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The Impact of the Iraqi Community on the Spatial and Socio-
cultural Urban Structure of Amman**

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cultural Urban Structure of Amman**

ABSTRACT

The influx of Iraqis to Jordan came in two major waves. The first wave had taken place in 1991 when Iraq was subjected to a devastating war following its invasion of Kuwait, while the second wave resulted from the US-led war against Iraq in 2003. In both waves, the Iraqi immigrants can be grouped into three categories. The first relates to those Iraqis who came seeking temporary safety from the spread of violence back home, but for whom the idea of returning to Iraq remained in mind. The second category is of those Iraqis who came to stay for family any pressing reasons and the third group is of those who viewed Amman as a transit station towards other destinations. The second wave has proven to be not as short-lived as was the earlier one, due to persistent living hardship in Iraq. The Jordanian government statistics and documents show that for the sake of this long-term permanent, a large number of Iraqis bought or built houses or apartments which will be discussed in farther details later. In addition this long-term permanent residency means that the Iraqis have to move their own business or to establish new one. This research addresses the long-term pattern including certain business activities in Amman by the upper-middle class and high-class of Iraqi immigrants. The research also raises questions as to what makes such immigrants select certain areas, and finally by testing the two questions the research will examine if they did form an Iraqi community within the urban fabric of Amman and what kind of characteristics dose this community have physically, socially and economically. To give a comprehensive and fully understanding answers for the research problem a multi-dimensional behavior and physical urban theories and principles will be applied such as place attachment, place identity, place memory, trans placed, sense of place, sense of community, urban structure urban forms and spatial dimensions, and this will be studied in an analytical methodology. The findings of this research will help to understand the phenomena of gathering the impact of the conflict trans-placed communities on the physical, as well as, the social and cultural urban structure of the multi layered cities such as Amman.

Keywords: Trans-placed, communities, Arrival points, Place identity, Place Attachment, Place Dependence, Sense of Place, Sense of Community.

Objective(s)

Assessing the sense of place dimensions: place identity features, place attachment attractions and place dependence qualities for such communities.

Introduction

Iraqi feel more at home in Jordan than anywhere else. Geography and history and tribal and family kinships constitute important factors in the closeness between Iraqis and Jordanians.

Iraqis in Jordan are not refugees but immigrants who left their country to seek a better life elsewhere (Edwards, 2016). More than 50% of them live in Amman at areas like al-Rabiya, Um Utheyna and Tlaa'ul Ali which they generally identify with similar districts in Baghdad. The bustling nature of busy streets is a constant reminder of the streets of al-Karrada or Zayouna with shops of all kinds and restraints for all tastes. Their choice of district in Amman is driven by other reasons such as housing convenience and service availability, as well as family reunion, schooling, health conditions, investment and business interests.

Amman is socially and culturally speaking a dual city: which serves as the Capital's modern economic center, and East Amman which is, in Beal's (1998) "the poor part of the city".

Districts, such as Tlaa'ul Ali and al-Rabiya, became points of arrival and attraction for Iraqi immigrants in their search for a substitute "sense of place" at the city of Amman by carrying memories with a sense of belonging that creates a new kind of place attachment, place dependency and place identity (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2005).

Literature Review

West Amman and East Amman Brief

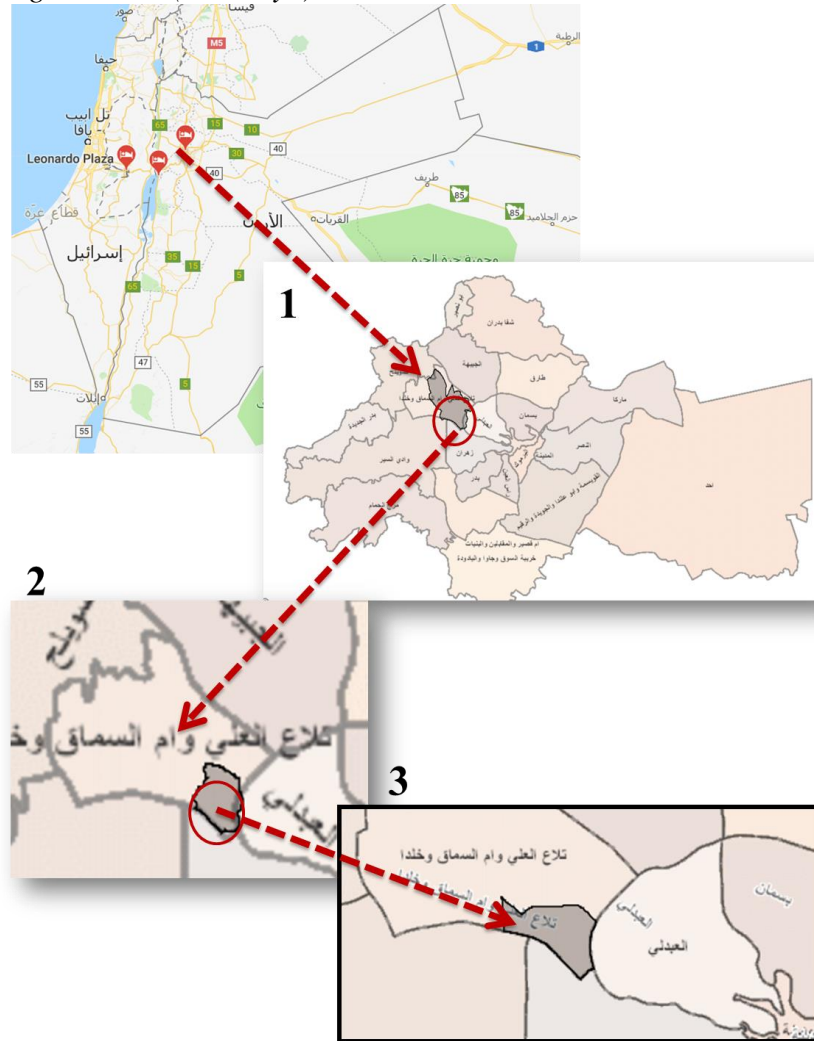
East Amman is, generally speaking, a relatively flat area, populated rather densely, by a mixed community of middle-and-lower class residents. West Amman, on the other hand, is more modern and serves as the economic center of the city. The upper middle and higher class of the Jordanians and non-Jordanians mostly live in the west of Amman and have, as a result, established their businesses in this part of the city. This is "The rich part of the city" as described by Beal (1998). Therefore, Amman is, socially and culturally speaking, a dual city; West of Amman and East of Amman.

