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# Social Disparities and Public Policies in Amman

Myriam Ababsa

## RÉSUMÉ

### Disparités sociales et politiques publiques à Amman

*En s'appuyant sur une série de cartes réalisées à partir du recensement 2004 à l'échelle de 4800 îlots pour la ville d'Amman, cet article rend compte des disparités sociales particulièrement grandes au sein de la capitale entre « est » et « ouest ». Les cartes de densité de population, de type de bâti, de structure des ménages, d'âge et d'activités ont été réalisées en collaboration avec le service d'information géographique de la municipalité du Grand Amman en 2008. Parmi ces diverses cartes, celle de la structure des ménages et du pourcentage d'enfants de moins de quinze ans montre clairement la division des quartiers entre est pauvre et surpeuplé et ouest plus aisé et moins dense. Ainsi l'ouest d'Amman s'étend-il de Jabal Amman à Khaldi entre les Wadi Hadadeh au nord et Deir Ghbar au sud. L'est d'Amman comprend le centre historique et plus de la moitié de la ville vers le Nord et le Sud, et une quinzaine de quartiers informels très denses développés autour des camps palestiniens de Jabal Hussein et Wahdat.*

*L'article analyse les politiques publiques de réhabilitation des zones informelles et de logement social conduites depuis les années 1980. De 1980 à 1997, la Jordanie a fait école dans le domaine de la réhabilitation des quartiers pauvres des villes orientales en étant le premier pays arabe à appliquer l'idéologie développementaliste nouvellement promue par la Banque Mondiale en Amérique latine et en Asie, qui consistait à faire participer les populations des zones informelles à toutes les étapes de rénovation de leur habitat et à leur permettre d'accéder à la propriété via des prêts sur le long terme garantis par l'État. Mais à partir du processus de paix israélo-palestinien (accords d'Oslo de septembre 1993 et de Wadi Araba en janvier 1994), le gouvernement jordanien via la Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC) modifia ses modes d'intervention dans les camps et les zones informelles du pays, pour se concentrer sur la seule provision de services, avec une priorité sécuritaire évidente. Depuis 2005, toute une politique de logement social a été lancée, accélérée à partir de 2008 avec la campagne royale d'un "logement*

*décent pour une vie décente”. Un “fond de développement local” a été créé au sein de la municipalité d’Amman afin de financer le logement social à partir de la taxation des étages supplémentaires des tours de luxe construites dans la capitale, mais il est peu efficace car non coordonné avec le HUDC.*

While the Municipality of Amman celebrated its centennial in 2009, highlighting the diversity of its population made up of migrants from across the Bilad al-Sham<sup>1</sup>, as well as its modernity, symbolized by the successive development projects (the business district of Shmeissani in the 1980s and the new Abdali downtown planned for 2011), social disparities within the city continue to grow stronger between West Amman and East Amman. These disparities tie in with morphological differences between informal housing communities developed near the Palestinian camps of Wahdat and Jabal Hussein, with their self-built buildings; and West Amman neighbourhoods with family-owned four storey buildings, interspersed with villas and office blocks. They reflect types of activity, degrees of citizenship (between Trans-Jordanians, Jordanians of Palestinian origin who receive services and aid from UNRWA and refugees holding only travel documents), but also lifestyles and perceptions of others. These disparities are all the more evident because the expansion of the city of Amman not only by-passes the eastern suburbs via corridors of development (to the east and the south), but has also complicated travel for workers from these underprivileged neighbourhoods since the Abdali bus station was moved in 2007 to Tabarbour to create green spaces near the new town centre under construction.

But what exactly do these designations of East Amman and West Amman mean? Which areas and neighbourhoods do they represent? After having represented the spatial disparities in the Hashemite capital using cartography,

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1. The Municipality of Amman focuses on migrants who arrived before 1948: Circassians, Trans-Jordanians, Palestinians, Damascus and Lebanese traders, and Armenians who fled the Turkish genocide, opposing the widespread idea that Amman is a city founded by Circassians and inhabited mostly by Palestinians.



this chapter will outline the different public policies (upgrading, social housing) implemented to resolve the gap between East and West within the city of Amman<sup>2</sup>.

## 1. Amman-Russeifa-Zarqa Growth and Population Composition (1946-2010)

*Horizontal expansion of the urban conurbation of over 4% per year since 1946*

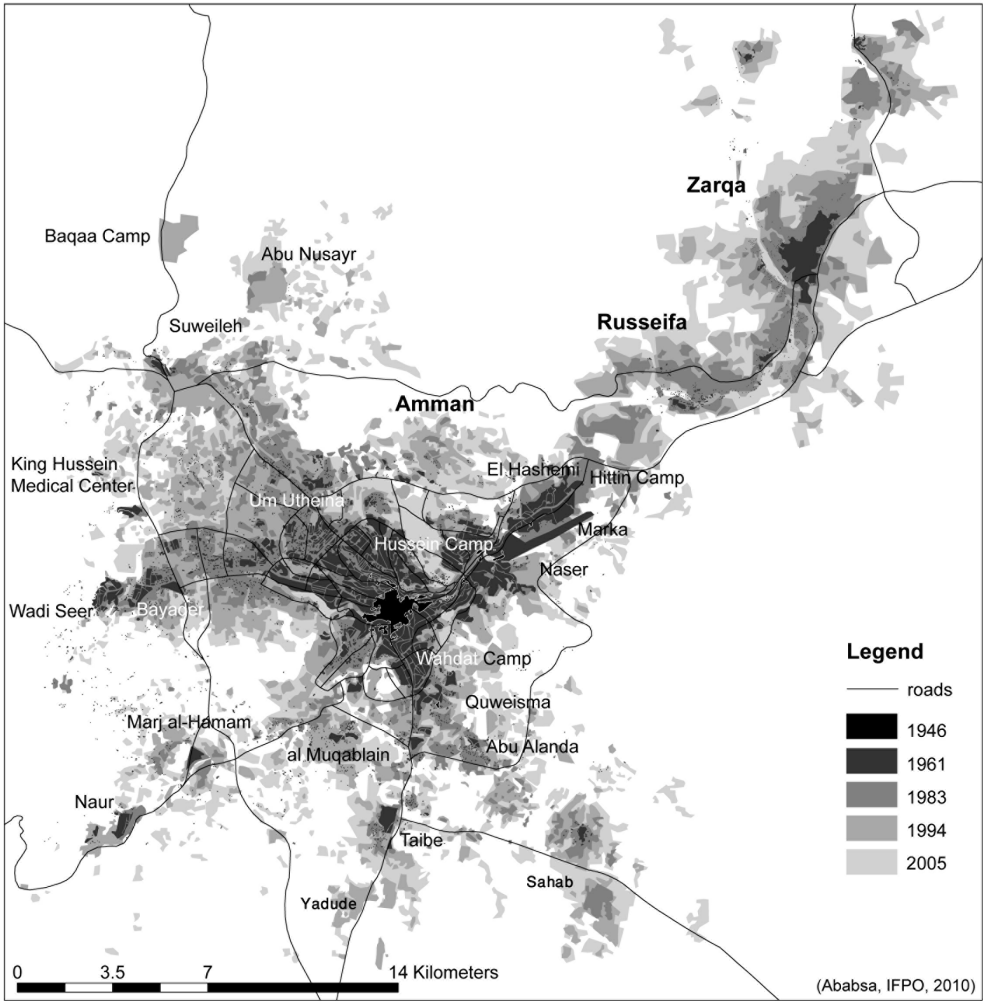
In 2010 the conurbation of Amman-Russeifa-Zarqa housed half of the Jordanian population (nearly 3 million out of 6.5 million inhabitants). Mapping growth stages of the Amman-Russeifa-Zarqa conurbation based on satellite images<sup>3</sup> allows us to calculate the rate of average annual growth of the developed expansion of the towns and their suburbs and to compare it to the rate of average annual growth of the population (**figure 1**). Tables 1 and 2 show that physical expansion exceeded 4% per year over half a century, and was higher than the rate of population growth, which indicates considerable horizontal expansion of the city (detached houses, low-rise family buildings and self-built buildings). While Amman was expanding horizontally at an annual growth rate of 6.6% between 1983 and 1994, its population grew at an annual growth rate of 5.5%; and between 1994 and 2005, the built-up area expanded at an average annual growth rate of 4.2%, compared to 3.1% for the population between 1994 and 2004. All these rates are very high. For comparison, Jordan's Population is increasing at an annual growth rate of 2.2% in 2009. This highlights the huge urban sprawl the conurbation is facing, as well as the need for urban planning, since for twenty years the planning and development programmes (particularly that of 1985) only gave

