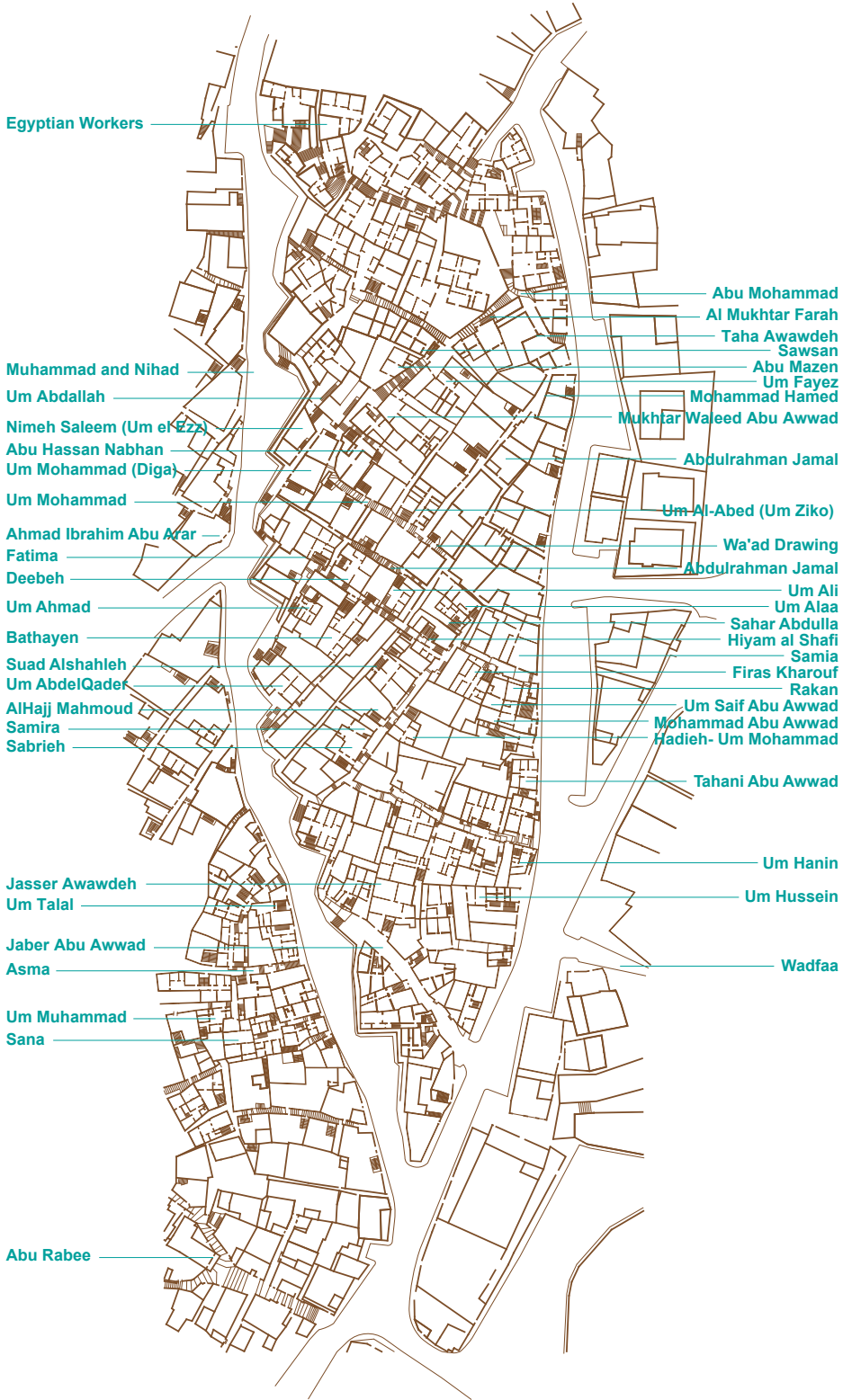
EW: I would not attempt to address any urban conditions through a predetermined approach, such as landscape urbanism. Some of the ideas of landscape urbanism may be suitable for upgrading informal or unplanned settlements but these would change from city to city. Landscape, in its broad definition, as defining relationships between people and land can be a useful way of thinking about cities. Landscape approaches can be used to consider material spaces as well as less tangible concerns for secure tenure on the land, environmental concerns and social space. These are often the immediate concerns for those living in unplanned settlements rather than traditional notions of landscape, as green space.



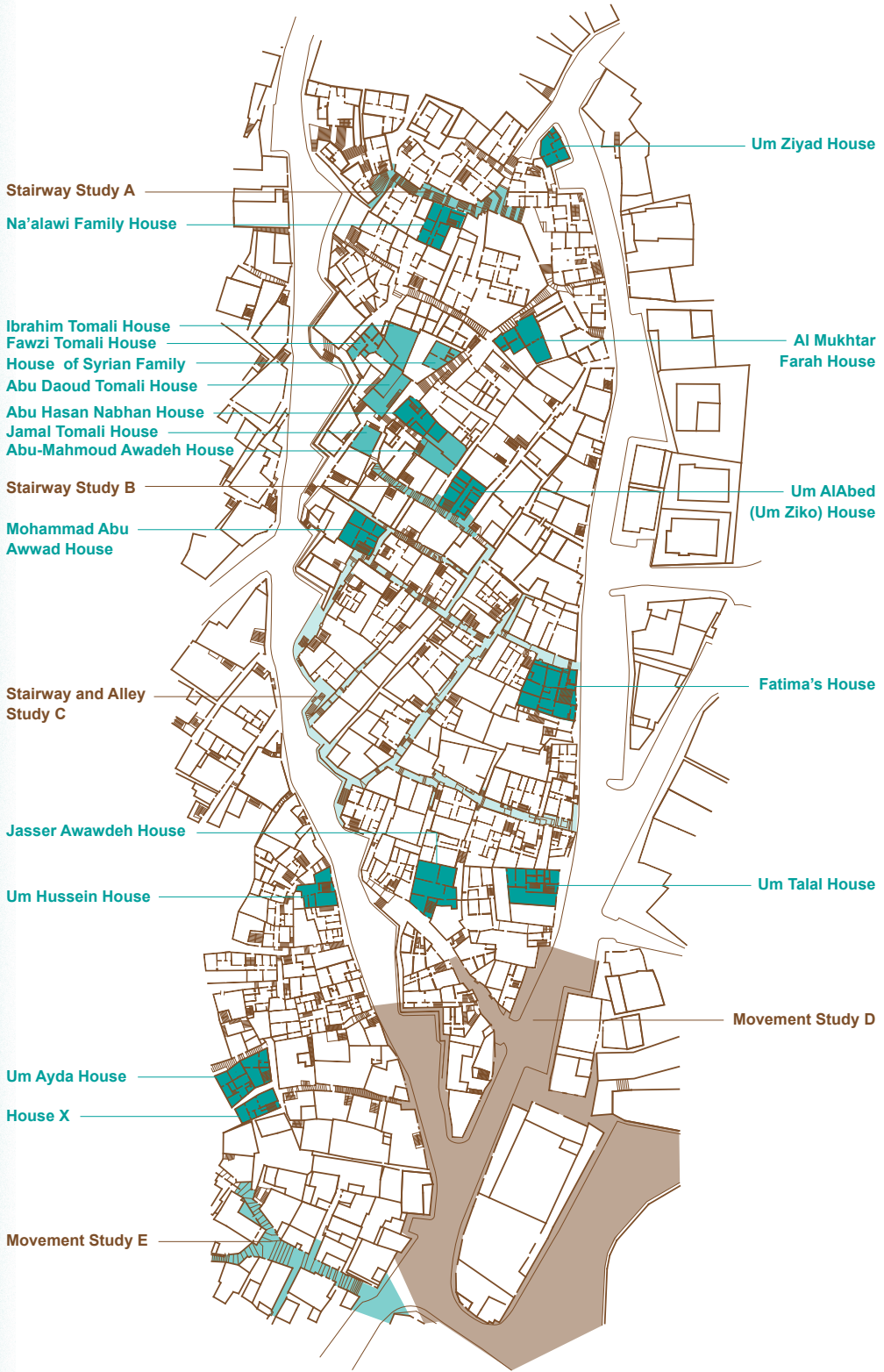


## PERSONAL INTERVIEWS AND HOUSING TYPOLOGIES

Forty-eight people and families were interviewed and twelve exemplary houses surveyed through photographs, sketches, floor plans of all levels, and in most cases, an axonometric drawing. The morphology of these self-built houses reacts to the needs of inhabitants, but also to their urban context, to neighboring buildings, and respond to the topography. For this reason the ground floor plans, as well as some volumetric studies, are drawn in context. The interviews with inhabitants took place on site, and are summarized from notes taken during the conversation. Interviewees' opinions and personal narratives are presented as they were related to us. We are unable to verify facts and we withhold judgment in order to be able to represent the diversity of viewpoints and experiences.







Location of Housing Typologies and Studies



### INTERVIEW #1: AL MUKHTAR

**Name: Waleed Abu Awad**

**Gender/Age: Male/60s**

**Employment Status: Unemployed**

**Household: Wife, 2 Daughters, 5 Sons (married)**

**Building ownership: Owner**

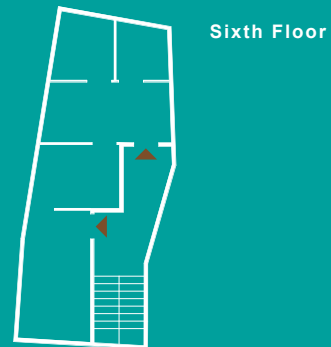
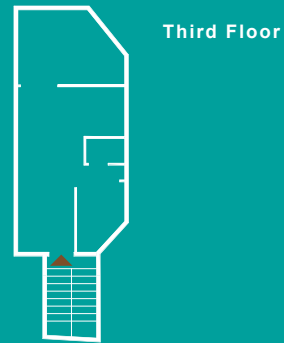
Abu Awad is the Mokhtar of the neighbourhood, he unsuccessfully ran for parliament twice. His two daughters are enrolled in a school outside the camp; all his sons are married and live outside Jabal Al Natheef, except for one son, who lives in the same building. He often visits his relatives in the neighbourhood and gets his necessities from other areas (Wehdat) because of lower prices. He complains of insufficient parking lots, which forces him to park his car relatively far from home, this in turn leads to car vandalism and theft (his son's bus was stolen -reason for relocating to other neighbourhood). Abu Awad is satisfied with the public transportation, he uses the service taxi route from Natheef to Raghadan, but feels uncomfortable returning to the neighbourhood late as there are no lights in the alleyways. He also mentions the lack of children playgrounds consequently; the family's main social space becomes the balcony at the entrance of the house, or the rooftop.

Mukhtar Farah building:  
6 floors, 2 basements,  
and a roof. The total of 15  
apartments for 15 families.

Ground floor: 3 apart-  
ments rented by foreig-  
ners (non-relatives). One of the  
apartments is inhabited by Al  
Sayyed Muhammad Mahmoud from  
Egypt, with his wife who's  
from Philippines. He is a  
construction worker, who has  
worked on several sites around  
Amman. He has been living  
in this apartment for the  
last 8 years. Most of their  
interactions are with other  
foreigners in the area.

Fourth floor: 2 apart-  
ments, for 2 families sharing  
a corridor and the stairwell.  
They are relatives of Mukhtar  
Farah. One of the apartments  
holds a family of 4 kids and  
their parents. 3 boys and a  
girl, all going to Mu'ath bin  
Jabal School in AlMareekh.  
The father is a nurse in Al  
Karameh Hospital, the mother  
is a college graduate of IT,  
she worked with the ministry  
of education a while back but  
now is a house wife.

Sixth floor: 2 Apart-  
ments for two families; one  
of which moved to a new area  
of Amman ( Jawwah- Khrebet Al  
Souq) and the other is still  
using the apartment. This  
family consists of 9 people,  
parents, grandparents, and  
5 kids. The house has two  
bedrooms, one living room,  
a kitchen and a bathroom. The  
children use the stairwell as  
a playground.