Administrative Divisions

The Rabyia neighborhood is one of the main districts of the capital Amman, it is located in the heart of West Amman, amidst neighborhoods of Tlaa Al-Ali to

the west, Um Uthaina to the south, Shmeisani and north Gardens to the east. It covers in a semi-square area between Wasfi al-Tal Street and Mecca Street, and running parallel to el-Medina el-Munawara Street and el-Shareef Nassir Street.

Figure 1. Location Description, since Number 1 Represents Tlaa'ulAli Village, Number 2 Represents Houth el-Shamasani and Number 3 Represents el-Salam Neighborhood (el-Rabiya)



Source: The researchers, 2017.
Iraqi Immigrants

Davis and Taylor (2007) describe Iraqis in Jordan as “guests” rather than as “refugees” who cannot return unless the situation that forced them to leave improves. By UNHCR standers, the majority of Iraqis in Jordan are free to return home at any time if things don’t work out as they had hoped, if they get homesick or if they wish to visit family members and friends left behind (UNHCR, 2016).

Why is the Area Called “El-Rabiya”?

In topography, Amman is a hilly city, which may explain why several of its areas have acquired names from the hills (Jabal) or the valleys (Wadi) they lie on, such as Jabal Lweibdeh and Wadi Abdoun.

In Arabic vocabulary Rabiya means an elevated or high-lying area overlooking other parts of Amman. It rises to a height of 1,015 meters above sea level.

El-Rabiya is the popular name given to the area and used over the years by the general public. This name, however, does not exist in the documents of government institutions or the Department of Land and Survey which the name used is El-Shamasani district which is a part of Eastern Tlaa’ulAli. El-Rabiya also has another official name used in the Greater Amman Municipality, which is El-Salam District (Peace District).

It must be noted, however, that the two “official names” are never used, or even known by the general public.

Place of Origin and Place of Settlements

The Norwegian Research Institute (FAFO) stresses that 76% of Iraqis residing in Jordan indicate that they are from Baghdad. This is particularly true for the population with high personal and material resources (education and health). An indication of the high level of personal resources among Iraqis is the fact that 93% of their adults have a university degree Bachelor or higher (2007).

The Department of Statistics data indicate that most of the Iraqis who came to Amman belong to Middle-to-high class backgrounds, and are that most of them have come from the capital Baghdad which explains their general tendency to settle in West Amman to “the rich part of the city”.

The Iraqi Demographic Profile

The Population of Iraq is in Jordan

The years 2005-2007 witnessed also a large Iraqi immigration to Amman because the Jordanian government encouraged foreign investment by reducing taxes. Most of them came with their families and lived in western Amman, where housing and services are attractive, and because neighborhoods like Abdoun and el-Rabiya have features similar to their home areas in Iraq. Indeed, in some cases Iraq have used pseudo-names to their areas in Amman, like “el-Karradeh” for el-Rabiya, “el-Mansor” for Tlaa’ul Ali, “Zayouna” and “el-Adhamiyah” for Abdoun.

In (2007) FAFO in cooperation with the Department of Statistics, states the number of Iraqi residents in Jordan stands somewhere between 450,000 and 500,000 individuals, the majority of whom are chose to live in the Capital Amman, and had themselves originally come from the Capital Baghdad.

At present, Department of Statistics figures show that, by 2015, the number of Iraqi individuals currently residing in Jordan has decreased. The number has been