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2. This article has been written in the dual framework of a research programme on public policy and legal practices of management of informal settlements headed by Baudouin Dupret within the ANR programme: "Citadain", "City and Law in the Arab world and in India"(2006-2009) directed by Philippe Cadène (University of Paris VII) and my ongoing 'Atlas of Jordan' project with the Ifpo.

3. During the preparation of the Atlas of Jordan (a project I have been directing with the French Institute of the Middle East since September 2005 and which will be concluded in the spring of 2010), I suggested that the Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre extract the developed expansions of Amman, Russeifa and Zarqa conurbations from three Landsat satellite images with a 30 metre resolution, for 1983, 1994 and 2005. For 2008, I used a file from the Greater Amman Master Plan published in May 2008. For 1961, I suggested that the RJGC use topographic maps of a scale 1 / 50,000 drawn up from aerial photographs. Finally, 1946 and 1957 data come from a map produced in 1986 by the RJGC from a series of aerial photographs. Note that the isolated built-up areas near towns were included, even though the urban continuity was interrupted, which tends to increase the figures.

Figure 1 : Amman, Russeifa, Zarqa Expansion according to Satellite Images and Aerial Photographs (1946-2005). IFPO Atlas of Jordan with the Royal Jordanian Geographic Center (2009).



general guidelines, and were not applied. Despite the fact that the municipality undertook to strictly implement the 2008 programme which plans to make the existing structure more concentrated and channel growth along the development corridors (High Density Mixed Used corridors).

*Table 1: Amman, Russeifa and Zarqa Built-Up Expansion Annual Growth Rate.*

Amman	Area in sq km	Av. Annual Growth Rate
1947	2.05	
1956	4.34	8.8 %
1961	28.6	-
1983	71.8	4.3 %
1994	144.6	6.6 %
2005	226.6	4.2 %
Zarqa – Russeifa	Area in sq km	
1961	8.3	
1983	22	4.5 %
1994	45.1	6.7 %
2005	79.7	5.3 %

(Source: author's calculation based on RJGC Satellite Image and Maps Analysis, 2009).

*Table 2: Amman, Russeifa and Zarqa Population Average Annual Growth Rate.*

Amman	Population (Census)	Av. Annual Growth Rate
1945	56 000	
1962	214 219	8.2 %
1979	623 925	6.5 %
1994	1 392 195	5.5 %
2004	1 896 426	3.1 %
Zarqa – Russeifa	Population (Census)	
1979	265 950	
1994	531 068	4.7 %
2004	631 307	1.7 %

(Source: author's calculation based on the National Population and Housing Census, Department of Statistics 2004, 1994, 1979, 1962).

These high rates are characteristic of developing cities which attract many rural migrants, but also refugees, and which have high rates of natural growth. In the case of Amman, the considerable growth experienced by the city is due to the arrival of successive waves of Palestinian refugees (100,000 in 1948 and 300,000 in 1967), Palestinian workers of Jordanian nationality deported from the Gulf States in 1991 (350,000), Iraqi refugees (about 300,000 between

1991 and 2007)<sup>4</sup> and Arab and Asian workers (320,000 held work permits in 2007, and as many work without legal papers).

### *The Expansion of Informal Settlement*

The map of the expansion of Amman in 1961 shows the camps, but also the informal settlements which are adjacent to them (Jabal Akhdar, Taj and Nozah) (**figure 1**). Conversely, in West Amman, the first villas and houses on the hills of Abdoun and Shmeissani began to appear. The informal settlements that grew significantly after 1967 were mostly set up on vacant lots, including floodable areas and steep hillsides, but also on agricultural land located in the eastern part of Amman, to the east of Jabal Hussein and Wahdat camps. Nearly half of the refugees bought land from several members of the Al-Hadid family which owned the land of Wahdat Camp and the surrounding area. They paid one Dinar for each square metre (“lira al-meter”)<sup>5</sup>. As a result, in 2000, more than half of the residents of informal settlements were land owners in poor areas of Eastern Amman (59.8 % in 2000), 16.5 % rent their apartments, while 21 % use relatives’ or friends’ apartments (CIP A completion report 2004). This high rate of home ownership in informal settlements is due to the existence of earlier real-estate transactions, which may or may not be registered in the land registry, as well as former upgrading policies, which included access to housing.

The *Housing and Urban Development Corporation*<sup>6</sup> has three criteria to define informality: two morphological criteria related to the road network (accessibility of the area) and the shape of the building, and a legal criterion linked to types of ownership<sup>7</sup>. The legal status of housing alone can define informality, if one considers that lack of exclusive and inalienable rights of transfer make a property informal. In 2006, the HUDC evaluated the number of “squatter areas” throughout Jordan: forty in all, inhabited by some 100,000 people. A very low figure compared with Syria, where 40% of the city of Damascus is considered informal (self-built constructions not included in planning and development programmes). According to UN Habitat, a parcel is

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4. The issue of the number of Iraqi refugees is very controversial. While the Jordanian government announced 700,000 people in 2005 to justify its requests for international aid, the figure has been revised significantly downwards. Thus the website for the Jordanian Department of Statistics shows in 2010 a figure of 400,000 people, after consulting FAFO, the Norwegian research centre, while experts speak instead of 200,000 people, and the UNHCR has only registered 50,000 Iraqi refugees.

5. Author’s fieldwork in Nahariya, March 2006.

6. The institution in charge of informal settlement rehabilitation since 1991 (see section 3).

7. Interview with Bayan Jaradat, HUDC, October 22, 2008.

informal if at least two of the following criteria are missing: access to drinking water, sewage, sustainability of the housing unit, sufficient surface area (fewer than two persons per room), and security of tenure. Up to 99% of buildings in Amman have access to improved water, and up to 80% to sanitation in 2000. Security of tenure is guaranteed in Amman (through *mulk* and *musharak* contracts) as is the durability of housing except for apartments with a sheet metal roof. But overcrowding is prevalent nearly everywhere in the heart of the city. In most of the centre of Amman, there are more than 2 inhabitants per room.

### *Amman Population Composition*

Much of the population of Amman is composed of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, descendants of refugees who arrived in 1948 and 1967. For obvious political reasons, the statistics only differentiate Jordanians from foreigners, without establishing classes among citizens. In 2002, a former prime minister told a newspaper that 43% of the national Jordanian population was made up of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, 37% of whom were registered with UNRWA<sup>8</sup>, thereby removing a major taboo and surprising many who thought the percentage to be higher. But research by demographers confirms the figure given at the national level<sup>9</sup>. However, this percentage is higher if we only take into consideration the Greater Amman – Russeifa – Zarqa conurbation<sup>10</sup>.