## INTERVIEW #2: THE FATHER WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

**Name: Jassar Awawdeh**  
**Gender: Male/50s**  
**Employment Status: Unemployed**  
**Household: Wife, 2 daughters and 3 sons**  
**Housing Typology: Ground floor apartment**  
**Building ownership: Owner**

Jassar was born in Khalil, Palestine, he has been in Jabal Al Natheef since 1948, and he lives in the building along with his 6 brothers. He is disabled, therefore gets financial support from a governmental aid institution. His children are enrolled in a governmental school in the area, but he highly believes that the main problem of the area is the lack of playgrounds for kids, as they are all over the streets which is unsafe. He describes the area as "suffocating for children".

His wife added the following:

"We have adjusted the house to fit in with the needs of my husband, the doors are wider and there is more space compared to our neighbours to allow my physically disabled husband to move freely."

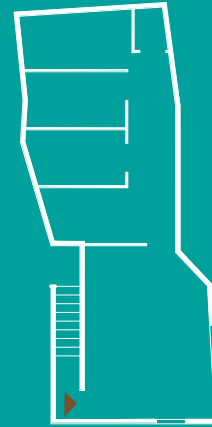


The building is inhabited by the families of 2 brothers who are married to 2 sisters.

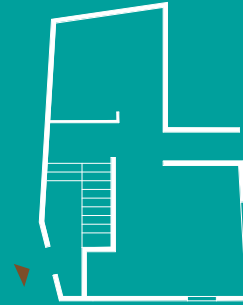
Abu Hassan lives on the ground floor with his wife, 3 sons and daughter. Many changes have been made to the building since it was built in 1948 to adapt to their needs; such as shifting the entrance of the house to add a bathroom for his disabled son.

The first floor is for Um Qusai's family, the apartment has no windows except in the living room. There used to be a courtyard but it was converted to bedrooms for the children.

Ground Floor



First Floor





### INTERVIEW #3: THE TRUCK DRIVER

**Name:** Abu Hassan Al Nahban  
**Gender:** Male/50s  
**Profession:** Truck Driver  
**Household:** Wife, 3 sons and 1 daughter  
**Housing Typology:** Ground floor apartment  
**Building ownership:** Owned

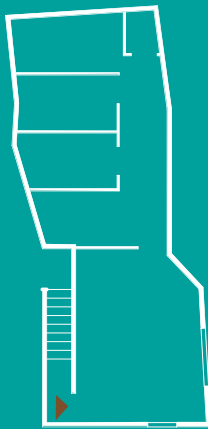
Abu Hassan is a truck driver whose family migrated to Jabal Al Natheef in 1948. He feels comfortable in the area, and knows most of his neighbors who are all from his hometown -Khalil, Palestine. His home is in a very bad condition, which is due to his financial inability to get it fixed. He made a few changes, such as converting the courtyard into bedrooms for the children, and changing the location of the entrance in order to add a bathroom for his disabled son. There is no secondary school for boys in the area; his son thus has to walk to catch the bus to get to his school in Al Ashrafiyyah.

### Ground Floor



He describes the two staircases that lead to his home as tiring but he prefers one to the other because he knows all the people that live around it, he thinks the other one is dirty and dislikes the community around there. Abu Hassan says the area has become much safer since the police station opened, he still however thinks "My neighbor paid for the building of staircase, not the municipality, I do not expect them to take care of our needs, even collecting trash. Me and the children do it."

### First Floor





#### INTERVIEW #4: THE RUWWAD APPRECIATOR

**Name:** Um Abed

**Gender:** Female/40s

**Employment Status:** Housewife

**Household:** Husband, 6 sons and one daughter

**Housing Typology:** Ground floor apartment of family building

**Building ownership:** Owned by father in law

Um Abed hates the area and wishes to relocate because of the trash. The municipality regularly empties the trash bins located on main streets, but they do not clean the alleys. Her husband shops in other neighborhood (Wehdat Camp) because it is cheaper. She took part in "homes without violence" workshop at Ruwwad, and appreciates their presence in the neighborhood. Her daughter left school at 14 because her husband and father in law feel that the neighborhood is not safe for young girls. She does not leave her home except to visit her brother who lives at top end of staircase or sister who lives at bottom end of staircase. The building's courtyard is the extended family's gathering place and it has multiple uses: celebrations, washing rail, and a play area for children. It is also the only outdoor space for the women who live in the building. Her apartment was previously a bakery, and is in a derelict state because due to humidity. Her six children sleep in one bedroom. She and her husband sleep in the living room.

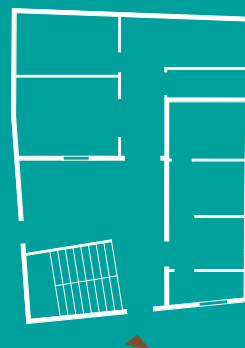


The building has 4 apartments owned by the father where he and his three sons with their families live.

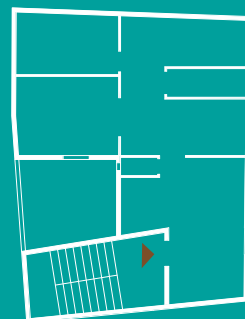
The courtyard is the extended family's gathering place and it has multiple uses: celebrations, washing rail, and the play area for children. It is also the only outdoor space for the women who live in the building.

The ground floor: it has two apartments, one is inhabited by the elder brother, his wife (Um Ziko) and their six children. their apartment was previously a bakery owed by her father in law and is now in a derelict state due to humidity. Her six children sleep in one bedroom. She and her husband sleep in the living room.

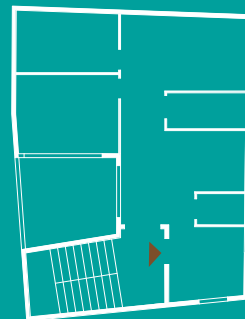
Ground Floor



First Floor



Second Floor





#### INTERVIEW #5: THE TAILOR

**Name:** Fatima Mussalam

**Gender:** Female/50s

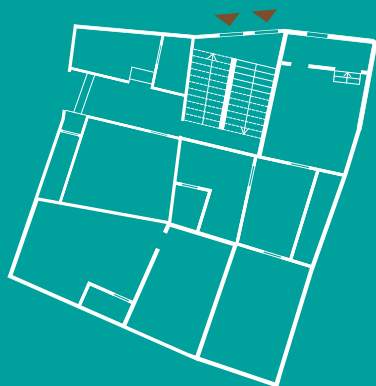
**Employment Status:** Housewife and Tailor

**Household:** Husband, 6 children

**Housing Typology:** Three-bedroom apartment

Fatima lives with her husband and six children in a small apartment of three rooms. Her husband works as a taxi driver and two of her children graduated from college. She benefits from the rations stamps.

Ground Floor



First Floor





#### INTERVIEW #6: THE GOOD SON

**Name: Mohamad Abu Awwad**

**Gender: Male/30s**

**Profession: Works in the Syrian refugee camps in the north of Jordan**

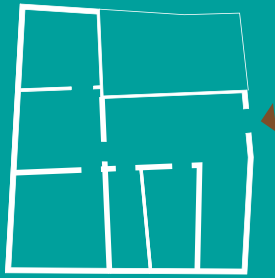
**Household: Mother, father and two sisters**

**Housing Typology: Three-bedroom apartment**

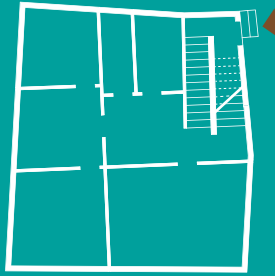
**Building ownership: Owned**

Mohammad lives in excellent conditions with his parents and 2 sisters; they seem a very educated family. All family members had graduated from the University of Jordan. His family was the first to come to Al Natheef in 1948; his father (Yousef Al Haj Ali) is a main source of information about the area. He believes that Al Natheef is a good environment and the municipality does a good job in cleaning the streets. He also believes that the people cause the main problems; they tend to throw garbage on the streets. He added that there is a lot of anti social behavior; such as drugs, alcohol and vandalism. Mohammad's house has two big guest rooms, a living room, a kitchen, a bathroom and three bedrooms. The family owns the whole building; two new rooms were built on the top floor to accommodate more relatives.

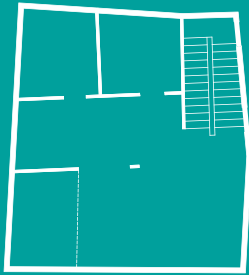




Basement



Ground Floor



First Floor





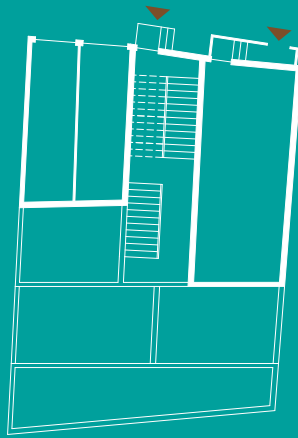
#### INTERVIEW #7: THE MOTHER IN LAW

**Name: Um Talal**  
**Gender: Female/66**  
**Profession: Housewife**  
**Household: Two sons and a daughter**  
**Housing Typology: Three-bedroom apartment**  
**Building ownership: Owned**

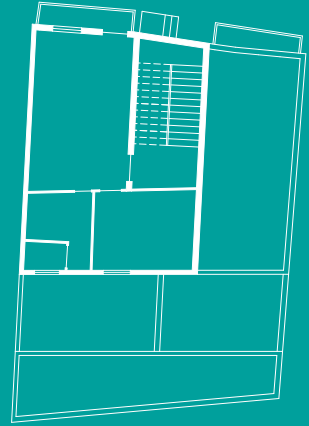
Um Talal has been living in Jabal Al Natheef since 1971, her husband left her a four-storey house. She shares it with her family; she lives on the 4th floor alone with her daughter and her married sons occupy the remaining floors. She complained about her son's wife claiming it cost him 20,000 JDS to marry her.

The Interviewee's husband left her a 4 storey house, she lives on the 4th floor alone with her daughter. On the 1st floor lives her son's first wife with 2 kids (2, 7 years old). The 2nd wife of her son lives on the 3rd floor with 2 kids (3 years, 6 months old), that leaves the apartment on the ground floor empty. During the interview the daughter (32 years old) asked her mother if she can open a kindergarten in the empty apartment. The mother refused due to children being noisy.

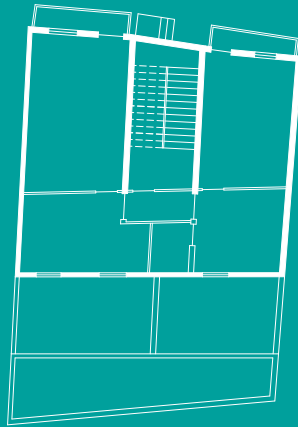
Ground Floor



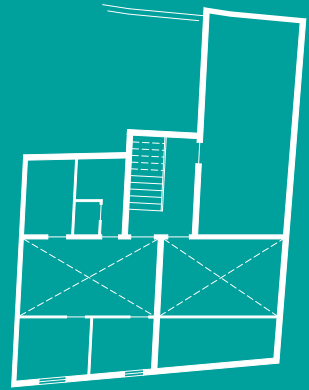
First Floor



Second Floor



Roof



## INTERVIEW #8: THE NARRATOR

**Name:** Abu Mohammad  
**Gender/Age:** Male/67  
**Employment Status:** Unemployed  
**Household:** Wife, 2 daughters and 2 sons  
**Housing Typology:** Ground floor apartment  
**Building ownership:** Owner

Abu Mohammad says that the area used to be farmlands; fig trees, vines and wheat fields, and that it was full of caves when the refugees came in 1948. Lots of families took shelter in the caves, and then they started setting up tents. The ones that had money built a "barakeyyeh" (a temporary structure made out of metal sheets and wood), the materials used for the barrakeyyeh were sold for 8 Dinars; they would build it and rent it for half a Dinar. The ones who couldn't afford it set up a tent, later on; they started marking the land around their tent using rocks claiming it as theirs. The land, however, belonged to Mohammad Amin, who at the time didn't know that the land was his. When he found out he claimed the land, the UNRWA thus rented the land for many years.