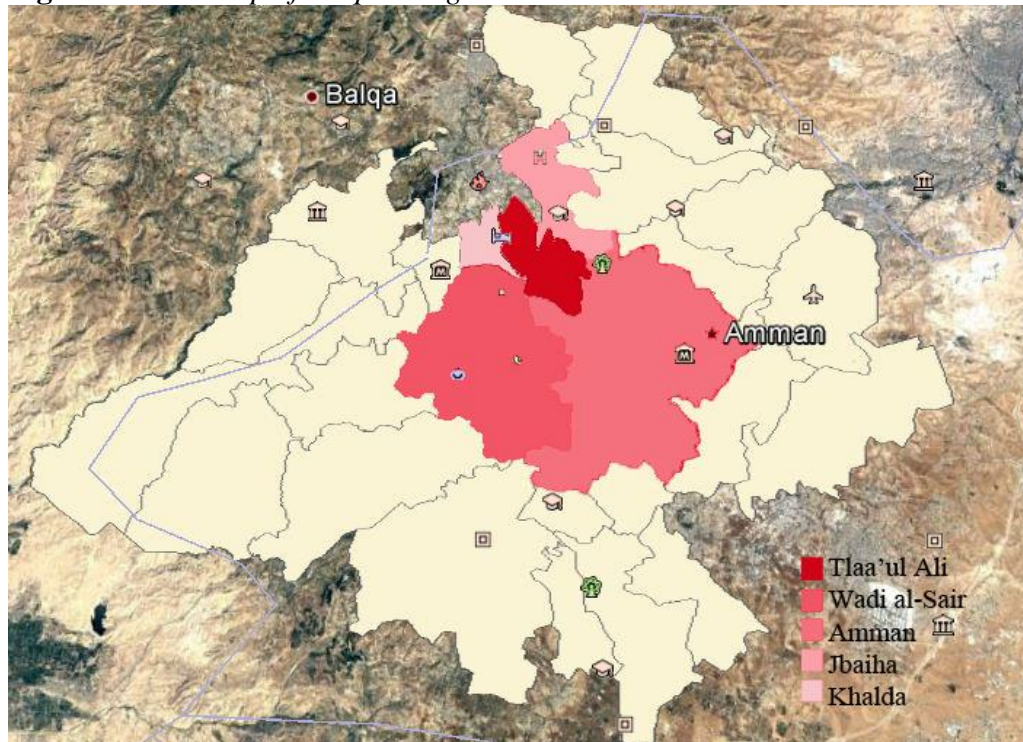
reduced due to that to some 180-200 thousand individuals. Those that have left have either gone back to Iraq or travel to another country.

Al-Azhari and Al-Najjar (2013) explained that Iraqi residents in Amman have created points of arrival for their trans-placed identity and culture inside the urban fabric of the city. In these points of arrival Iraqis can meet and socialize with fellow Iraqis and create a sense of home within their new city.

Population of Iraqis in el-Rabiya

Depending on official statistics from the Department of Land and survey of the city Amman we can be sure that most of the Iraqis who came to Amman eventually settled down in western Amman in areas like Tlaa'ul Ali, al-Rabiya, Wadi al-Sair, Jbailha and Khalda as shown below in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Heat Map of Iraqi Immigrant's Concentrations in Amman



Source: The researchers, 2017.

In order to arrive at accurate numbers of the Iraqis population in el-Rabiya, requests were presented to Department of Statistics for updated data, according to the department; they used to measure a total population for multiple areas. Thus, the researchers obtained data on the Iraqis population in certain areas in Amman such as Khalda, el-Khalden, el-Saleheen, el-Baraka, Um- elsumaq and Tlaa'ul Ali, leading to an overall figure of 29167 residences.

According to the Department of Statistics (DOS) of Tla'a al-Ali houses some 40% of the population. El-Rabiya is part of western Tla'a al-Ali with a percentage of 60% of the Iraqi population in Tla'a al-Ali, only.

According to this data, the researchers measured the ratio of the percentages of Iraqi population in Tla'a al-Ali as a whole as well as their percentage in el-Rabiya only. The result shows that the number of Iraqis living in all Tla'a al-Ali is 11.6668, compared to their population in el-Rabiya which is around 7000 only.

Methodology

The researchers plan to examine the main arrival points for Iraqis immigrants in the city of Amman, along with their sense of place in these arrival points, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, by assessing dimensions attitude toward the physical environment and its cultural pluralism. I will collect data through a questionnaire.

Qualitative Research

Choosing a qualitative approach in this research is seen to be helpful in addressing, understanding and studying a social and cultural phenomenon for a group of Iraqi immigrants who came to Amman and chose certain areas as arrival points to settle in and start creating their own trans-placed community in the Capital of Jordan. Since according to Mason (2002), Qualitative approach concern with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted. Qualitative research might understand or approach multiple elements in different ways, for example, focusing on social meanings, or interpretations, or practices, or discourses, or processes, or constructions, all will see at least some of these as meaningful elements in a complex – possibly multi-layered and textured – social world.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) Where are the initial arrival points which attracted Iraqi immigrants?
- (2) What are the reasons that led Iraqi immigrants to those arrival points in the first place?
- (3) What memory dose these places carry in its corridors that made Iraqis get attached to it?
- (4) What effect have the Iraqi immigrants had on the social and economic layers of the city of Amman?

Research Design

The researchers will map the large-scale private investment based on site selection and observation.

Data Analysis

Mapping out the areas of Iraqi immigrants with emphasis on the main incentives found in place such as el-Rabiya.

Target Population and Sampling Technique

The target population and sampling technique will be ownership and users of el-Rabiya as well as, planners, architects, decision-makers, and investors.

Data Collection Procedures:

- Semi-Structured face to face interviews
- Semi-Structured focus group interviews
- Observation
- Mapping and layering the official data

Documents

For Iraqi immigrant number and concentration areas, official Amman Municipality data shall be obtained and used to assess their arrival points, their behavior and ultimately their impact on the urban form of the city.

Findings and Results

El-Rabiya Urban Form Analysis

Analyzing el-Rabiya as a trans-placed community for Iraqi immigrants who came to Jordan seeking a new place to live in, along with their own socio-cultural and economic aspects in the new atmosphere of the new city.