## **2. East Amman / West Amman: a cartographic vision of social disparities within Amman**

Since 1952, four general censuses of population and habitat have been carried out in Jordan, at the initiative of the Ministry of Interior and the Department of Statistics: 1961, 1979, 1994, 2004. Surveys were carried out in households and their results were published throughout the governorate. Researchers can obtain the district level (*Liwa*) and sub-district level (*caza*),

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8. This figure was officially quoted for the first time by Ali Abu Ghareb, former prime minister and published in the daily al-Rai on September 3, 2002.

9. Demography specialists of Jordan who suggest the figure of 45% of the population of Palestinian origin according to the 2004 census (DE BEL AIR, 2010).

10. In 1980 an often cited U.S. study estimated that Palestinian refugees formed between 60% and 80% of the population of Amman, reflecting the extent of the influx of Palestinian refugees from 1948 and 1967 (NYROP 1980 in ROGAN 1987).

but it is quite exceptional to get the level of communities, neighbourhoods and blocks. In 2008, I had the privilege of working with Geographic Information System GIS engineers from the Municipality of Greater Amman on the 2004 census across 4,808 blocks<sup>11</sup>, in the context of the Atlas of Jordan. First of all I suggested they convert the data, represented in the form of points, into surface areas. Then I was able to analyse various indicators to produce the figures attached<sup>12</sup>. The size of the blocks alone gives an idea of the morphological structure and disparities within the city : first between the mass of small blocks in the centre of the city and near the Palestinian camps, and the slightly larger blocks in West Amman; and then between the centre of the city and the rural periphery (that includes agricultural land in the north, west and south, and pastoral land in the east, depending on the climatic gradient that divides Amman in two : the East receives less than 200 mm annual rainfall, while the West has more rain). This structure must be taken into consideration when analyzing the census results. Indeed, rural areas have lower population densities on much larger plots, which tends to exaggerate the results visually, compared with the very densely populated downtown areas.

#### *Amman Density of Population in 2004 at the block level*

As Greater Amman Municipality expanded in 2007, its density of population became 40 inhabitants per ha (or 4,000 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>). But in Amman's central neighbourhoods (Wadi Hadadeh, al-Nozha, al-Hashemi al-Shamali, al-Hashemi al-Janubi, Hamza, Jabal al-Nasr, al-Amir Hasan, Jabal Jofeh, al-Manarah, al-Taj, al-Mudarraaj, al-Ashrafia, al-Nadhif, al-Akhdar, al-Awdeh and al-Thera), the density of population is over 20,000 inhabitants per square kilometre (with a maximum of 31,240) which is among the highest urban densities in the world (Delhi is between 3,000 and 29,000 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, London 4,000 to 7,000 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>)<sup>13</sup> (**figure 2**).

These neighbourhoods include most of the informal settlements that developed following the arrival in the city of the 1967 Palestinian displaced persons from the West Bank and Gaza. Many of the settlements sprang up in the fringes of the Jabal Hussein and Wahdat official refugee camps, which

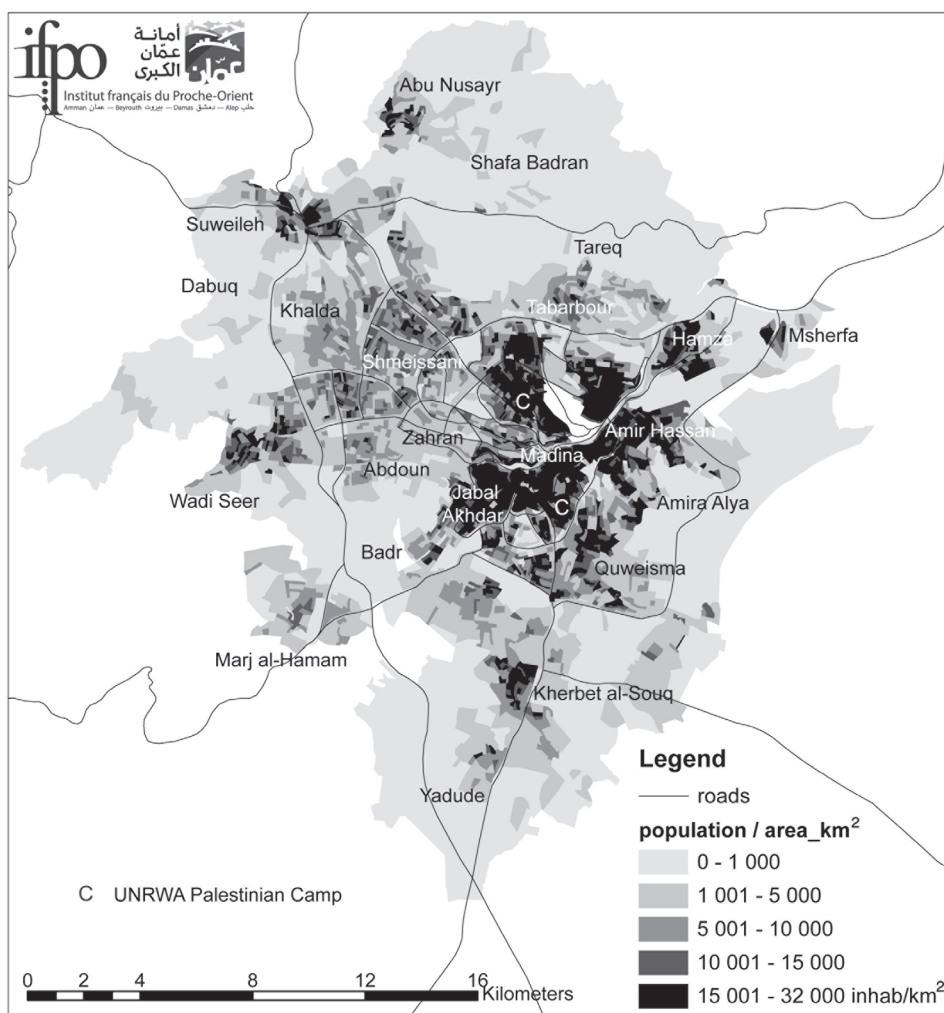
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11. The file provided does not cover the entire city in 2004: the neighbourhoods of Jabal al-Qusour palaces and the citadel are excluded. As shown in Table 3 this set of blocks does not cover the entire population in 2004, but no newer file has been updated in the database of the GIS service of the Municipality of Greater Amman.

12. Made using Arc Map 9.2 software, ESRI.

13. <http://www.citymayors.com/statistics/larges-cities-density-125.html>.

Figure 2 : Amman Population Density at the block level in 2004.



Source : Departement of Statistics and Greater Amman Municipality.

(Ababsa, IFPO, 2010)

had been set up to accommodate the neediest refugees in 1948, in 1952 and 1955 respectively. The idea was to have easy access to UNRWA's services that were mainly based in the camps (primary education, medical aid, relief and social services). Informal settlements pose particular challenges. They are characterized by high natural population growth (more than 6% per year) and are typically located on treacherous terrains, including floodable *wadi* basins and steep hillsides (*jabal*). They also frequently encroach on agricultural land.