In the 1960s women used to go to Ras Al-Ain, which had water spring to do their laundry, wash the dishes and bring back drinking water, there was no running water at the time. In 1963 the Jabal started prospering, there were less barrakeyat and more buildings, people self-built their houses, by 1967, people started building single rooms. With more influx, people started extending leaving tight distances between the houses, in the lower camp, some alleys are about 40 cm wide, and you have to walk sideways to fit. In the 1990's, the street in the middle of the camp only reached Mos'ab mosque, if there was a fire or someone got sick, ambulances and fire trucks could not access the accident. He can't afford to leave Jabal Al Natheef, but he says that people who have enough money would sell their house to people from outside the area and buy one somewhere else in Amman. Some of these new owners were decent and other brought troubles. He nostalgically talks about the good old days of a community who knew and respected one another, share food to each other in Ramadan, but the times are different now, in my own home, we don't all eat together. It's not the way it used to be.







### INTERVIEW #9: THE CRITICIZER

**Name: Mohammad Hamed**  
**Gender/Age: Male/50**  
**Employment Status: Retired**  
**Household: Wife, children**  
**Building ownership: Owner**

Mohammad talks about the 2002 new roads project, he says that the municipality paid good compensations to the people affected by the roads -buildings were torn down at a rate of 200 JDs per square meter.

'Imagine 4 floors with an area of 1000 meters, they would get 200,000 JDs even though the house isn't worth 20,000 JDs!'

They have to re-assess the situation; one road to service the area isn't enough; it is still very hard to get basics such as gas. He has lived here for 40 years and he faced many problems, thugs coming in the night, armed hooligans wondering. Alleyways and passages drown in darkness due to insufficient lighting.

"If we had wide open streets where you can see and supervise everything we'd feel safer. Look at these alleys! Some are 1.5 meters wide! They shouldn't have allowed multi-story building here."





He also states that the reason the camp did not develop is absence of government intervention, residents were charged for all the infrastructure.

"They charged me about 500 JDs 20 years ago when they first did the sewer lines!... They said they would stop charging us fees for sewerage infrastructure but they still charge us fees for it! All of it goes in their pockets... No one cares if we survive or not!"

His children didn't get scholarships from Ruwwad. One son studies accounting and the other studies hotel services yet his retirement salary barely covers their education fees.

"In the beginning we had a negative attitude towards Ruwwad and the Jordan River foundation but we helped them get started and supported them and told people to trust them, however, we didn't get the help we were promised. Other people got scholarships and jobs and we were left to beg. I can't afford to pay their tuition... my son, who studies accounting, has to work at Sameh mall from 4 pm till 2 am! He sleeps for a few hours and then goes to University... this lead to his grades dropping... this is what's happening to us."



#### INTERVIEW #10: THE EGYPTIAN

**Names:** Sayyed Abd Al-Rahman

**Gender/Age:** Male/47

**Employment Status:** Employed

**Household:** 5 flat mates

**Housing Typology:** 3-bedroom apartment - Shared

**Building ownership:** Rented

Sayyed has been in Jordan since 1989 and has been living in the same house ever since, he visits Egypt every 6-7 months. He says that life expenses here are much better than in his home country. Although he and his flat mates all have diplomas (one used to work for the ministry of health in Egypt) in Amman they work at construction sites. He keeps to himself to avoid problems, and keep his relationship with neighbors at respectful level. Because of his long working hours he barely have time to go anywhere, even on Fridays he usually have to work. He haven't benefited from Ruwwad as it only targets the original residents of the area.







#### INTERVIEW #11: THE COMPLAINER

**Name: Um Mohammad**  
**Gender/Age: Female/60**  
**Employment Status: Housewife**

Um Mohammad talks about problems in infrastructure; water, sewer lines, pipes breaking and leaking all over the stairs. She says it is impossible to get assistance because of the stair/alley network; gas and fire trucks and vegetable selling lorries have absolutely no access. Waste is not collected in the area; and it is very difficult to carry it all the way up the stairs to the garbage bins in the upper and lower streets. The Alleys are very problematic in terms of circulation; the stairs are exhausting for the senior citizens, the alleys block the sunlight, which in turn causes walls to get and cold and hold moisture. She also mentions rat and mice problems at the ground level, moreover, she mentions deficiency in street lighting, which leads to insecurity and crime. She ends the interview with this blunt declaration:

"The only solution I can think of is that they demolish the whole area and give us compensation! We'd be happy with that! Get us out of this disgusting place."





## INTERVIEW #12: THE BOY WITH THE MENTAL MAP

**Name:** Wa'ed  
**Gender/Age:** Male/9

When asked about his house, Wa'ad drew a set of maps; a plan of his house and an outdoor sketch of his house showing the satellite dish on the roof and some doves flying in the sky.







### INTERVIEW #13: ELDERLY WOMEN ON THE ROOF

**Name: Nimeh Saleem**  
**Gender: Female/70s**  
**Employment Status: Housewife**  
**Household: Husband, no children**  
**Housing Typology: 2-floor building**  
**Building ownership: Owner**

Originally from Khalil, Palestine, when Nimeh first migrated to Jabal Al Natheef which she describes as an empty land, she lived in a tent for 3 years, along with her husband she then built a room using corrugated sheets in which they lived for 3 or 4 years. They later moved into a flat across the street, and when things got better they moved into their current home, which is a converted bakery that belonged to her cousin. They initially lived in one floor, but added a second one at a later stage. Unlike other neighbors with children, they paid for builders to do the work. A close relative lives nearby, his wife takes care of all their needs, she does their grocery shopping and brings them food at a daily basis. Since Nimeh rarely leave home, she spends her day on the rooftop and the small entrance/ balcony facing the street.



#### INTERVIEW #14: THE CRAFTSMAN

**Name:** Ahmad Ibrahim Abu Arar  
**Gender:** Male/50s  
**Employment Status:** Retired  
**Household:** Wife, 8 children  
**Housing Typology:** Ground floor apartment  
**Building ownership:** Owner

Ahmad is a retired father and husband; he has been living in the camp since 1967. He left school in the 4th grade, he later worked as a craftsman to provide for his family of 8 but now his son is the main source of income he works as a car mechanic. He currently lives in the three-room ground floor apartment of his family's building.

His house is located on the upper edge of the lower camp directly on the new street. He complained about the services such as streetlights and garbage collection. He says:

"Garbage is collected once a month, and to fix a streetlight you have to wait forever".

Ahmad also discusses the negative effect of the new streets; he says the area used to be safer, quieter and inhabitants were closer to each other, he goes on to describe the status quo as unusual with new people of different backgrounds coming into the area.



#### INTERVIEW #15: THE GYPSY

**Name:** Sami  
**Gender:** Female/30s  
**Employment Status:** Housewife  
**Household:** Husband, 10 children  
**Housing Typology:** 3-bedroom apartment  
**Building ownership:** Rented

A mother of 10 children lives with her husband in a rented derelict apartment with her husband and children. Samia is a gypsy who dropped out from school at the age of 7, she got married 11 years ago and now has children with ages ranging from 7 months to 24 years (3 boys and 7 girls), 3 of her daughters are married and moved out from Al Natheef. Her husband also a drop out after the 3rd grade, he works as a scavenger and is the family's only income source.

When asked about her neighbors, she says that she doesn't know or visit anyone and has no contact with them. Other than the lack of social interaction she said that the area isn't safe and that she must lock her door at all times.

The house's doorsteps are filled with garbage and empty bags. Neighbors claim that this family has the worst reputation in the camp; they swear and say blasphemous things, even the young kids. The children kept asking for change all the way from the main street. The poor women asked for this "Please don't take pictures of me, my husband would go crazy!"







#### INTERVIEW #16: THE PICTURE-PERFECT FAMILY

**Name:** Firas Ihsan Kharouf  
**Gender:** Male/30s  
**Employment Status:** Janitor  
**Household:** Wife, 2 daughters and a son  
**Housing Typology:** Four-room apartment  
**Building ownership:** Owner

Firas lives in the ground floor of a 3-storey building with his mom, wife, 2 daughters and son. The four-room apartment has been newly renovated and is in a very good condition, the building consists of 3 apartments one on each floor; Firas and his two uncles live in it. Both he and his wife Noor finished school, he now works as a janitor at a telecommunications company. They understand and believe in the importance of education as they told us both their kids (8 and 6 years old) go to school and are to graduate high school and get a collage degree if possible. Wissam (8 years old) and Dana (6 years old) joined Ruwwad's programs and go to Shams Al-Jabal library whenever is possible. Firas says that the fact that they live close to their relatives helped in creating strong family connections and their good reputation in the neighborhood. They say that they move around freely, but things would be much better and they would feel safer if their next-door neighbors didn't drink and use drugs.



#### INTERVIEW #17: THE PROBLEMATIC TEENAGER

**Name: Rakan**

**Gender: Male/17**

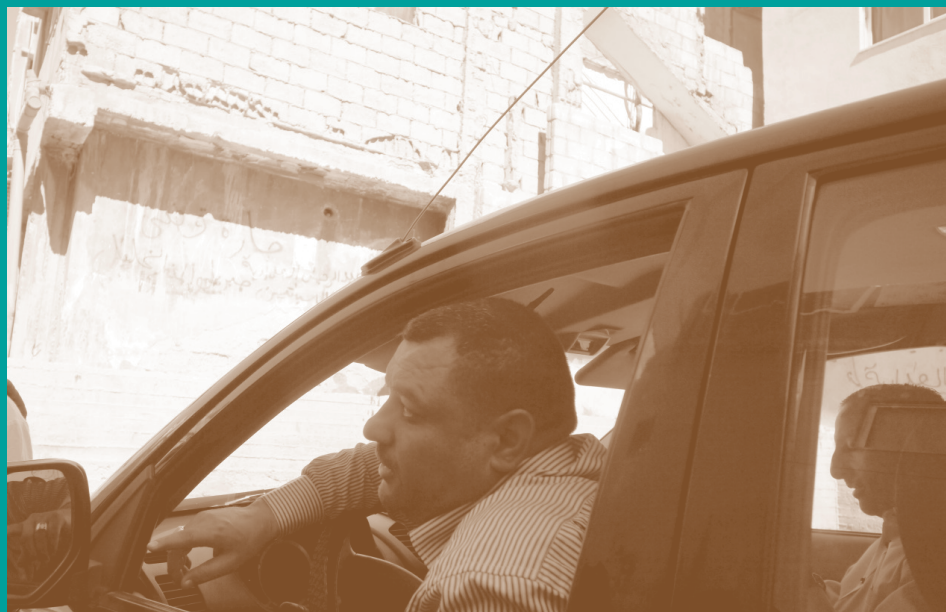
**Household: Mother, stepfather and 3 brothers**

**Housing Typology: Apartment**

**Building ownership: Rented**

The high school student, Rakan lives with his mother, stepfather and three brothers. They live in their apartment in very bad conditions. The family grew apart since the death of the father, the mother (42 year old) has remarried a younger man (33 year old) and the stepfather tends to stay at home, not working. Rakan's mother is the main income source working as a janitor in a nearby company. The neighbors' complain about the boy's attitude, he drinks a lot and is a troublemaker.





#### INTERVIEW #18: THE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

**Name:** Eng. Muhammad Hunaiti and Nihad Muslih

**Gender:** Males/40s

**Profession:** Employees at the Environmental department of the Greater Amman Municipality

Eng. Muhammad Hunaiti and Nihad Musih, were driving through Jabal Al Natheef. They are in for work; trying to raise awareness about hygiene issues by starting campaigns for children at schools. They complained about vandalism acts that are happening in Jabal, such as burning garbage containers and breaking streetlights.