The analysis was conducted according to the main concepts which the researcher adopted after reviewing previous literature for this study. These main concepts are to do with Place attachment, Place dependence and Place identity, as well as having a full understanding of Sense of place and Sense of community.

According to those concepts, as compared with the real situation of the Iraqi community in el-Rabiya, the researcher studied the situation from both physical and psychological aspects, and in an integrated approach because both aspects are inter-connected in one way or another. The literature reviews conducted by the researcher were mainly about issues of locality and localization matter as attended to in Andreas Langenohl's important book which deals with the subject of town-twinning stressing the constitutive role of localization in bringing about trans-local and transnational sociality, communality, and maybe something akin to solidarity.

In studying transnationalism, Langenohl deals with the social logic of trans-local encounters: making towns meet through the concept of town-twinning. Transnational and trans-situational character of town twinning ought to be

addressed from the perspective of localization practices that make trans-local references emerge in local practices. This reveals the situational logic and local contextualization of trans-local practices that are so distinctive about town-twinning which is viewed as a set of practices of localization that generates trans-local references and encompasses different, and at time divergent and conflicting, logic action (Langenohl, 2016).

Physical Urban Form and Data Analysis

This analysis was concentrated on the official data which were obtained and studied by the researcher from Department of Statistics, Department of Land and Survey, from Greater Amman Municipality as well as through site observation and interviewing done by the researcher. In this respect, the researcher studied the existing situation of the Iraqis in el-Rabiya along with the data that was collected from the institutions.

El-Rabiya is divided into two main zones, residential and commercial, both of which combined into creating the factors that drove Iraqis to come to el-Rabiya and make it their initial arrival point in Amman (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. Main Zones Map

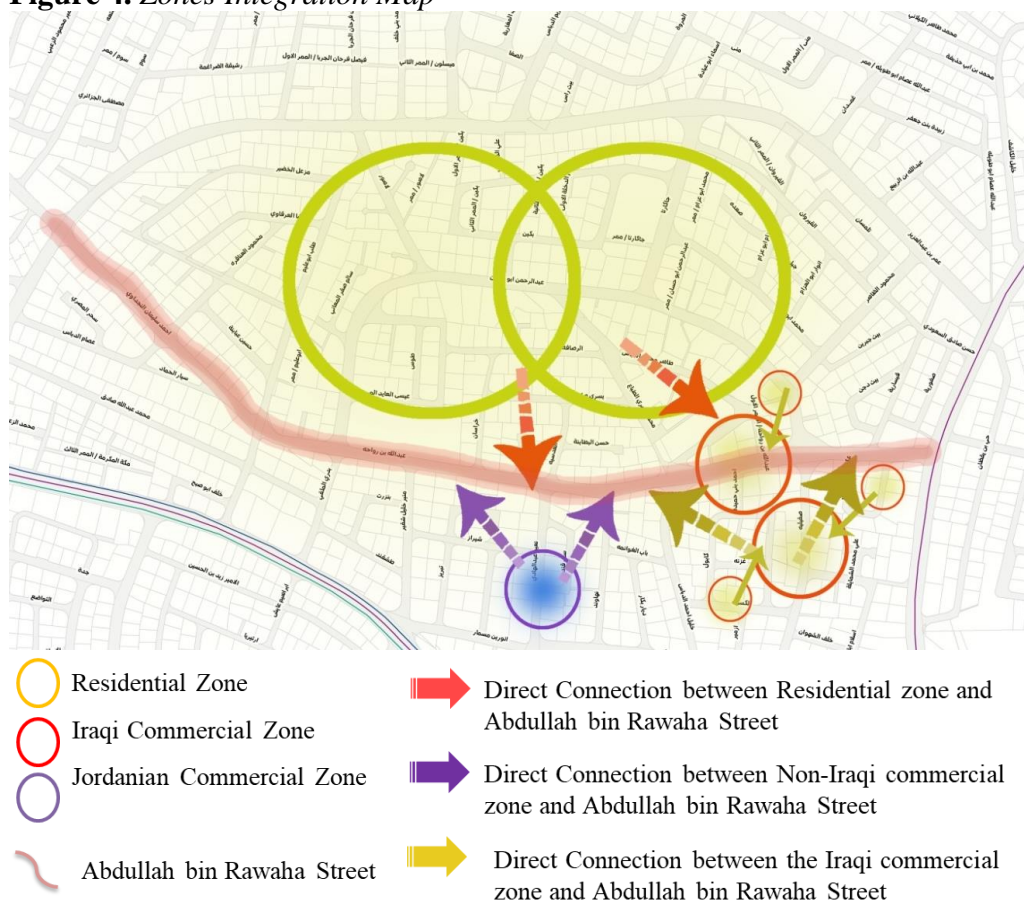


Source: The researchers, 2017.

Two main factors drove Iraqis to create their trans-placed community in el-Rabiya, and those factors are the socio-cultural factor which as reflected in the residential zone and the economic factor which was represented in the commercial zone. On the other hand, the two factors are so closely integrated that they exchange impact on each other.

There is another factor which has been instrumental in the decision of their dissension of many Iraqis to choose el-Rabiya as their arrival point. This is the urban form factor of el-Rabiya itself. This factor has emerged gradually since the arrival of the first Iraqi wave to el-Rabiya, when then the urban shape of el-Rabiya began to develop in the era of the formation of the new city of Amman in the 1990s.