*Table 3: Population, Education and Activity of the Population of Amman by district, in 2004.*

District in 2004	Population	Number of Households	Workers %	Job seekers %	At school %	pop <15 %
Madineh	29 150	6 181	41.5	6.7	25.4	30.1
Basman	209 001	41 282	37.6	7.6	31.4	37.0
Marka	89 218	17 409	36.4	7.5	31.0	36.7
al-Nusr	134 765	25 081	36.0	7.5	31.6	39.6
al-Yarmouk	150 708	29 603	37.2	8.3	30.0	37.5
Ras al-Ain	92 677	17 595	40.2	7.7	29.3	38.1
Badr al-Jadeeda	135 541	25 900	36.7	7.3	31.2	38.1
Zahran	35 009	8 503	42.0	5.7	24.4	23.9
al-Abdali	90 862	19 591	37.2	6.2	28.1	29.2
Tariq	45 464	8 691	37.0	7.7	33.7	35.2
Quaismeh, Jwaydeh	123 003	22 333	38.3	6.8	31.1	40.4
Khraibet Esoq, Jawa	84 674	13 857	42.6	6.8	29.7	37.2
Um Qsair Moqabaleen	36 909	6 758	36.3	7.1	31.8	38.7
Wadi al-Sir	122 933	26 932	41.5	6.7	29.4	29.8
Badr Jdiedeh	10 049	1 765	30.4	14.3	35.3	37.5
Sweileh	61 578	12 557	40.2	7.9	31.5	31.4
Tla al-Ali, Khelda	113 083	25 502	39.9	5.5	30.7	26.1
al-Jbeiha	63 783	13 781	37.4	6.4	33.5	28.2
Shafa Badran	14 171	2 589	34.5	8.6	36.0	34.9
Abu Nseir	24 680	4 692	34.7	9.0	39.2	29.4
Total for 4 808 blocks	<b>1 667 257<sup>14</sup></b>	<b>330 601</b>	<b>38.3</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>34.9</b>

Source: Department of Statistics, National Housing and Population Census 2004, data at the block level prepared for Greater Amman Municipality.

14. In 2008, the population figures of the various districts of Amman were as follows : Madina 35,188, Basman 238,909, Marka 101,940, al-Nasr 16,728, al-Yarmouk 172,250, Ras al-Ain 103,150, Badr 153,050, Zahran 60,177, Abdali 105,709, Tareq 58,500, Quwaismeh 156,781, Kherbet al-Souq 98,290, Um Qusayr 42,000, Wadi Seer 138,350, Badr al-Jadida 12,750, Sweileh 71,200, Tala Ali 128,350, Jbeiha 50,800, Shafa Badran 17,000, Abu Nusayr 28,370, Ohod 17,346, Sahab 47,800, al-Mwaqer 22,360, al-Jeezah 50,800, Husban 28,660, Naour 50,340, Marj al-Hamam 32,305.



*Types of housing inside Greater Amman at the block level (building, dar and villa).*

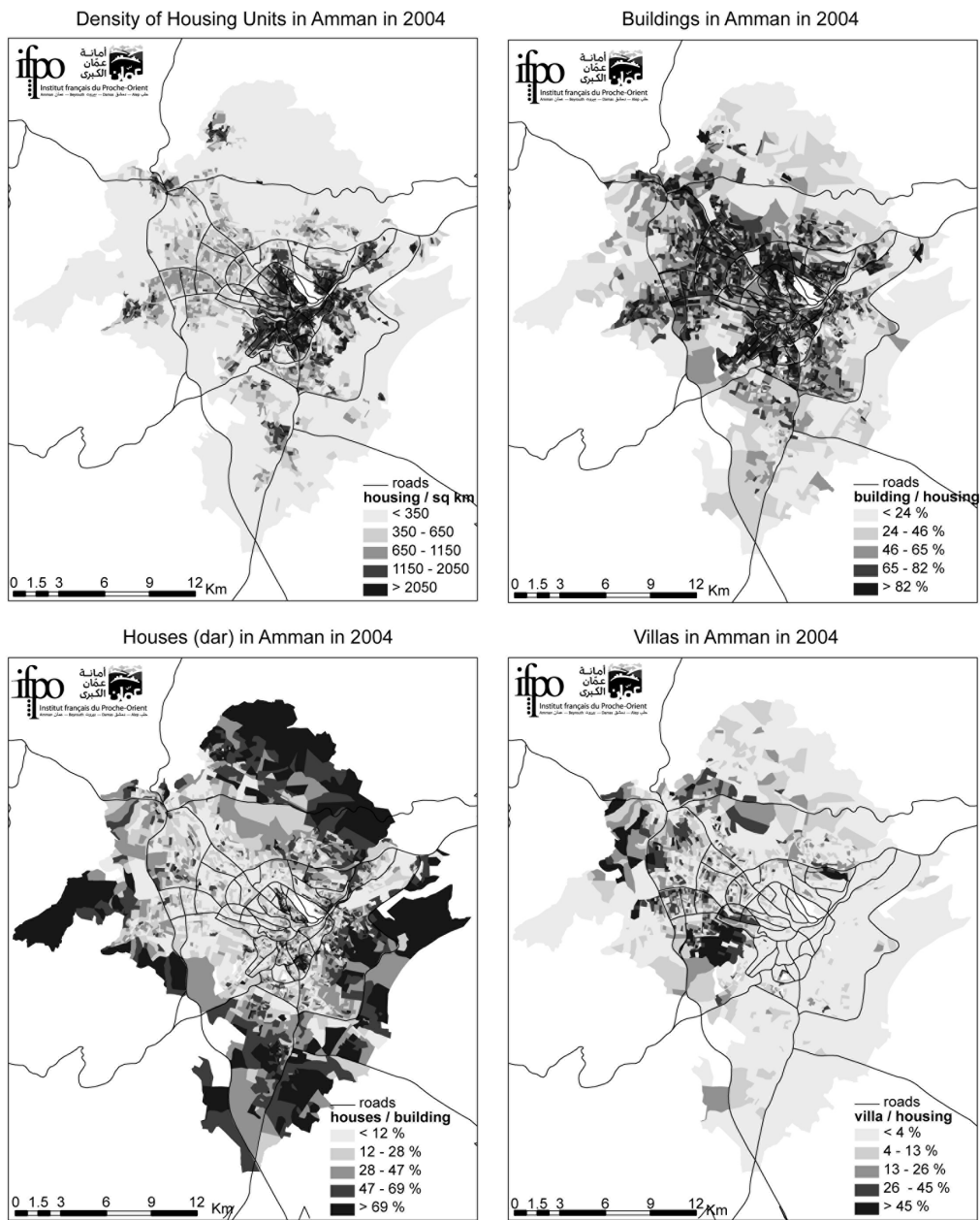
**Figure 3** allows us to understand the morphology of urban Amman. Indeed, the census tells us about the types of buildings: whether they are traditional houses (*dar*) of one or two floors (sometime with courtyard), buildings or villas. The mapping of these types of buildings can identify several morphological types: the dominant type in the centre of Amman is collective housing in apartment blocks, either family buildings of four storeys high (with the possibility of building stories below street level, to benefit from hillside slopes) built in the 1970s during the oil boom; or since the 1990s, buildings over eight storeys high. They make up on average more than half of all buildings. Mapping of traditional houses reveals two very different morphological types: that of the rural areas on the fringes of the city where more than two-thirds of houses are “*dar*” (in the North : Um Shtairat, Um al-Orouq, Yajouz, Marj Firas; in the East: Salhiya, Amira Alya, Um Nowwarah; in the South: the former large cereal growing villages of Um al-Kundum and Yadouda as well as Jawa Qobaa and Wafaa; finally in the West: Zabda, Waisa, al-Ghrous and Belal) with agricultural activities surviving in the south and west, and poor self-built habitats in the town centre. It is thus quite remarkable to note that both the Wahdat and Jabal Hussein camps had two thirds of their self-built buildings around courtyards statistically recorded as *dars*, even though they were densified by self construction after 1967. The informal settlements of Jabal al-Qusour and Jabal Akhdar also have a majority of homes classified as “*dar*” because they are dilapidated. Finally, villas are clearly concentrated in the western part of the city, constituting more than half of housing in the neighbourhoods of Abdoun Shamali and Abdoun Janubi, but also in a small developed area north of Raghadan, called al-Shahid al-Janoubi. On the whole, villas make up one quarter of buildings in Bashir, Tala Ali, Khalda, Um al-Summaq and Deir Ghbar. All these neighbourhoods with villas have developed over the years 1990-2000 as shown in figure 1 (in 1994 only one third of them had been built).