They also discussed the inefficiency of the sewage and drainage systems, which gets worse in rainy and snowy days, difficulty in circulation, and water being provided only three days a week. Muhammad also said: "Vandalism is very common in Jabal Al Natheef; we recently installed 4 new garbage containers because the old ones got burned"





#### INTERVIEW #19: THE LITTLE GIRL

**Name:** Asma  
**Gender:** Female/10

Asma was born in Jabal Al Natheef, she attend school in Jabal Al Mareekh which is relatively far. When is not at school she goes to Ruwwad library to play and spend her free time. She happily says: "I like spending time in Ruwwad's library, we read, play tennis and paint"



#### INTERVIEW #20: THE SUPERMARKET OWNER

**Name:** Abu Rabee

**Gender:** Male/60s

**Employment Status:** Supermarket owner

**Building ownership:** Owner

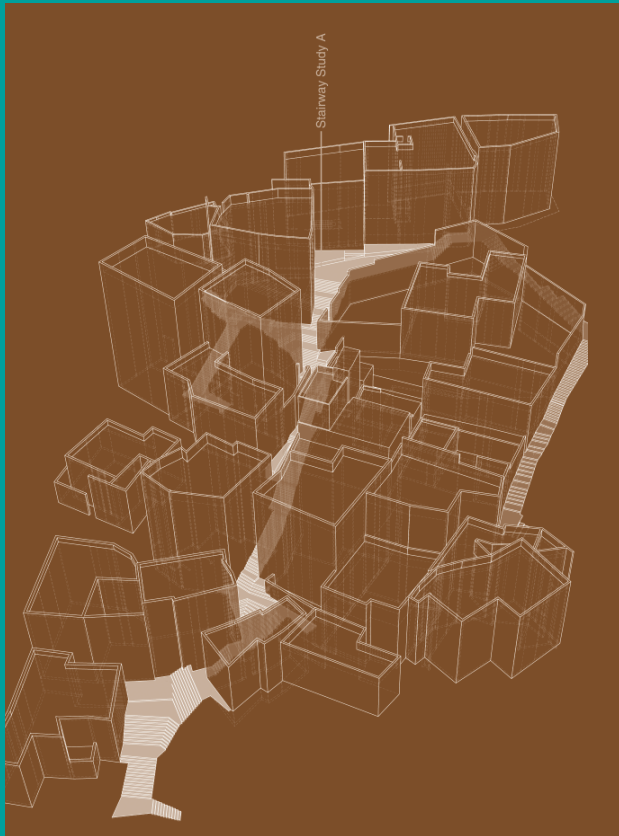
Abu Rabee has been living in Jabal Al Natheef since the 1980s; he changed several jobs before opening his own supermarket. He complained about the difficulty of importing the goods, which are delivered from the main street to his supermarket he blames it on the lack of wide streets inside the camp. He says that the inhabitants suffer from bad living conditions and insecurity. "People here are unfortunate and whoever gets the chance and has the ability to leave Jabal Al Natheef will do so."



#### INTERVIEW #21: THE MOTHER AND THE DAUGHTER

**Name:** Sana'a  
**Gender:** Female/40s  
**Employment Status:** Teacher  
**Household:** 1 daughter  
**Housing Typology:** Apartment  
**Building ownership:** Owned

Sana teaches Arabic at the Islamic community college, she provides for herself and her 21-year-old daughter who studies genetic engineering at Philadelphia University. The girl applied for the Ruwwad scholarship but did not qualify, her mother thus pays her tuition fees, and since they don't own a car she uses public transportation to get to university. In her free time she usually meets with her friends at some coffee shop outside Jabal Al Natheef, but she usually won't stay out later than 6 pm.



### SHARED STAIRWAYS AND ALLEYWAYS

Shared spaces between houses in the upper camp often are of minimal dimensions. Their enclosures and geometries are defined by the houses that surround them and that were self-built without an authoritative urban plan. As such, many of these spaces are delineated by geometries "left over" once houses were constructed. They face the problems that are documented and described here, but also reveal moments of unexpected beauty.

The stairways of Mohammad Amin camp partly mimic the celebrated stairs of Amman but also show a character that responds to the particularities of the Jabal Al Natheef -topography, urban grain, morphology and social capital.





STAIRWAY  
STUDY A:  
LEFTOVER  
SPACE

Apart from infrastructural and service problems, most of the People we've interviewed had no complaints about the homes they live in, but they mainly complained about the spaces in between; the leftover space. These spaces in between the buildings remained a byproduct of the expansion of each house. They managed to explore new forms of their own stability to adapt to the uncertainty of their situation individually, yet not as a community as a whole.





9 AM



12 PM



3 PM



6 PM



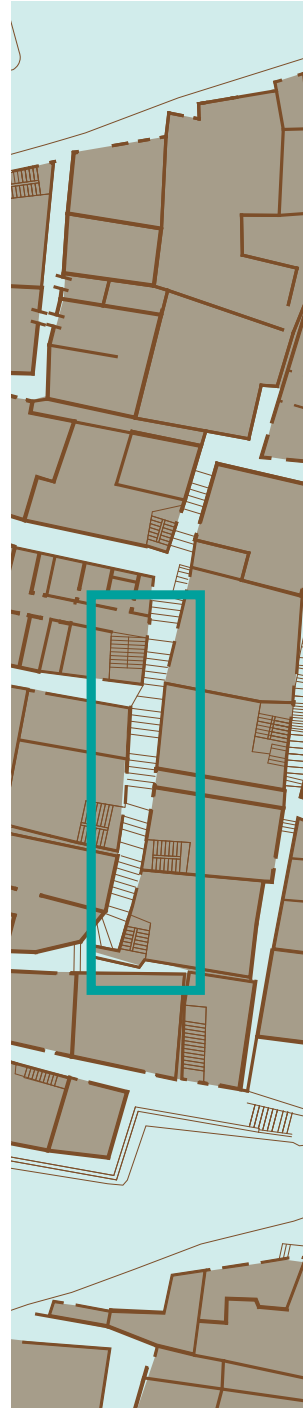
STAIRWAY  
STUDY B:

INFRASTRUCTURE  
PROBLEMS

A Broken Sewer Pipe kept leaking on the stairs all day while people walked over and kids played around. According to residents this happens often.

DAYLIGHT

The Staircase is tight, surrounded by high buildings preventing any daylight from getting in. The walls hold moisture in them and residents face problems with rats on the ground floors.







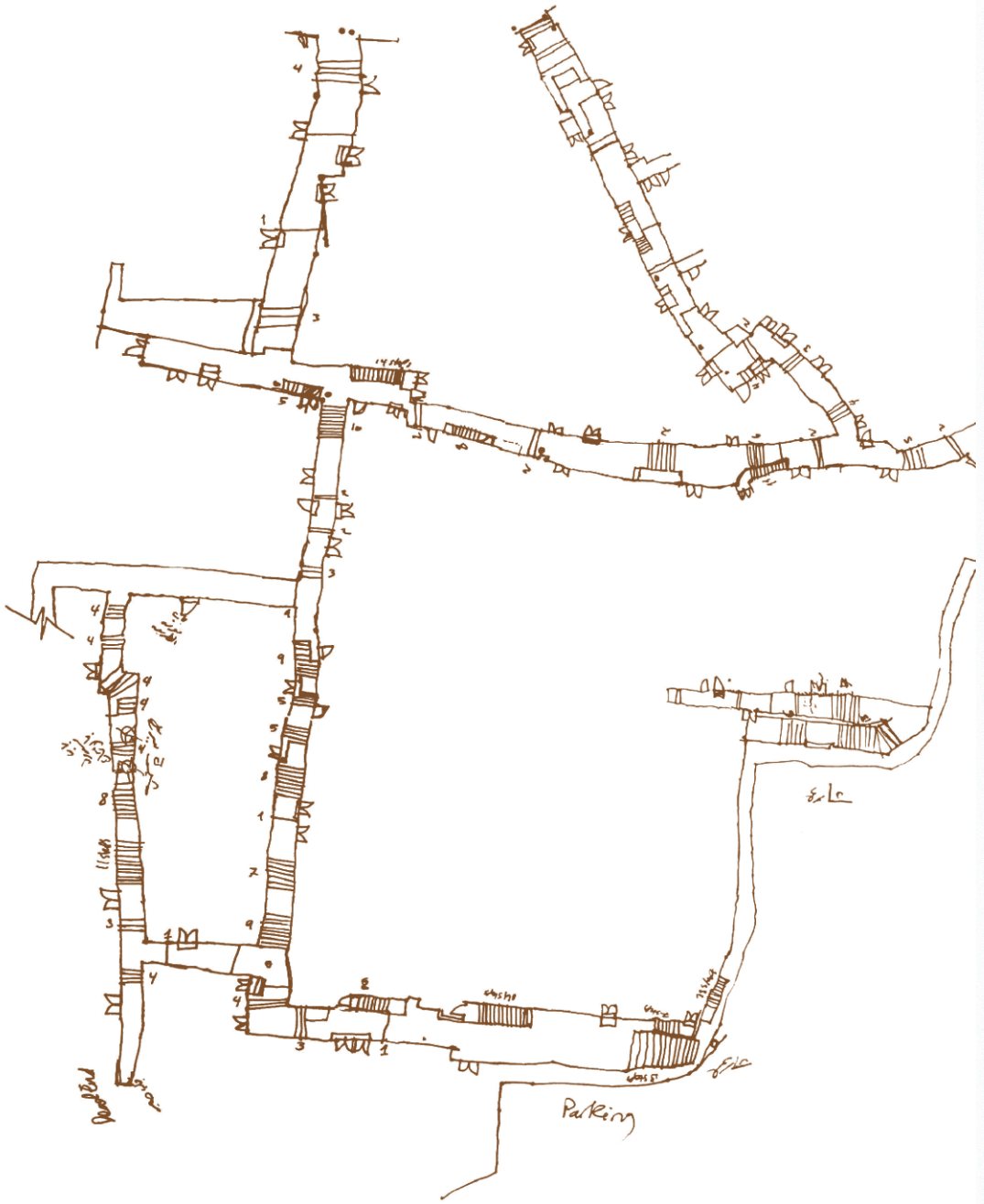


### NETWORK OF ALLEYS AND CHILDREN'S GAMES

The intricate pathways that permeate the upper camp are the only medium of movement in, out and through Mohammad Amin Camp. These pathways reveal glimpses of the socially vibrant life of their residents. Many of these residents welcomed us into their homes, and then allowed us to survey their shared and domestic spaces.

The interwoven series of stairs and alleyways, many less than 1 meter wide suffers from poor lighting and water dripping from leaky pipes above. There is a lot out there on critiquing the experience of urban mobility as part of the built environment. Because of this, we categorized the idea and established a useful method of analysis that got to the heart of urban circulation form in an aim of developing the design of public space.

STAIRWAYS AND ALLEYS  
STUDY C:





### CHILDREN'S GAMES

Many interests developed during our exploration of the network of pathways and stairways, with their many level changes and their intricate articulation of thresholds, entrances and spatial transitions. One of our main interests revolved around entering the world of the children and their games. Throwing a bottle filled with sand, and then hiding it in the nooks and crannies that surround the pathways is a variation of "hide and seek" specific to the camp. We discussed the implications of this game with Siobhan Campbell during the interview that accompanies our drawings.

TRANSCRIPT OF AN EMAIL INTERVIEW WITH  
SIOBHAN CAMPBELL, KINGSTON UNIVERSITY  
LONDON, 26.10.2013

Question: Palestinians are displaced from the war in their land and the region, along with the newcomers from Syria that are fleeing to their refuge in the informal settlement of Jabal Al Natheef. How do you see the potential of that in creating more conflict and traumatic stories in the camp and the impact on their daily lives?

Siobhan Campbell: I am from Ireland where I've worked in Dialogue for Peaceful Change and other interventions. The title of one of the Peace Process projects in Northern Ireland is 'Towards Understanding and Healing: Dealing with the Past through Storytelling and Positive Encounter Dialogue'. In the ways you describe here, with your interest in social relations and their environmental contexts, you are working within this 'positive encounter' arena with your mapping of Jabal Al Natheef and with your collection of stories and experiences from those who live there. You are working to recognize individual experience and to also place this in the context of larger stories. The gathering of experiences is facilitated by the fact that you are among the inhabitants, 'on the ground' as it were, as you produce detailed maps which will augment the stories of these lives. It is fair to say that the 'truths' that we see in your reports are ones which we would not otherwise encounter. You mention the fleeing from war and conflict experienced both by Palestinians who have fled both their land and the region, 'along with the new comers from Syria that are fleeing to take refuge in the informal settlement of Jabal Al Natheef and other places in Amman.' What we can recognize here are the ways in which some of the personal stories have similarities of experience while we also recognize that each is entirely different and inflected with different needs, wants, hopes and in some cases, a decisive wish that 'return' be made possible. A chance to 'speak life narrative' can often be the first step towards a



sense that the difficulties of displacement can be spoken of and that this can have a lasting effect. It can often present one of the initial ways towards replacing the feeling of not being in a safe or suitable place with a sense that the temporary space has indeed become a place of engagement with life's processes. This is seen through your recording of the efforts the inhabitants of Jabal Al Natheef have made with regard to the environment, as well as your striking engagement with the ways that the children play. One way of circumnavigating the multiplicity of narratives, some of which may seek to cancel each other out by describing for instance a worse experience, or a heightened sense of victimhood, is to adopt - as you have here - the idea of 'disparate multiple narratives'. This facilitates better understanding of the historical and social drivers of the legacies spoken about and highlights the effort it has taken in some cases to overcome these inheritances. When you present your work back to the communities in Jabal Al Natheef, it is hoped, (as we have observed this in Northern Ireland) that the stories you gathered become a key way to develop and maintain cross-community and cross-cultural meaningful relationships, allowing those who participated and those who read your work and opportunity to begin to see the past and its present in a different set of ways.