Figure 4. Zones Integration Map



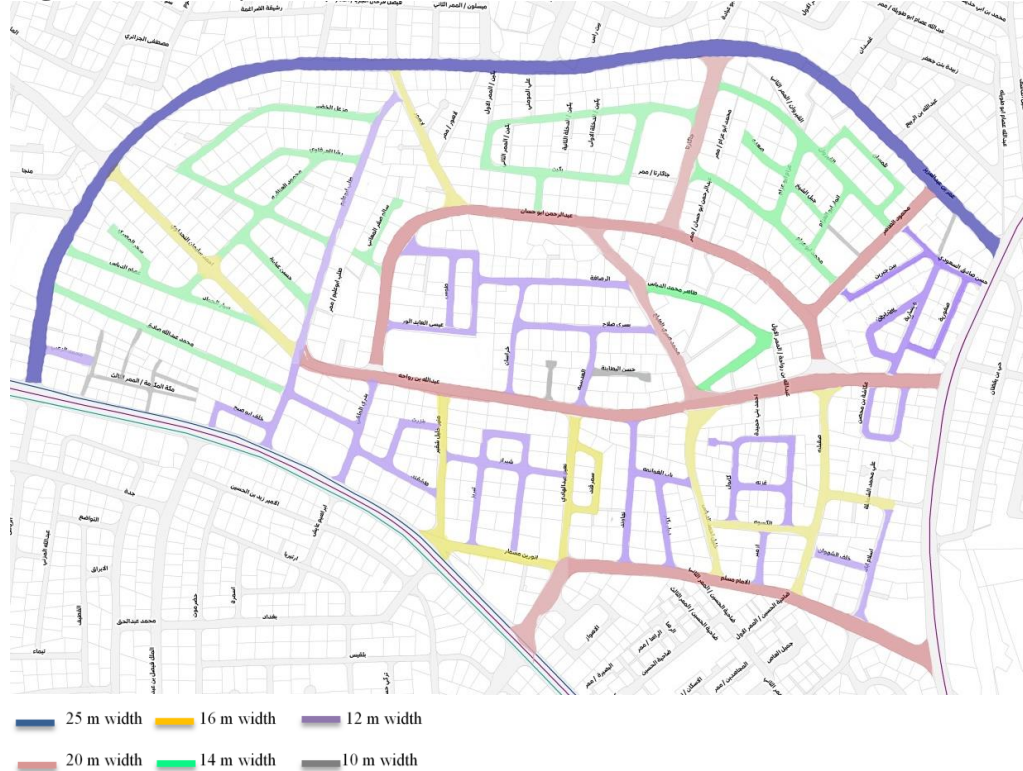
Source: The researchers, 2017.

Observing the area and assessing its characteristics from the official data obtained from the Greater Amman Municipality, the researcher has discovered that both the commercial zone and the residential zone face each other and integrated together in the connecting with the main street which divides el-Rabyia into these commercial and residential zones

This street is called Abdullah bin Rawaha Street which were runs parallel with Mecca Street, as well as Wasfi el-Tal Street. It begins from el-Shareef Nassir

bin Jameel Street going through el-Rabiya circle towards el-Madina Street. The street is 20 m wide and it is a dual-carriage way separated by a mid-road island. Buildings are on both sides of the street (See Figure 4 and Figure 5).

Figure 5. El-Rabiya Streets Dimensions



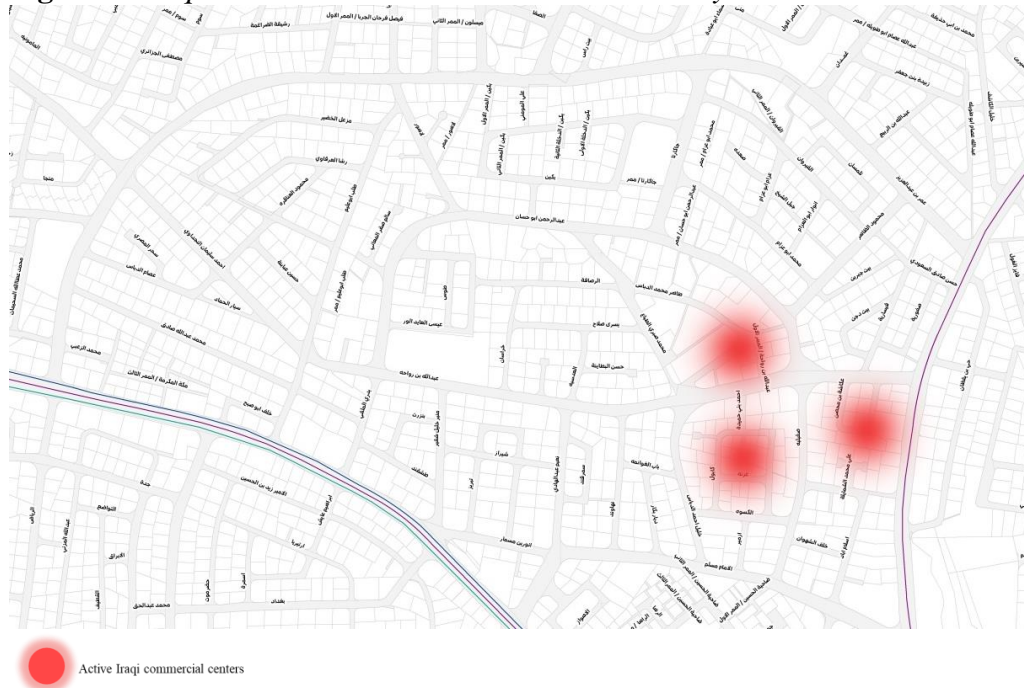
Source: The researchers, 2017.