*Family types*

- *The Young and the Elderly in Amman: the real indicator of poverty in the City*

**Figures 4 and 5** show very clearly the East and West Amman Division line. Less than one-third of West Amman’s population is under the age of 15, compared to more than 38% of the population of East Amman (al-Nasr, al-Quwaisme and Kherbet al-Suq districts). At the other end of the age range,

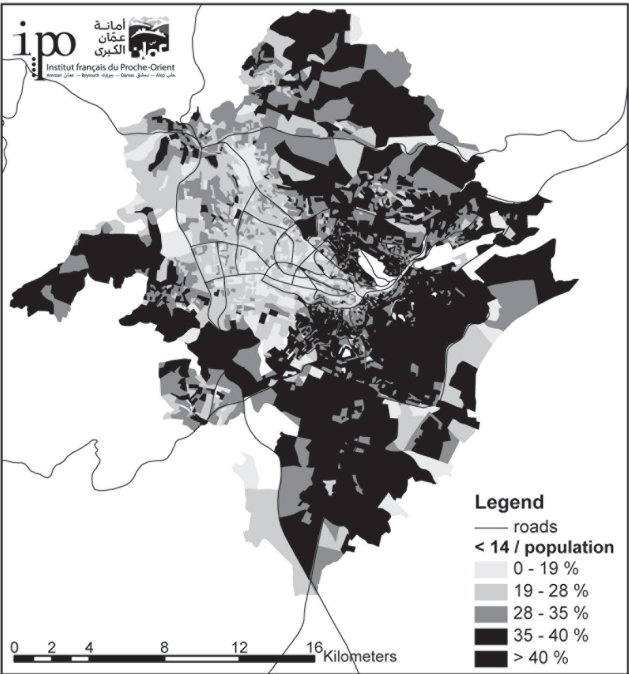
Figure 3 : Types of housing units and density of building in Amman in 2004.



Source : Departement of Statistics and Greater Amman Municipality.

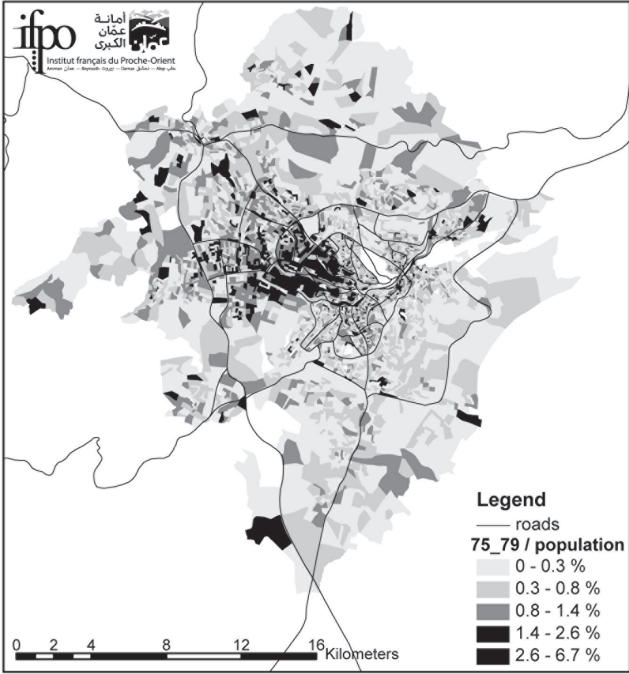
(Ababsa, IFPO, 2010)

Figure 4 : Children under 14 years in Amman at the block level in 2004.



Source : Departement of Statistics and Greater Amman Municipality.

Figure 5 : Elder (75 to 79 years) in Amman at the block level in 2004.



Source : Departement of Statistics and Greater Amman Municipality. (Ababsa 2010)

**Figure 5** indicates that the elderly population group (between 75 and 79 years old) makes up less than 1% of the population in East Amman, whereas it sometimes reaches 6.6% in some blocks of West Amman. It is interesting to note that they are not in the neighbourhoods with the richest villas (whose residents are young), but more in the districts west of Amman developed during the 1950s : Badr, Zahran and Um Qusayr. In 2004, life expectancy in Jordan was 71 years for men and 74 years for women. At the national level, 37.3% of the population was under 15 in 2004, and 3.2% was over 65 (DOS, 2007). Jordan started its demographic transition forty years ago. The fertility rate is 3.6 children per woman. These figures allow us to present the different types of families in the city: with more than 4 children per family in the neighbourhoods of the East (informal areas near camps) against those with fewer than 4 children and with elderly people.

### Sex Ratio and Activity in Amman

#### *- Sex Ratio*

**Figures 6** and **7** indicate the sex / active population ratio<sup>15</sup>. Due to the emigration of many young educated professional men (600,000 Jordanians work abroad, nearly half of them are in the Gulf) and the massive presence of female domestic workers (mostly from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines), West Amman's active population is slightly more feminine than East Amman. East Amman's active population includes more men, also because of the presence of foreign male workers employed in the construction and manufacturing sector (mainly Egyptians). Collective housing and public housing are also more developed in the eastern part of the city.

#### *- Workers and Job Seekers in Amman*

**Figures 8** and **9** further confirm the division line between West and East Amman. Figure 9 shows that more than 36% (up to 62% in Abdoun Janoubi, Helal, Yasmin) of West Amman's active population is economically active<sup>16</sup>, whereas only 26 to 36% of East Amman's active population is economically active. In contrast, job seekers represent between 6 and 14% of East Amman's and the rural fringe's population, and between 3 and 9% of West Amman's population.

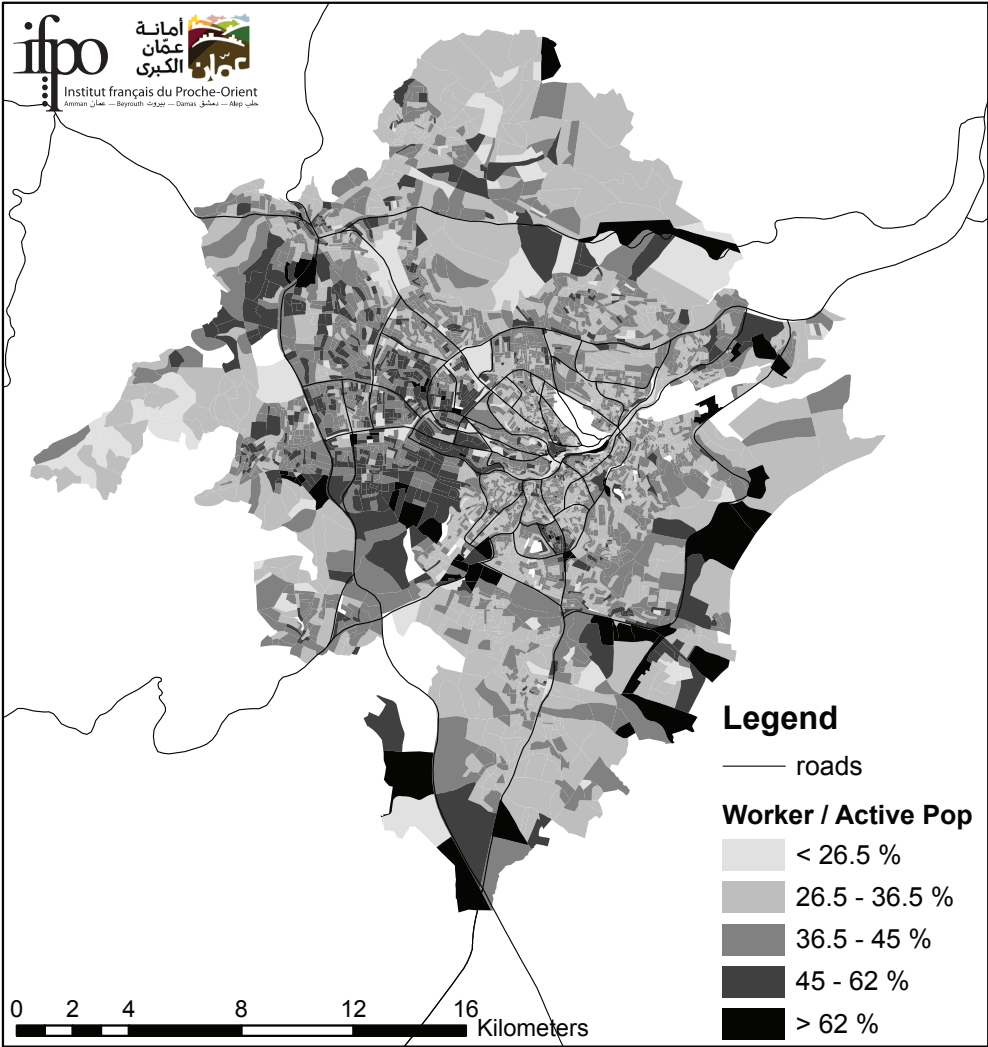
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15. I took population classes between 15 and 65 years.