With your project in Jabal Al Natheef, you are paying particular attention to the environments, both spatial and imagined, in which the people live. We know from works such as *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: the Ethics of Recognition* by Siddonie Smith and Jay Schaffer that the personal 'really is political'. In their essay on 'Truth, Reconciliation and the Traumatic past', these authors pay attention to the 'diverse forms of witnessing' to life as lived and your work in Jordan forms part of the ongoing world-wide project of ethical recognition of the personal as political and therefore of the real need for stories-based experience to be recorded and preserved.

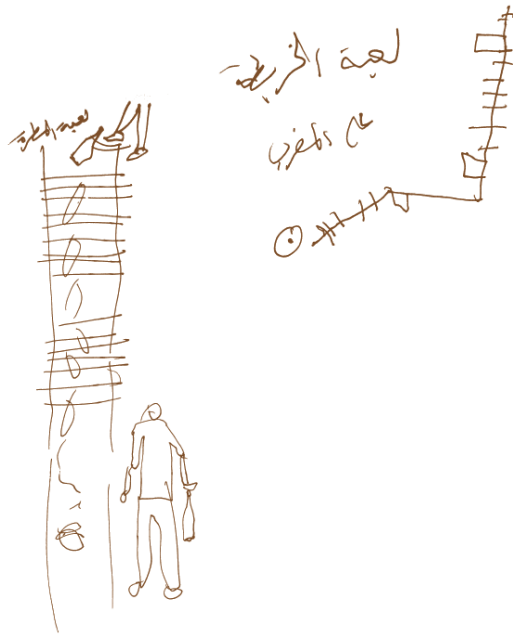
Question: Life in the camp is problematic because of the strong emergence of the drug and alcoholic scene, which is causing an epidemic amongst the youth of the camp.

Siobhan Campbell: We know from studies on trauma-informed substance abuse (Combat Stress UK and elsewhere) that forms of PTSD and other post-trauma processes can lead to the kind of epidemic levels of substance use as you observed in Jabal Al Natheef. I have worked with Combat Stress and their therapists to incorporate creative writing into a set of interventions which can have an affect over time on such patterns of behaviour. It is to be hoped that since this project is partly to stimulate a discussion of Jabal Al Natheef's possible futures and since your mapping of such possibilities may include future community gathering centers and the like, that there may be room in the set of futures discussed for ongoing work related to involving the young people in recording their present and in imagining their futures via writing processes and practice and other art-based work.

Question: There are quite a few games of hide & seek type and that depend on the use of the intricate pathways inside the camp amongst the kids. Some games depend on hiding bottles around the pathway and trying to find them with going backwards to get them back. Others depend on creating maps and following them around sunset time to make it last longer and make it more exciting. We found this element quite interesting and possibly related to the traumatic experiences of the kids and their families. (See sketches)

Siobhan Campbell: Your striking observations around the games of hide and seek as played in the camp provide a set of images worth reflecting upon. The narrow intricate pathways and up-and-down nature of the stairs, platforms, arrival landings and drops are ideal for games which rest on the idea that just around any corner may be the 'finder' -or, in imagination- 'the enemy'. The players may at any stage be 'found out' or they may succeed in remaining hidden or lost for more time, which in this game is a successful outcome. I think you are correct in positing that these games directly emerge from the set of experiences which some of the older respondents mention. Tropes of being displaced, homeless, and feeling out-of-the-picture and the

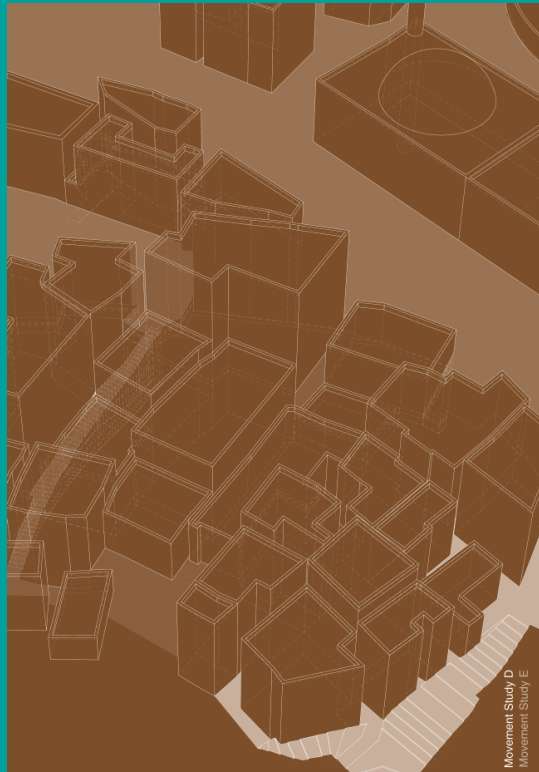
idea of finding peace, finding 'home' or finding refuge all appear in the experiences you've gathered. While in Northern Ireland, the street games we grew up with had a sectarian element (eg. anti-catholic games involving making fun of the pope), here we see a game which can engage children of different backgrounds who will readily appreciate the slightly scary element -especially at sunset- that time when shadows may look like people, when a concrete pillar may look like a ghost. We know that 'play' is an arena in which children vent both conscious and sub-conscious fears, hopes and anxieties and the ideas of displacing and replacing seem particularly captured by your descriptions of these particular descriptions of hide and seek.







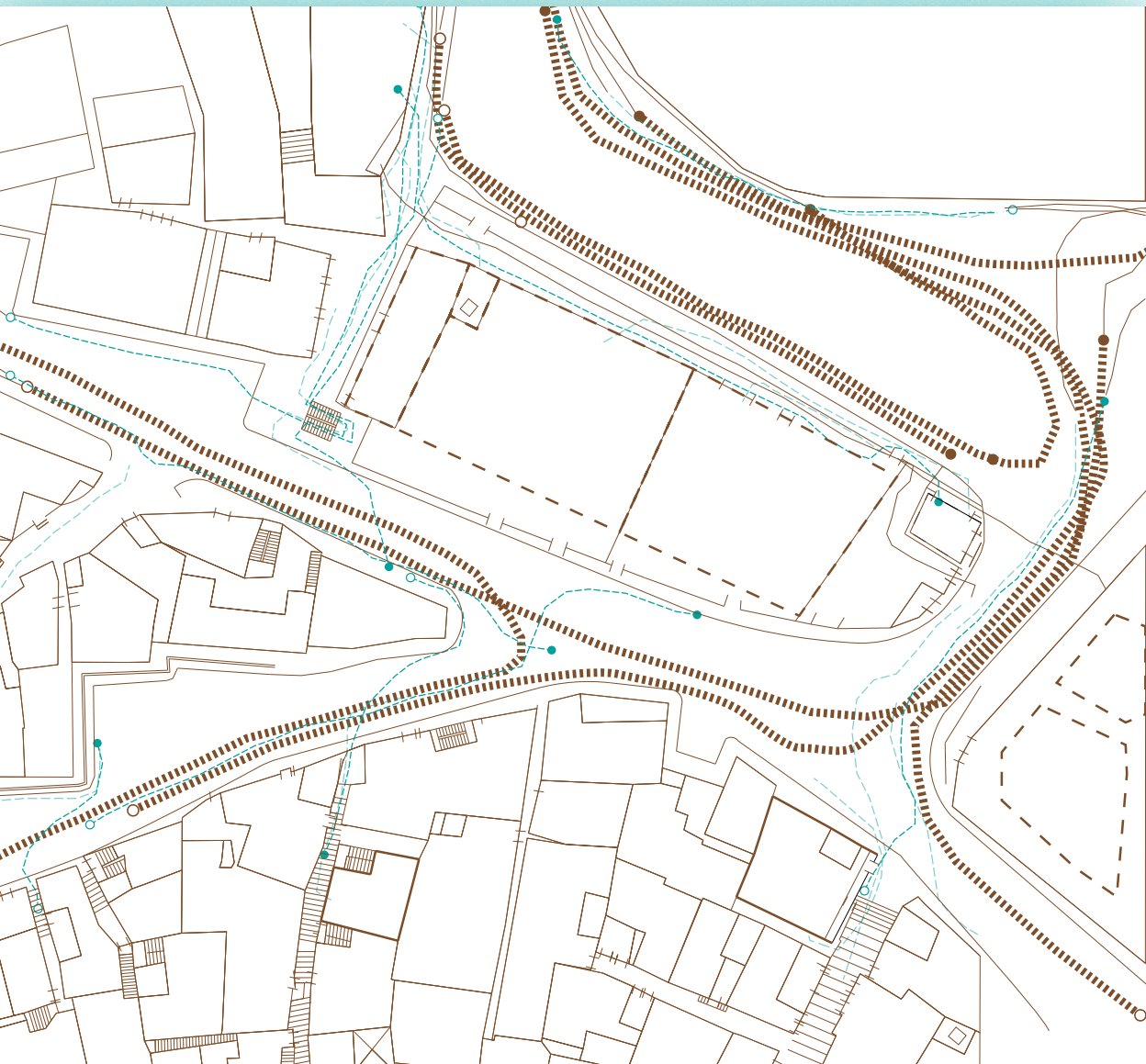




### MAPPING ONE MINUTE ON A STREET AND TWO MINUTES IN AN ALLEYWAY

Spaces of movement tell a story about the places the inhabitants move through, how and why. The spaces the inhabitants of Jabal Al Natheef use to travel are not only utilitarian (streets, roads, pathways and junctions); the spaces they travel through are the human environment, the area itself, with all its multiplicities.








Our research looked at human movement as an additional layer to sense of place, by using drawing methods that emphasize urban journeys as part of a dynamic experience of space. The movement studies aim to link photographic documentation of activities to their diagrammatic notation, and to the ground floor plan we produced for the upper camp. The notations record a timespan of between one and two minutes.