According to all this, the second wave of Iraqi immigrants who came began to create new spots in el-Rabiya, and those spots became as the main centers for their social and spatial gathering.

This was ensured by the researchers in different ways physically and theoretically. The observation aspect has been translate into maps, while the theoretical studies have been stringing these maps since Hoerder (2013) mentioned that states and statewide economies might also be the generators of local emigration: Slowly developing or even dysfunctional economies, predatory states, or competing elites engaged in internal warfare over segments of the state may force people to depart.

The Iraqis local spaces of departure and arrival have become part of regional economies as well as region-specific cultures and dialects “transregionalism” (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. Iraqis Active Commercial Centers in el-Rabiya



Source: The researchers, 2017.

The commercial zone is transforming spatially and socially into gathering spots for the Iraqis who are living in el-Rabiya as well as Iraqis who live in the areas around el-Rabiya. The existing old shops, reportedly built in the 1990s continue to attract Iraqis and non-Iraqi partners to come and invest in the area by building Iraqi cafes, restaurants, shops and companies. This has had a huge impact on el-Rabiya spatially by refreshing the area economically and socially with an Iraqi socio-cultural touch.

This has also definitely attracted Iraqis to get together socially with their relatives and friends, re-living their old days of gathering in the crowded streets of Baghdad.

Iraqis love to sit in cafes which serve old traditional Iraqi meal. They also enjoy buying fast food of Iraqi Kebaab and Tikka and other delights from Iraqi restaurants that have mushroomed throughout the area over the years.

Areas that are uncovered and exposing everything in the street. They love to call their friends while spotting them in the street to come and join them by drinking Iraqi tea and a game of domino or backgammon.

In order to study the area of the commercial zone, the researchers had to consider the gathering spots, including the defined places of cafes and restaurant, with special attention to the type of food they serve and the kind of customers they receive (See Figure 7).

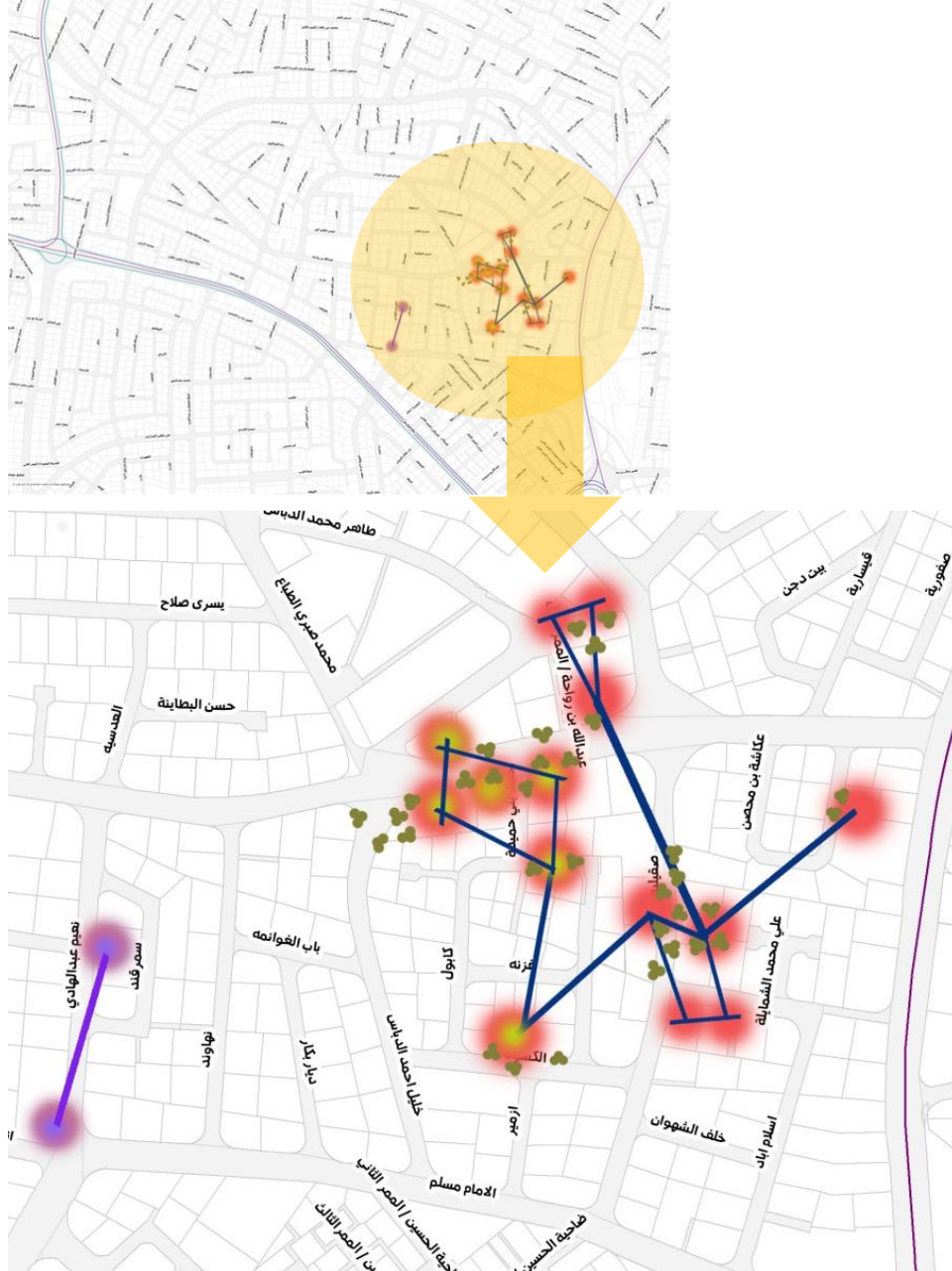
Figure 7. El-Rabiya Land Use



Source: The researchers, 2017.