16. I noted the absolute figures for the active population and the unemployed not out of the absolute population, but out of the active population, ie. the entire population over 15 years of age.



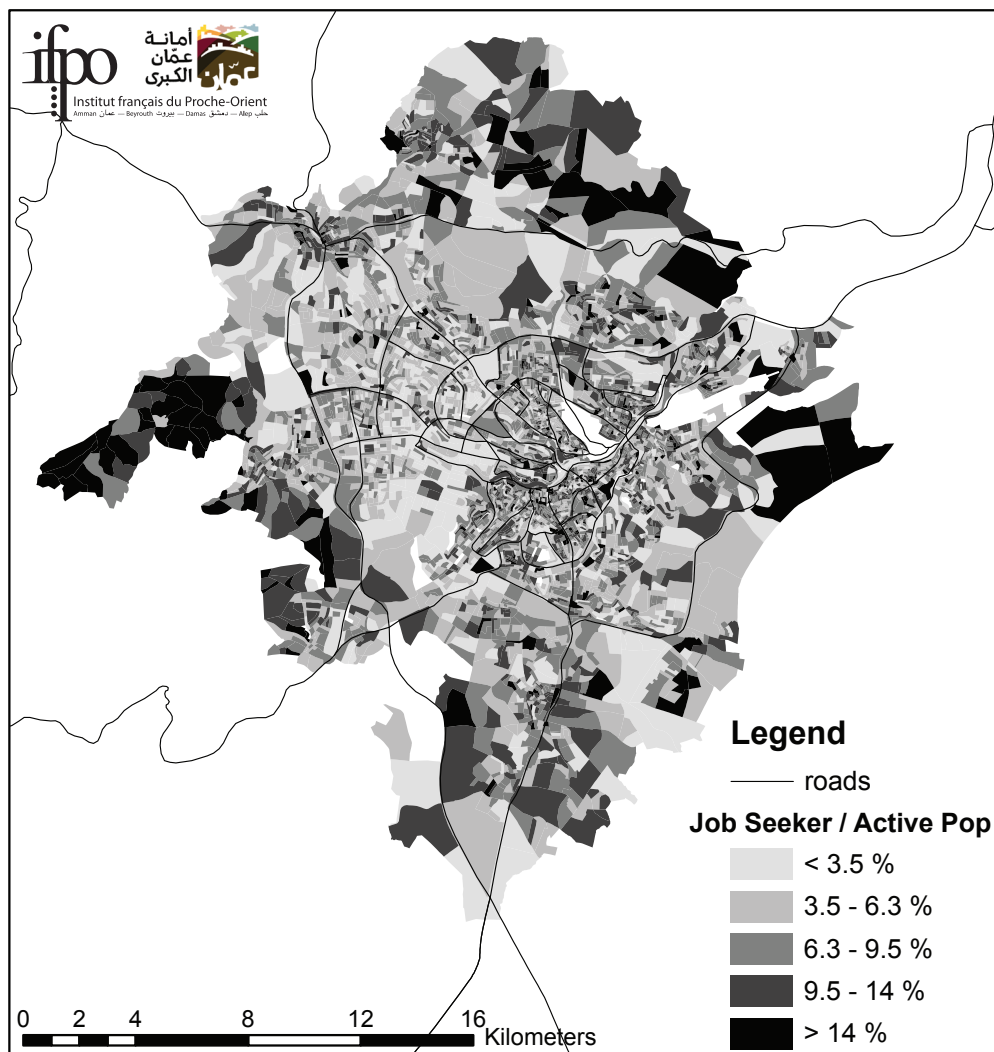
Figure 8 : Workers on Active Population in Amman at the block level in 2004.



Source : Departement of Statistics and Greater Amman Municipality.



Figure 9 : Job Seekers on Active Population in Amman at the block level in 2004.

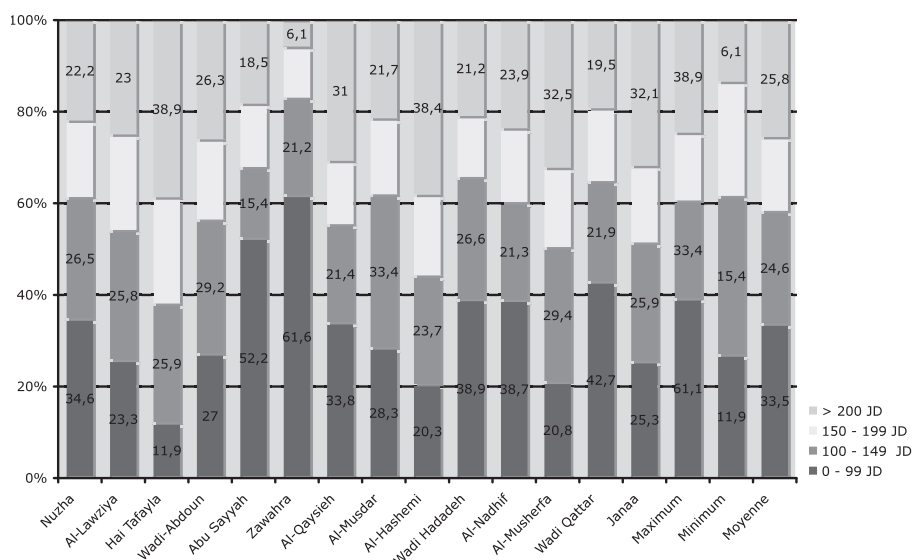


Source : Departement of Statistics and Greater Amman Municipality. (Ababsa, 2010)

### - Poverty in the city of Amman

Census data obtained on the block level does not include information on income levels. So here we will rely on surveys carried out by HUDC during the CIP A in 2000 within upgraded informal sites (Jabal Nuzha, al-Lawziya, Hai Tafayla, Wadi Abdoun, Abu Sayyah, Zawahri, al-Qaysieh, al-Musdar, al-Hashemi, Wadi Hadadeh, Jabal Nadhif, al-Musherfa, Wadi Qattar and Janaa). They allow us to identify large pockets of poverty within the city.

Graph 1: Household incomes of informal sites of Amman upgraded by the HUDC in 2000.