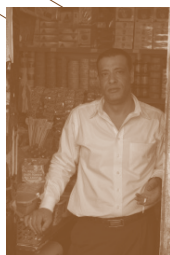
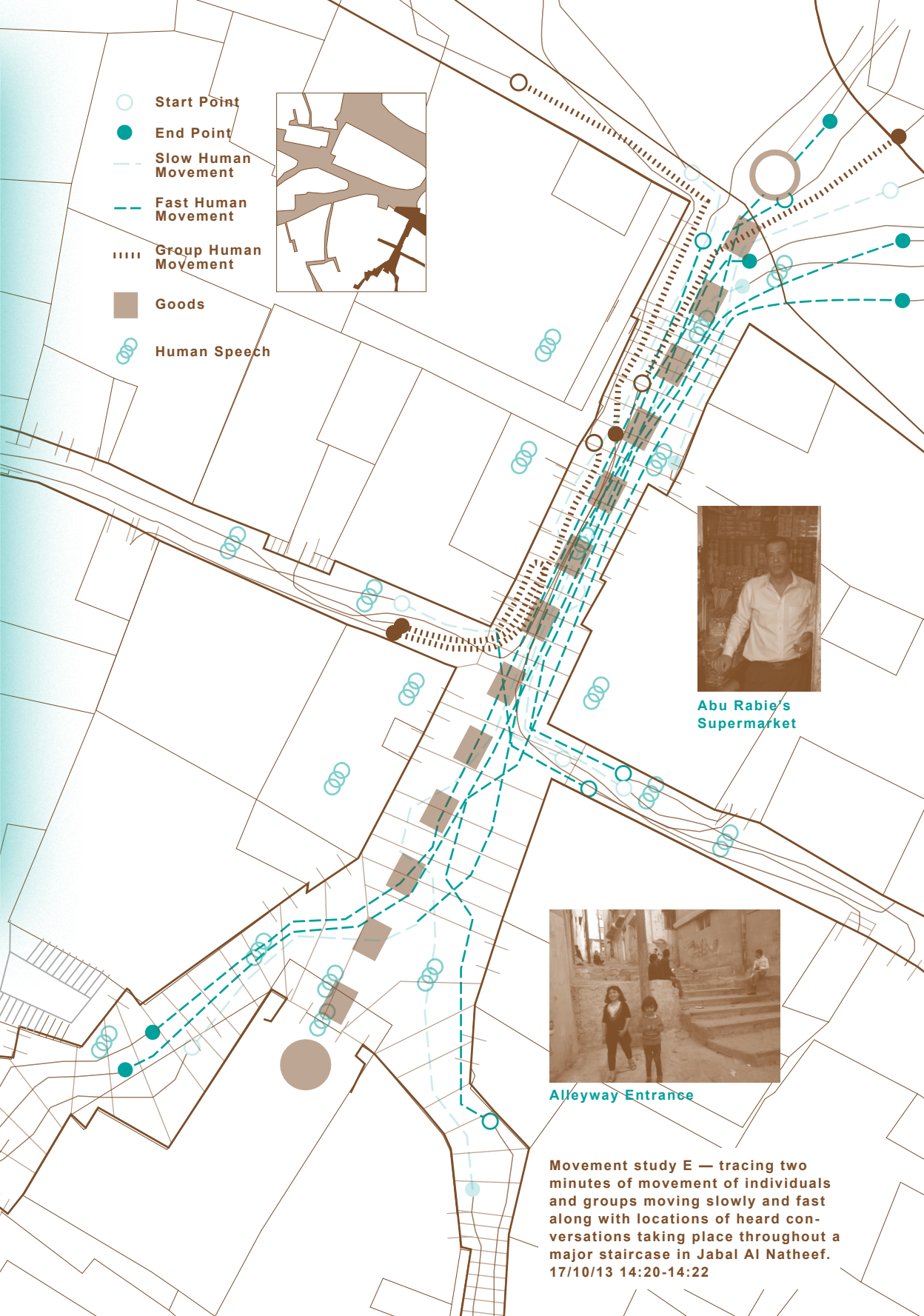


- Start Point
- End Point
- Slow Movement
- ... Fast Movement
- Car Movement
- Shop / Public
- Houses



**Movement study D — tracing a minute of movement of vehicles and individuals across a commercial street in Jabal Al Natheef.**  
17/10/13 14:00-14:01

-  Start Point
-  End Point
-  Slow Human Movement
-  Fast Human Movement
-  Group Human Movement
-  Goods
-  Human Speech



Abu Rabie's Supermarket



Alleyway Entrance

**Movement study E — tracing two minutes of movement of individuals and groups moving slowly and fast along with locations of heard conversations taking place throughout a major staircase in Jabal Al Natheef. 17/10/13 14:20-14:22**

Easy

Hard



6

2

1

3

4

5

108



## ACCESSIBILITY MAP

Analyzing the roads and alleyways in the area in terms of accessibility, this was done through site observations that led into deciding how easy or hard an alleyway is to access.



1



2



3



4



5



6

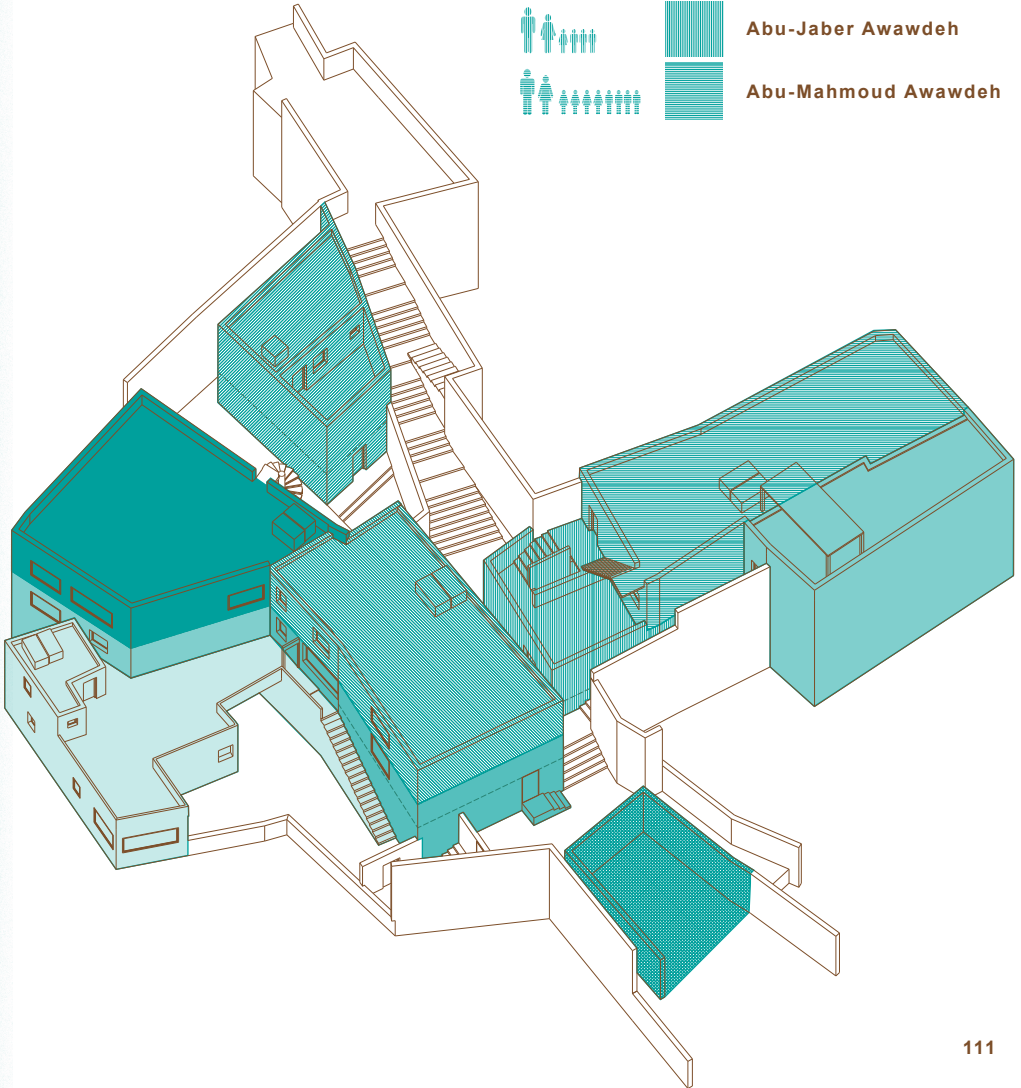
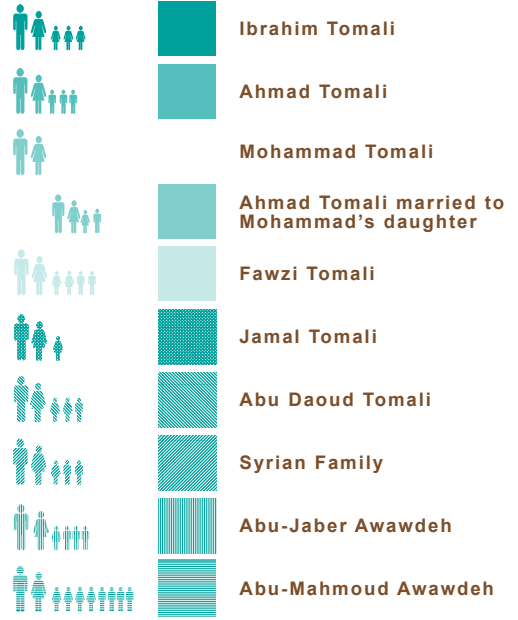


## STUDY OF ROOFTOPS AND SOCIAL SPACES

In the upper camp, rooftops, courtyards and stairways accommodate and encourage a differentiated range of activities. This study aims to reveal patterns of inhabitation and social negotiation. Due to the small size of apartments and interior spaces, inhabitants need to intelligently make use of rooftop space, often in an unorthodox manner. The privacy afforded by rooftops along with the access to open space and the relative degree of safety that they provide, recommends these areas as shared spaces for women to gather, and for children to play.

Whenever there is an opportunity, rooftop spaces connect to other rooftops, and, due to topography, even to ground floor spaces. An example of such a connection was a roof terrace opening onto a ground floor kitchen, which is owned by a different family. We observed that this close proximity fosters closer relationship among the neighbors. Hence, the links between these spaces provide for one of the essential ways through which the community is able to sustain social relationships.

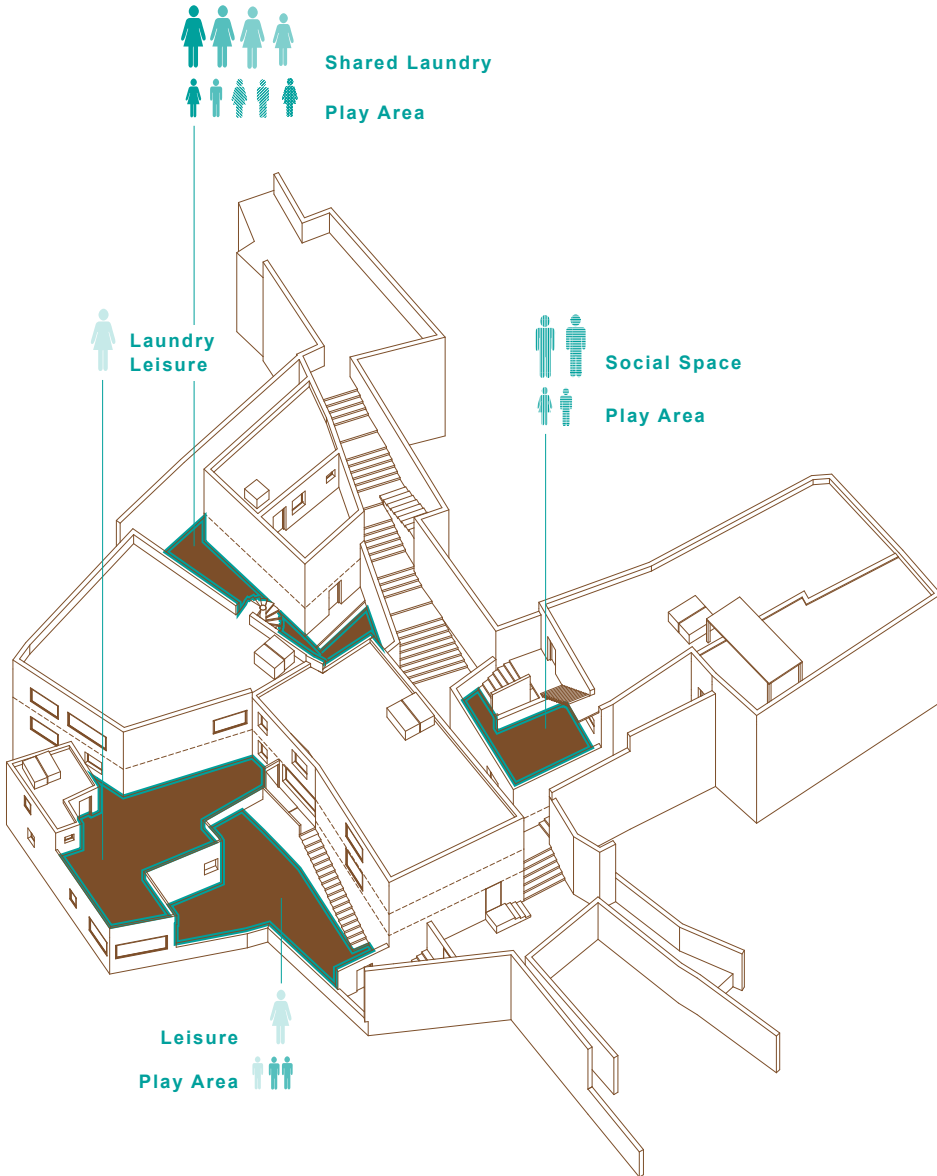
Five generations of the family have been living in Jabal AlNatheef. The base of the Tomali Complex is now inhabited by Mohammad and Ahmad Tomali's families which was originally their father's house. The house is still used as the main gathering space for the extended family, where the brothers and their families meet every day.