By observing the existing land uses of el-Rabiya as well as comparing it with the GAM data the researchers had the chance to spot gathering areas and the spatial relations between those social gathering areas (See Figure 8).

Figure 8. *Commercial Centers Connectivity or Gathering Areas Connectivity*



Source: The researchers, 2017.

Towards this end, the researcher has benefitted from the chance of interviewing Iraqi users both individually and in groups (See Figure 9).

Figure 9. *Levels of Iraqi's Concentration in the Economic Sector*

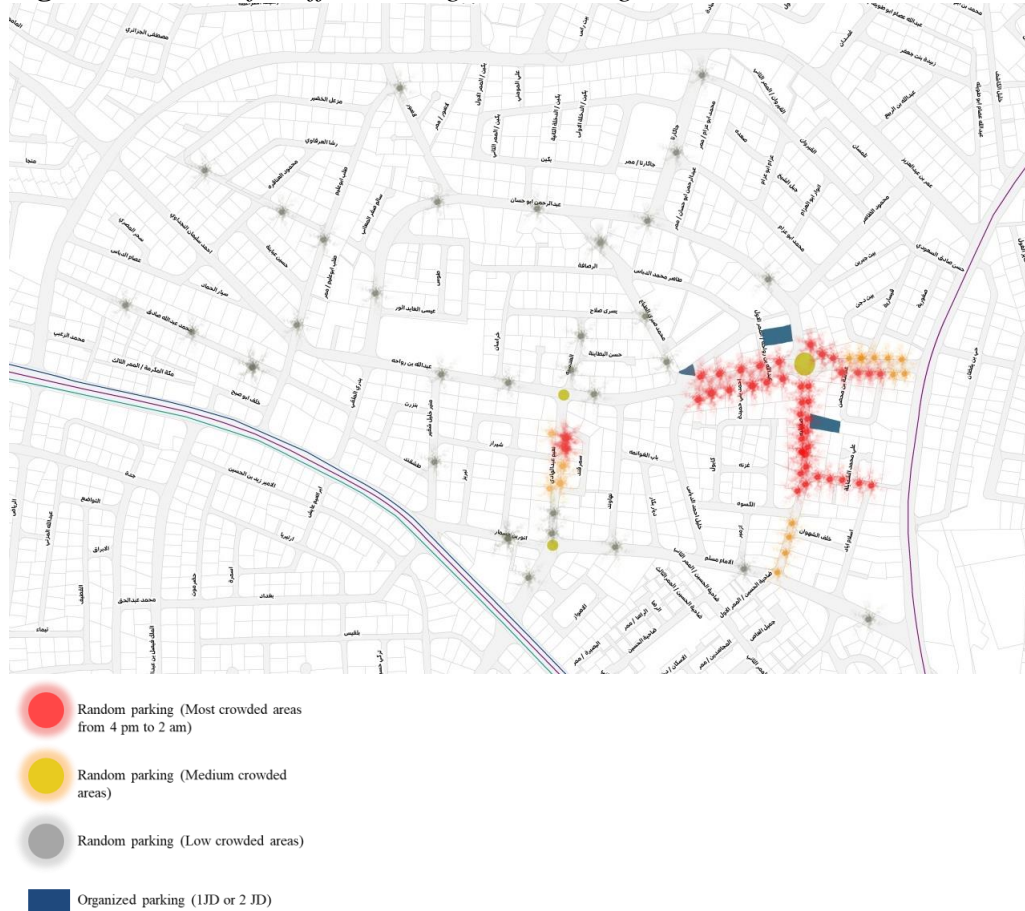


Source: The researchers, 2017.

According to the studies the researchers had conducted, the connections between two or more specific localities created and experienced by immigrants are usually called “Trans-local” notions (Hoerder, 2013). This has long been an evident fact throughout the history of migration.

This social activity has also brought about a considerable increase in traffic movement on the streets of el-Rabiya, starting from around 4 p.m. to as late as 1 or 2 a.m. especially in summer time (See Figure 10).

Figure 10. Levels of Traffic and Orgnized Parking Areas in the Commercial Zone



Source: The researchers, 2017.

Urban Factors of Attraction

- Socio-cultural Factor
- Economic Factor

In this zone, a lot of old shops have been established in el-Rabiya since the 1990s along with the new cafes which were set-up especially after the arrival of the post-2003 wave of Iraqis.

The reason why Iraqis have settled in certain areas more than others, are mainly to do with family reunion, schooling, health conditions, investment and business interests. There have also other psychological reasons such as attachment to, dependence on and identification with the areas in question.

Transcultural studies do not focus on what culture does to human beings, but on what different human beings do with culture. Fischer (2016) believes that “the transcultural dimensions of literary texts cultivate transcultural mentalities”.