(Compiled from *CIP-A Completion Report* HUDC, 2004)

This graph shows the insecure situation of residents of informal areas who are the beneficiaries of upgrading programmes carried out by HUDC. Graph 1 represents levels of income per household. In 2000, the poverty line was at 121 JD for a family per month, while the average household income was of 4 998 JD (416,5 JD per month) (UNDP 2000). In 2000, a third of the families living in East Amman were poor (earning less than 100 Dinars per month). This amount corresponds to the aid provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which varied between JD 40 and JD 120 per family (between JD 40 and JD 180 today), and covers basic food needs. Health services and schools are provided free by UNRWA. Only a quarter of families reported earning more than JD 200 per month in 2000. Since the government started its policy to reduce rural “pockets of poverty” in 2002, it must be underlined that the majority of the poor in Jordan live in East Amman, Russeifa and Zarqa.



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Such disparities have been tackled by the Greater Amman Municipality for the past thirty years, through several upgrading policies and revitalization programmes.

### 3. Upgrading Policies and Down-Town Revitalization (1980-2010)

Since the early 1980s, the Municipality of Amman has attempted to address the disparities between the east and the west of the city in terms of access to services and housing. The originality of the Jordanian approach in the field of upgrading has been to involve inhabitants at all stages of the process and give them access to home ownership. However, these policies have evolved since the 1994 peace process and now focus only on the provision of services, rather than access to housing. From 2008, which was declared as the Year for Housing, the royal project “Sakan Karim la Ish Karim” (decent housing for a decent life) was launched to create 100,000 housing units over five years. However, these homes are on the outskirts of towns, located on public land in the desert, leading to the eviction of the poor from cities.

#### *The specific management of “poor areas”*

The predominance of informal settlements inhabited by Palestinian refugees is such that it has made the definition of informality specific in Jordan. The term *sakan ‘ashwai* refers almost exclusively to areas inhabited by Palestinian refugees, and is not used for informal settlements with rural or Bedouin populations, for which the term “poor areas” is preferred. The remaining informal settlements built within Jordanian towns are the result of rural depopulation and changing lifestyles in a Jordanian population experiencing considerable population growth. Thus, large areas of rangeland have been illegally appropriated and built on by members of the Beni Hassan and Beni Sakhr tribes in the north and east of Amman, in Zarqa and in Russeifa, leading to conflicts with the State (RAZZAZ 1991). Consequently, the government had to enact a special law in 1986 to regulate the appropriation of public land by Bedouins<sup>17</sup>. Periodically, the government allows these squatters to purchase the state lands they occupy, as was the case in October 2008 for the squatted land of Otal-Russeifa in the governorate of Zarqa, which was sold for the nominal price of 2JD per dunum.

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with an advisor to the director of the Land Registry Department, October 13, 2008

These areas that are populated by Transjordanian tribes pose different types of problems from those occupied by Palestinian refugees; mainly problems concerning real estate and tax issues that do not involve questions of nationality and identity, in contrast to areas inhabited by citizens of Palestinian origin. The informal settlements which arise from rural depopulation receive special treatment from municipal services and the Land Registry Department. Often, mayors provide basic services for their residents, without requiring the intervention of the HUDC. Thus, the mayor of Russeifa, who comes from the large Beni Hassan tribe, is able to provide water supply and electricity services in informal settlements populated by underprivileged members of his tribe and located within his sphere of competence<sup>18</sup>.

### *Upgrading policies with participation*

In 1980, a quarter of the city of Amman was occupied by informal settlements inhabited by Palestinian refugees<sup>19</sup>. The insecure position of refugee populations living in informal settlements in Amman, in the heart of the old districts of the capital, and therefore highly visible, became a national problem which went beyond urban management. In 1980, at the instigation of the World Bank, the *Urban Development Department* (UDD) was created within the Greater Amman Municipality to develop an urban renewal project of informal settlements located in the east of Amman. From the outset, Jordan implemented very avant-garde policies in terms of urban renewal. The UDD applied the new concepts of urban renewal advocated by the World Bank: “funding of real-estate ownership” (land was purchased by the UDD and sold to squatters); “cost recovery” to allow the replication of the project; “self-construction” by squatters who thus learn building trades; “job opportunity” whereby half the employed labourers must be recruited from the local population concerned; “community involvement” to facilitate the upgrading and adapt it to the real needs of the inhabitants; finally “incremental housing” that develops from a central unit equipped with a sanitation section (a tap with running water and a toilet with a sewer)<sup>20</sup>.

In 1991, the *Housing and Urban Development Corporation* was created from the merger of the *Housing Corporation* and the *Urban Development*

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18. Interview with an UNRWA member of staff, November 2008.

19. Client's record of East Wahdat Upgrading Program. Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1992, 10 pages. [http://www.archnet.org/library/files/one-file.jsp?file\\_id=925](http://www.archnet.org/library/files/one-file.jsp?file_id=925).

20. Interview with Dr. Khaled Jayussi, architect and technical manager of the East Wahdat project, June 12, 2006.

*Department.* The upgrading projects then began to include the whole country and no longer only Amman. But after the Oslo peace process in September 1993, the Jordanian government began implementing a completely different policy: aimed at improving only the provision of services in informal areas without addressing issues of access to property or the real-estate status of developed plots. Another major change, all the ten UNRWA camps and all three from the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) were integrated into the work of HUDC.

In 1997 a new policy to reduce poverty and unemployment, the *National Strategic Plan*, was implemented by the Jordanian government in the context of structural adjustment policies advocated by the IMF. Its parallel urban policy was a vast infrastructure program for populations (CIP *Community Infrastructure Program*) both in camps and in informal areas. For the first time in the history of the Jordanian administration, all ten UNRWA camps and all three camps of the Palestinian Affairs Department were integrated into the work of HUDC. The bulk of upgrading programmes in informal areas were in central Amman (**Figure 10**).

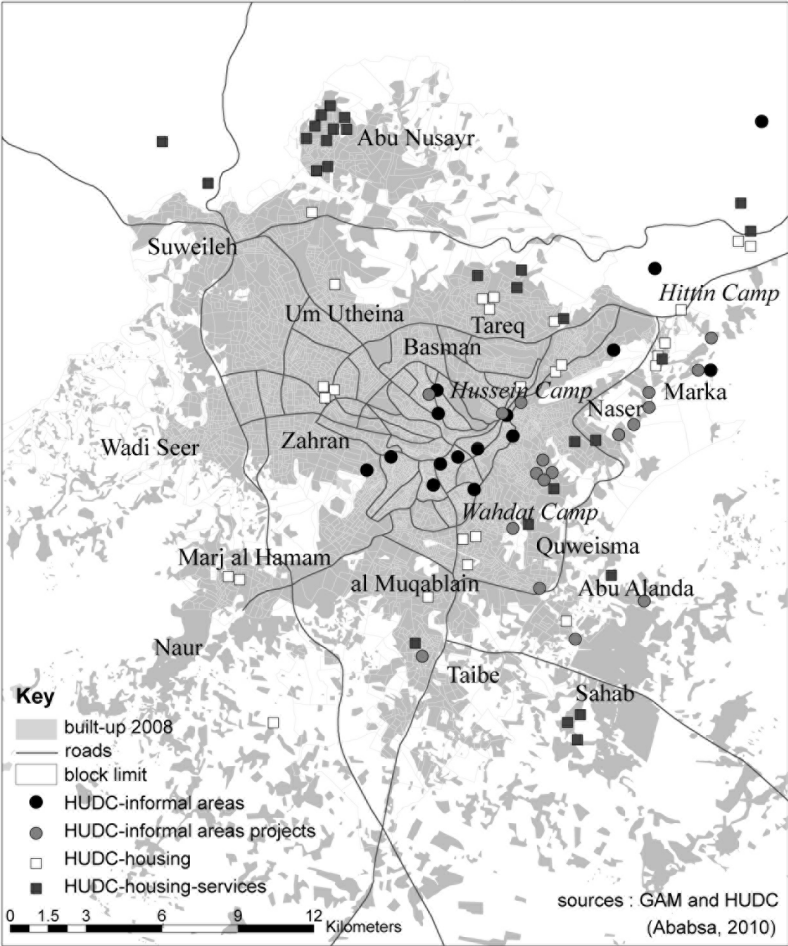
The *Community Infrastructure Program* works in a completely different way from the old UDD upgrading programs. They provide services without any financial or even technical participation from the beneficiaries because they concern utility services, and not housing improvements. They involve the local population, which must make up at least half the work force required for the work. Due to high unemployment figures, all the posts are filled. These infrastructure projects are generally well accepted by families in informal areas when compensation levels are high in the case of demolitions for the widening of roads. However, it is now out of the question to aid access to ownership by the regularisation of contracts or registration with the land registry.