## Courtyards

More residential units were added to accommodate the growing number of families. Original courtyards and rooftops were built on, which created other outdoor spaces with layouts based on relationships with their neighbors.



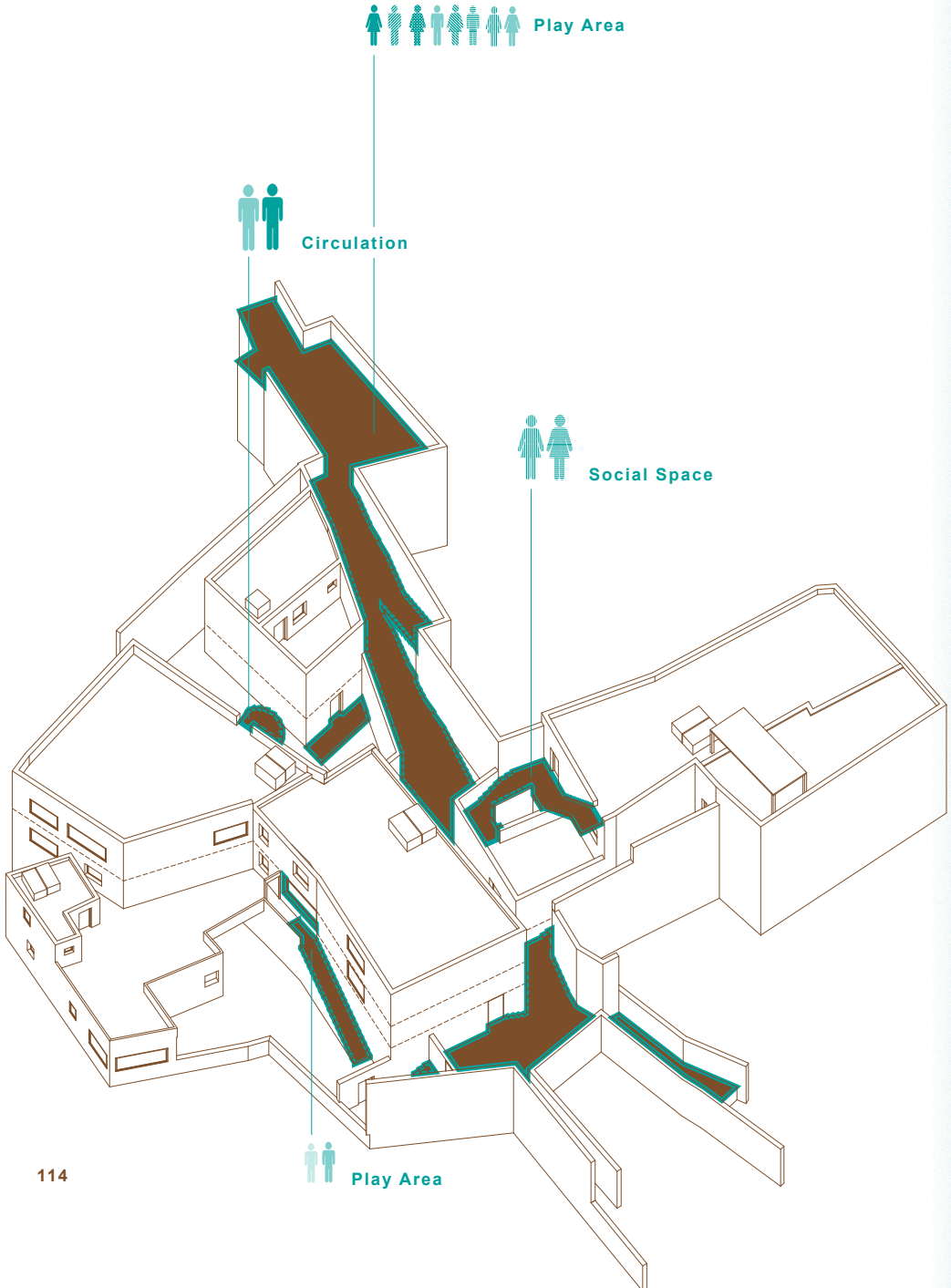




### Staircases

External staircases are used as play areas for children due to lack of safe playgrounds and gardens in the neighborhood.

Internal staircases are used by women for social interaction. It is the only indoor/outdoor area with visual privacy.

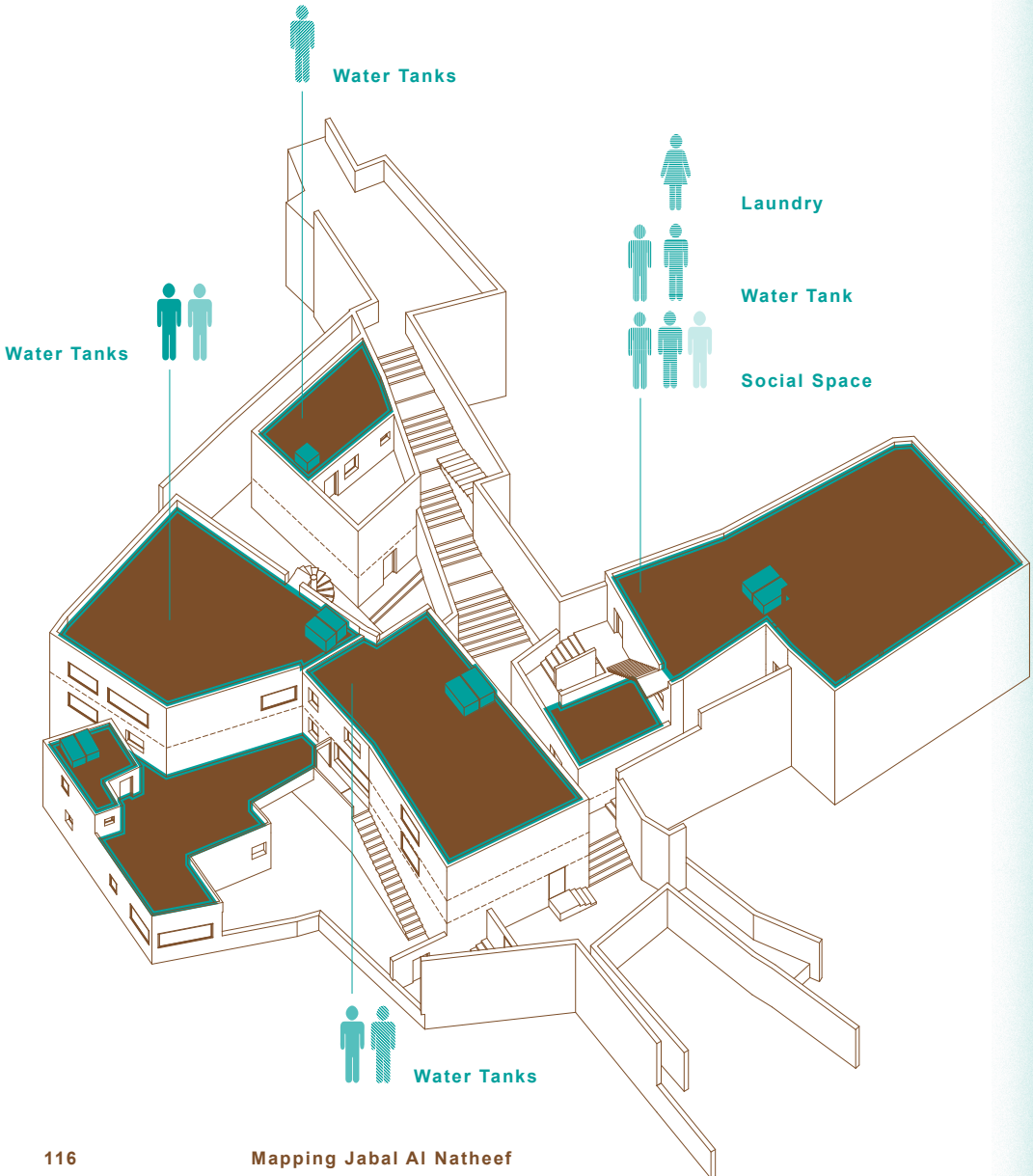






### Rooftops

Rooftops are used for water tanks as well as social functions. The staircases that lead to some of the rooftops are structurally unsafe, and those spaces are rarely accessed. Some rooftops are not fenced, therefore rarely accessed by women and children due to exposure and lack of safety, other rooftops are secured by parapets and provide women and young girls with access to outdoor space that is not available to them otherwise.





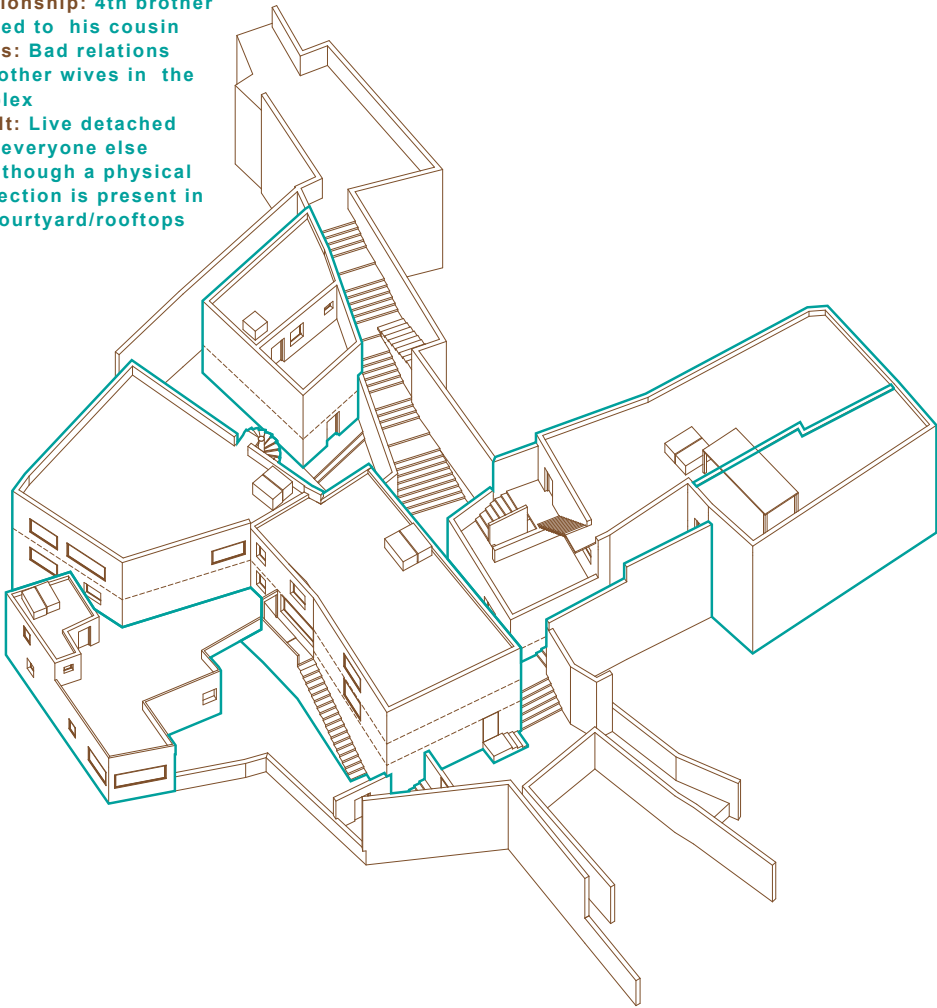


**Relationship:** 3 brothers  
married to cousins (3 sisters)  
**Status:** Good Relations  
**Result:** Houses are built  
attached with no exterior  
boundaries. Rooftops are used  
by all for the same purpose