Social Urban Form Analysis Subjective

This analysis is based on the field of observation and interviewing conducted by the researchers in site. This includes:

1. Observation: collecting photos and doing sketches.
2. Interviews: conducting a stream of interviews with Iraqi residents in order to collect as much information as possible about their psychological reasons behind establishing their new life in a new place away from their country and picking el-Rabiya as their initial arrival point in Amman, where in to start their new life and re-establish their new homes benefitting from previous life style in Iraq which is called “lived experience”, or by merging it with the new life style in Amman. This means there is a cultural interaction between Jordanian and Iraqi environments, which has an effect on strengthening attachment to both cultures.

Here the researchers raised the question of: Why do we feel at home?

Types of Interviews

Face-to-face Interviews

These interviews were done in several months. They were done with Iraqi and Non-Iraqi investors in order to see whether the Iraqi residents in Jordan had shown any specific requirements or needs which they wanted to have in their new homes in el-Rabiya district.

Some of interviews took place in their offices or in a building of them which was under constructing in el-Rabiya.

- Did you ever face a case of an Iraqi asking you to build several apartments for him and his relatives to live in the same building?
- Did you invest in this area because it was requested from the Iraqis?
- What type of areas did they prefer in their apartments?
- What is the range of Iraqis buying apartments to Non-Iraqis in one building?

Property investors, as well as estate agents, generally responded in the affirmative, and went on to point out the kind of preferences usually required, which may be summed up as follows:

- Iraqis in general, are used to living in houses and villas than in apartments. When forced to live in apartments, they naturally prefer them to be spacious, starting from around 200 sq. meters in size, with no less than three bedrooms.
- Iraqis prefer to live next to each other in order to reunion with their relatives.

- They prefer being near to shops that supply them with their basic needs of traditional food that they are used to eat, such as:
 - Traditional bread (Samoon and Khoboz).
 - Traditional Kaamer.
 - Kebab and Tekka
 - Bacha
 - Iraqi tea
 - Iraqi sweets like (Min el-Sama)
- Internal divisions
 - Larger rooms than usual
 - Larger kitchen with sitting space
 - More toilets
- External divisions
 - Garage
 - Gardens
 - Bigger salons in order to let father of the house gather with his old friends (traditional “Diwans” that is located usually outside the apartment if it is a ground floor apartment or it will be located in a space inside the apartment which is near by the main door as well as near the kitchen.
 - (Outer sitting areas) barbecuing sitting and chatting
- Luxurious needs like:
 - Marble finishing
 - Columns for decorating the “Diwans”
 - Iraqis in general like the light colors for wall paintings such as of whites, blue and beige.

Focused Group Interviews

These interviews were done in order to the widest range possible of Iraqis living in Amman. They took place in the spots of gathering and recreation for Iraqis which were represented in restaurant and cafes located in the economic zone of el-Rabiya. Those spots were analyzed before by the researchers in the physical urban form and data analysis procedure which was done simultaneously with this procedure of the social urban form analysis.

The interviews were based on open-ended questions submitted by the researcher to Iraqis sitting on different tables in cafes and were responded to spontaneously and in candor.

The questions were also designed to measure the Place Identity (PI), Place Dependence (PD) and Place Attachment (PA) qualitatively in order to see the

effect of these concepts on forming the Sense of Place (SOP) and Sense of Community (SOC). Measuring the PI, PD and PA is a process highlighted and discussed in convincing detail in such important academic studies as those of Jorgensen and Stedman (2001), Ahlam (2009), Fischer (2016), Hoerder (2013) and Langenohl (2016).

Dissection

The community was commonly identified as consisting of the people, place, services and amenities. For some the community instilled in them a sense of pride, while others felt the community consisted of a complex web of relationships between people and place. Community was thought to have no geographical boundaries extending past the physical features of the neighborhood and the immediate social setting to adjoining suburbs where external connections were fostered. The participants demonstrated a fondness for the environment. In-fact most moved into the area because they had the opportunity to be close to nearby nature. The environment played an important role in their perceptions of what elements make up their SOC. Even when they were looking at moving into the area, most chose their present location over that of an alternative location, because they could stay nearby their friends and relatives. So even before they moved, in their search for a new home and neighborhood setting, they may have started to form an attachment to the area. In this case, maybe the participants were able to automatically identify that this particular place was congruent with their needs and goals and had the potential to improve their quality of life and well-being. Apparently the dimensions of the sense of place which were represented by the place attachment (PA), place identity (PI) and place dependence (PD) played a huge role in making the Iraqis create a community in el-Rabiya. Given the strong empirical evidence that people are showing an increasing preference for being together within the environment doing everything together as well as, gathering and doing different activities and this was very important to explore the reasons of the participants showing a strong preference in emotional feelings of sense of community (SOC).

Conclusions

1. The topic we are addressing in this paper covers a span of some fifteen years or a bit longer. In other words the Iraqi families that moved to Jordan fleeing from violence, political struggle or threats of different kinds, have by the nature of things multiplied into branch families the sons and daughters who came as teenagers are now in their late twenties or thirties, and have completed their studies and got married to make their own families.
2. The new families may have remained in el-Rabiya or moved elsewhere in Amman. But el-Rabiya remains their point of reference and gathering

where they mingle with other Iraqis in such gatherings points as Iraqi tea-shops or cafeterias and restaurants of which there are many in the area.

3. El-Rabiya therefore remains an area of activities even for the Iraqis who have no longer living there, thus remaining an area of economic and social activities.

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