In 2006, the HUDC planned several urban upgrading projects in the eastern part of the city, but they were suspended in 2008 because of the royal initiative “Decent Housing for Decent Living” which aimed to build 100,000 homes over five years for the most needy families in the country. But these projects are located outside Jordan’s main cities, in the desert to the east of Zarqa and Marka, and the new beneficiaries are isolated from employment opportunities, schools and social infrastructure.

#### *The “Made-in-Amman Solution” for “Community Development Rights”*

In May 2008, the Municipality of Greater Amman officially presented the new planning and development programme for channelling the growth of the city along priority corridors. It was accompanied by a 205 page-long

Figure 10 : Housing and Urban Development Corporation Projects in Greater Amman Municipality since 1965.



presentation of town planning regulations for these priority corridors. Since they were aware of the demand for real estate from the poorest social groups, the town planners from Planning Alliance, headed by Gerry Post, the current Director of the Amman Institute, designed a system for charging taxes for additional floors in tower blocks built in the corridors. Thus 25% of the fees charged to build above the eighth floor are paid into a Community Development Fund in charge of “heritage preservation, greening of the city and social actions”. This system of taxation for additional floors was presented by its creators as a “Made-in-Amman” solution which should help fund projects for the “community” (which is not defined) of the city’s residents. This fund, which could theoretically finance social housing, in fact only serves to build parks and infrastructure around major projects, because of the lack of coordination between the GAM and the Housing and Urban Development Corporation, which is unfortunate for the provision of social housing in Amman<sup>21</sup>.

#### *The revitalization of downtown Amman*

In 2000, the Municipality of Amman moved into new buildings designed by the two best Jordanian architects (Jafar Toukan and Rassem Badram) in Ras al-Ain, in the heart of the city, in order to make the municipality equally accessible to residents from the East and the West of the city. The al-Hussein Cultural Centre was built in what was formerly the playground for children from Jabal Amman and Jabal Nadhif, at the source of the Sayl Amman. On the far eastern side of Ras al-Ain, near the entrance to the souk, the new National Museum has been under construction since 2006 and will be inaugurated in late 2010, helping to reinforce the importance of the historic centre. Artists and cultural activists are trying to build bridges between the two parts of the city. Raed Asfour opened the al-Balad theatre in February 2005 on the slopes of Jabal Amman, at the top of the steps that climb up from the downtown post office, “to build a bridge between the East and West of the city” and make art accessible to the most underprivileged (ABABSA 2007, p. 236-240).

In 2008, the municipality launched a project to revitalize the downtown, called Wadi Amman. This project aims to revive the downtown area by creating pedestrian zones and enabling residents to reclaim this important national heritage site, which is the original heart of the city, but which has been abandoned by the wealthy residents of West Amman. A major tourist development has been designed with the participation of, or at least by regularly

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21. Interview with a town planner from the Amman Institute, July 2010.

consulting, the residents and shopkeepers. Building projects are included, provided they comprise 10% social housing. The ultimate goal announced on the municipality's website is "Creating a more viable environment for the Eastern areas of Amman and linking it with West Amman"<sup>22</sup>.

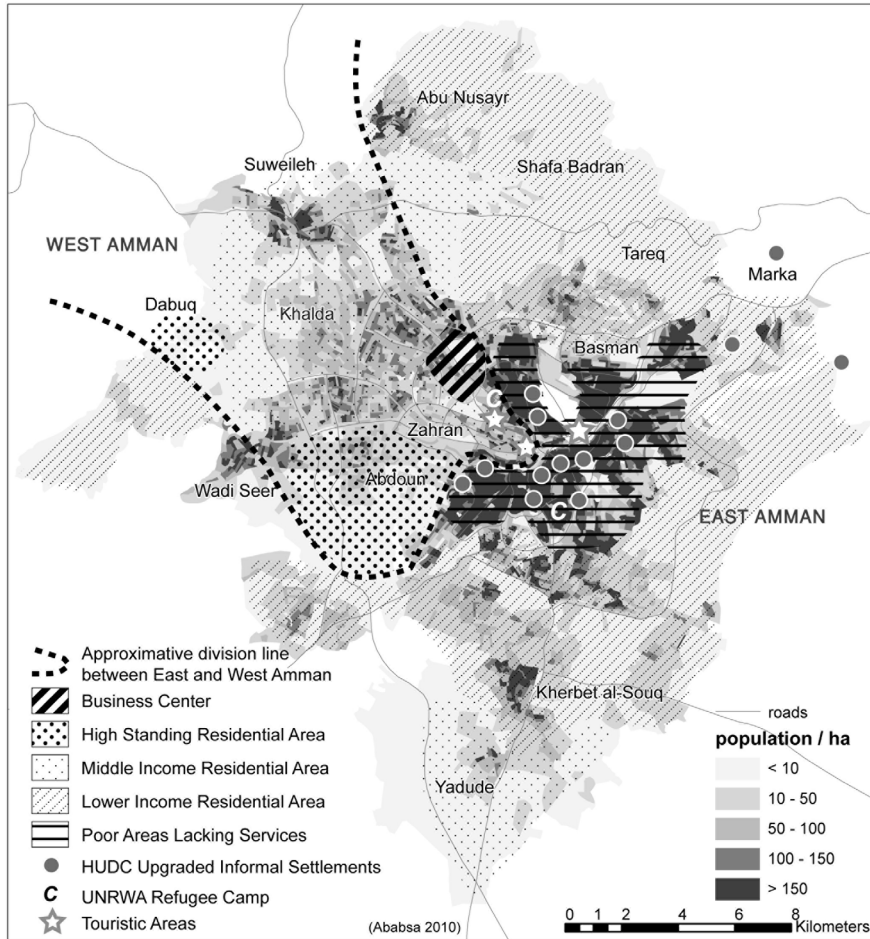
## Conclusion

After thirty years of urban renewal, Amman continues to be characterized by strong contrasts between poor, highly populated neighbourhoods where unemployment rates are high, and neighbourhoods primarily located in the west but also in the north-west and south west, where the active population is greater, the level of education better and buildings and infrastructure are more developed. Maps produced on the block level allow us to draw a dividing line between East and West neighbourhoods within the city of Amman. West Amman extends from Jabal Amman to Khalda and is bordered in the north by Wadi Hadadeh and in the South by Wadi Deir Ghbar. East Amman covers Amman's historical centre, and more than half of the city with its North and South expansions (**figure 11**). One can only regret that the new property developments underway only focus on limited areas within the city: Abdali and the Eastern development belt, leaving large overpopulated areas under-equipped, lacking in social housing and centres of employment. The Community Development Fund created in 2008 from the taxing of additional floors of the tower blocks built within the development corridors is in fact very rarely used for social housing projects, due to a lack of coordination between the GAM and the HUDC. It is therefore regrettable that the new social housing built by the HUDC under the royal initiative is located outside the urban centres, in the desert, thus depriving its inhabitants of part of their "rights to the city".

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22. <http://www.ammancity.gov.jo/en/projects/wadiamman.asp>.

*Figure 11 : Amman Urban Morphology and Approximative Division Line Between East and West Amman*





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