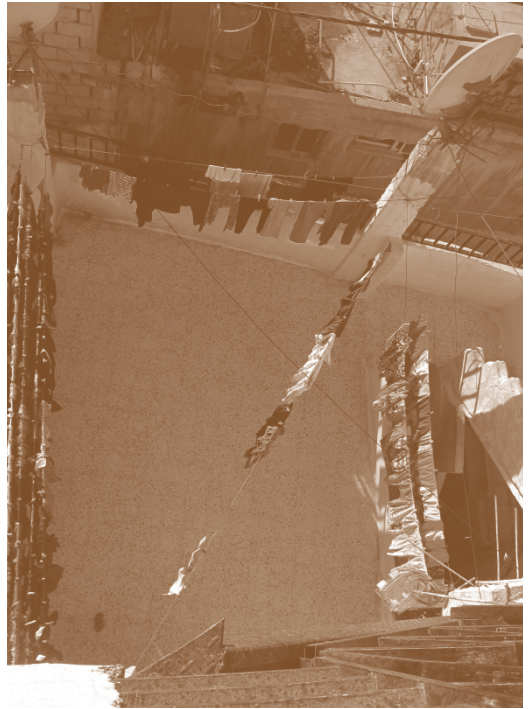
**Relationship:** None-Rental  
**Result:** No physical  
relationship with the rest  
of the buildings even  
though they have one  
owner

**Relationship:**  
Distant cousins  
**Status:** Good Relations  
**Result:** Houses are  
attached to each other  
with low parapet in  
between. Courtyard/Rooftop is used by all as a  
social space

**Relationship:** 4th brother  
married to his cousin  
**Status:** Bad relations  
with other wives in the  
complex  
**Result:** Live detached  
from everyone else  
even though a physical  
connection is present in  
the courtyard/rooftops







To introduce the area we are working in, it is a Palestinian camp starting in 1948, leaving the space to be developed by the inhabitants, resulting in a very complex, intricate way of urban design where a lot of the structures are following social interactions, social relationships between people and their neighbors. The architecture is really the background of their social interaction and stories that they have been able to develop throughout their years in this camp. Our group has been mainly interested in interactions on and between rooftops. Inhabitants have developed private as well as public space on the rooftops, accessible only by the families, but open to specific other rooftops, depending on relationships between neighbors; it has been a very interesting space to study.

To women the rooftops provide not the only, but the main access to outdoor space. Relationships have developed where neighbors see each other as family members rather than just neighbors. As story which illustrates this is about a little girl's window was about one meter away from her neighbor's door, and she now describes her neighbor as 'grandma'. This is an example of social structure that developed because of space.

Question: Christian, would you be able to help us situate our study in a wider theoretical context? Henri Lefebvre describes space that is produced through social interaction. Could you explain to us how Henri Lefebvre defines space, and whether his model could be applied to help understand our study?

Christian Schmid: Ok, I think that could work quite well. If we start to analyze this through Lefebvre's theory of the production of space we have to note that he distinguished between three dimensions, and I think they apply very well to that example. The first dimension is what Lefebvre calls perceived space, and he always uses two terms, the other being spatial practice. Perceived space is the space that we can perceive with our five senses. We can see it, we can touch it, smell it, and hear it. It is the material space, and what is special in that space is that the situation on the rooftops creates a very special



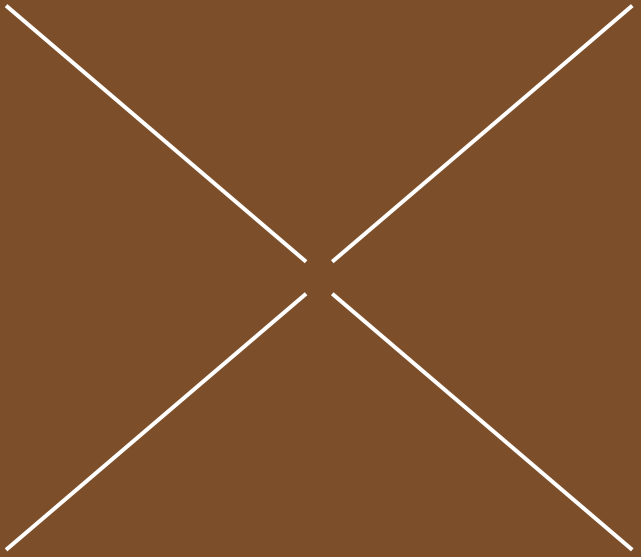
type of situation. That is interesting because the houses might be the result of self-construction, and the rooftop is obviously self-constructed.

Question: The whole neighborhood is self-constructed.

C.S.: So the people have the knowledge to construct their own houses; that is an important point. That also exists in Mexico City, and it is a very important capacity. It creates a certain structure that allows producing a space that is much more flexible to all sorts of changing needs. If you compare this with prefabricated houses or with houses that are produced by professionals, the great difference is that people have much more possibilities to adapt their houses to their needs, because they don't need the professional, they just need the material. That is a very important element already of Lefebvre's first dimension of space in as much as the appropriation of such spaces is much easier, and they can be much better adapted. That is visible in your photographs. They show that the result is an extremely differentiated space, you have niches, you have some corners, so the structure is finally quite complex. That is the first layer of analysis. Your question concerned proximity and neighbors, in the sense that you have neighbors who are just living next door, and the important question is whether that concerns only the material production of space or does this touch on other aspects. This brings up the second register or dimension, and Lefebvre calls this dimension conceived space. So, how is space conceived, and this depends on how people understand their space. Materiality is one element of space, and how you understand your space is another. One could also say that these are the rules that apply to that space. For example, what is private, what is public, what is semi-public? These are not very precise terms, and these are very Western terms. For the situations you are studying, you would perhaps need other terms, because it is not public, nor private, it is something else. In any case, there are special rules, and it is interesting to find out about those rules. What makes a neighbor a neighbor? What is the social distance, what are the relationships that develop over these rooftops? But this depends of course very much on rules. Whether you say that this is private, this is my private own space, or whether you say this is a type of shared space, and you might have all sorts of in-between spaces, that are defined in a different way, where certain things are allowed, other

things are not allowed -what are the rules in using the rooftops? Of course it is possible to study this by speaking to people, they explain how they use their space, how they interact with their neighbors, and you might find in similar situations different rules. You cannot take it for granted that only because this is a rooftop and only because it is self-constructed you will always get the same rules.

This brings me to the last point, to the third dimension, Lefebvre calls this dimension "lived space", the lived dimension. Lived space results from your everyday life, from your experience. Of course this is the dimension that is decisive for understanding the space you are studying, because it has to do with the history of the people living in those houses. How they came to that space, how they constructed it, how they inhabited it, the kinds of experiences they developed through their everyday practices. Again, this can be absolutely decisive, because you could imagine situations where you have a long common history, you did a lot of things together, maybe you had to fight for staying there, maybe you had to set up the water, the electricity, maybe there is a long history of a communal production of that space. Of course that would be a decisive element in how people interact with each other, because they have common experiences. To make an extreme comparison, let's say with a flat somewhere that is rented out, where perhaps you don't even know your neighbors, and you don't have a common history, then of course the way of interaction would be totally different. So the point here is that you have to take into account all three dimensions in order to understand that space, and the space is the result of those three dimensions. You need the physical dimension, you need to understand how this space is physically produced, second, you need to understand how that space is produced through social rules that govern that space, and then you have to understand how people produce this space through their everyday experiences. The three dimensions together finally explain that space, and you see that the relationships between the three dimensions are never clear. This always is an interaction. You might find situations that physically appear quite similar, but from a social point of view they could be totally different.



# SNAPSHOTS

When I first visited Jabal Al Nadeef refugee camp I was mesmerized how legible a society can be through its built environment. The prevailing vernacularism in its tightly knit urban fabric, the bold walls with minimal openings, the absence of an urban realm, the circulation patterns, its clear boundaries and edges are all indicators of a social system of a community deeply rooted within tailored tradition which creates and indicates a set of social behaviors and activity patterns.

The above might be a flowing narrative, which paints a context that is true to its residents yet the quality of this built environment is merely true to the basic needs of a human being. The need to upgrade the camp became clear to any participant of the workshop yet touching on the qualitative dimension through the various focus groups, community meetings, house visits and surveys made it clearer that improving their living infrastructure is an unsustainable face-lifting strategy.

It is therefore that the need has risen for a more comprehensive strategy that included a participative dimension to address the various development constraints that go beyond their built environment such as the high rate of unemployment, poverty, and gender constraints.

Mapping Jabal Al -Nadeef is the first step in this process, which came not only to evaluate and map the camp but also to analyze the context and furthermore explore the perception and expectation of the community.

This process not only aspired to solely rely on involving the community in a well structured participation process in the potentiality of the spatial upgrading of their camp but provide them with new options of diversification of their current economy.

Here lies the importance of this initiative, which emphasizes that that the more the camp residents are engaged in the process and the decision-making process, the more responsible and loyal they would be to the success of the process.

Yet one question prevailed throughout the process: *how can powerless people with no official recognition of their camp be empowered with the absence of a key stakeholder?*

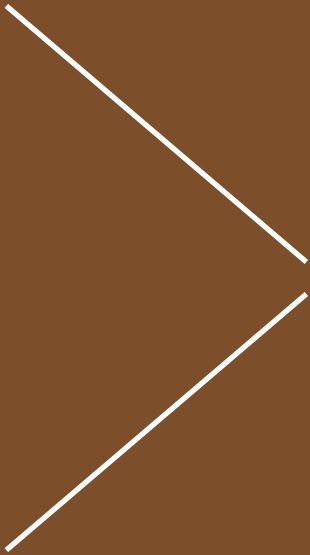
**Ohoud Kamal**







# | CONCLUSION







### WHAT'S NEXT?

It has been almost 70 years since people inhabited the area; Mohammad Amin camp is like a glitch in the urban fabric of Jabal Al Natheef, an informal cluster of buildings devoid of any input from architects, planners or engineers.

The government developed a 'hands-off' approach to the area, leaving it without a police station, building codes or any other form of regulation until new stakeholders penetrated the area and initiated socially oriented projects. From the 1970's, however, the government began to provide services as well as orchestrating a series of interventions to increase the permeability of the camp. Despite poverty, unsanitary conditions, many of the residents love the place, some of them expressed a strong community spirit spawned from shared history and closeness.

But the questions remain, what's next? What follows an in-depth examination of an urban condition?

Four significantly spatialized aims have emerged to define and explain pilot interventions that will drive rehabilitation and pursue a col-



laborative municipal agenda that recognizes Jabal Al Natheef's strengths and its shared destiny with Amman.

The first aim revolves around the empowerment of a community, who has no major stakeholders. A re-imagination of a better environment to be adhered to the refugees minds and the government who neglected them, through small-scale and self-driven initiatives which are motivated by a local need to get involved in local regeneration.

The second aim is to act imperatively to re-energize Jabal Al Natheef's economy, by diversifying, promoting areas of economic potential and subsequently encouraging the thriving communities of the area. Additionally, we need to promote partnerships among stakeholders to increase job-training opportunities.

The third aim looks into finding innovative approaches to transform the built environment and promote long-term sustainability. The spaces of Jabal Al Natheef, will be used for a multifaceted upgrading of the quality of life of its residents; firstly by addressing open spaces (in-between spaces, leftover spaces, schoolyards, vacant land and the cemetery) and strategically allocating activities. Secondly deploy a variety of low cost, low maintenance improvements to the built environment (houses, shops and the street envelope).

The fourth aim redefines and utilizes infrastructure as mean to develop the area, it tackles issues of urban sanitation, waste management, street lighting, household conditions and the street envelope.

There is a well-known anecdote about Picasso during World War II.

A German officer visited his studio, saw there *Guernica* and shocked at the modernist confusion of the painting asked him:

*Did you do this?*

Picasso calmly replied:

*No, YOU did this!*

Today we are left with the byproducts of conflict and we must dedicate ourselves to providing the refugees with meaningful ways to change their environment and the city at large.

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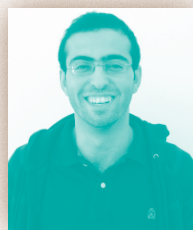
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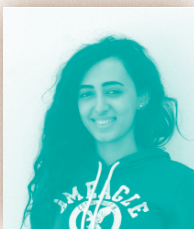
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