



# Variation in the Nature of the Activities, Interactions, and Behavior Patterns of Visitors of Public Spaces in the City of Amman: The New Abdali and Al-Balad Districts as a Case Study

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## Abstract

Public spaces differ from city to another, and in the city itself, in terms of nature, designs, as well as behavior patterns and social integration of visitors. This study aimed to analyze the characteristics of the activities, interactions, and behavior patterns in both the New Abdali and Al-Balad districts (the old city center or downtown). To collect data, a field study was conducted on a sample of visitors of these public spaces with the aim of identifying the visitors' behavior patterns in their leisure time, types of their activities, their favorite public spaces, the purpose of their visits, and the extent of their social interaction. The study showed that there were diverse activities in the public spaces in the study area. However, the occurrence of these activities varied depending on the visitors' economic and social characteristics and place of residence. Besides, these public spaces were dissimilar in terms of availability of amenities and services, social communication, and gender interaction. The study showed that there was a form of social segregation, which means that the New Abdali visitors' characteristics and behavior patterns were totally different from those of the old city center with little or no interaction between both groups.

**Keywords:** public spaces, social disparities, different activities, leisure time, modern and old spaces.

## 1. Introduction

Due to the political, economic and social developments in Jordan in general, and in Amman city in particular, Amman has become the largest city in Jordan (42% of Jordan's population lives in Amman) (department of statistics, 2016). In fact, the economic development in Amman in the 1960s and 1970s and the subsequent reforms and prosperity have led to the emergence of different spaces and centers along with the social inequality among its residents. One of the key reasons of this inequality was the spread of neoliberalism and globalization, which led to the emergence of urban public spaces that were different from the traditional ones.

The social inequality in Amman is based on economic factors. In East Amman, old neighborhoods and Palestinian refugee camps suffer from low standards of living and less developed infrastructure, While West Amman is more modern and serves as the economic center of the city. In West Amman, the rich and modern neighborhoods enjoy the highly developed infrastructure and higher standards of living, in addition to modern projects, such as high-rise towers, shopping centers, gated communities, restaurants, cafes and other high-end spaces. The New Abdali nowadays is an optimal example of the new neoliberal projects in the city of Amman.

This economic disparity and different types of public spaces have led to diverse activities and interactions in the public spaces in Amman based on the different behavior patterns of the visitors to these spaces. There are diverse practices and activities in these public spaces.

In his book *Life Between Buildings*, the Danish architect Jean Gehl summarized the visitors' activities. Greatly simplified, outdoor activities in public spaces can be divided into three categories, each of which places very different demands on the physical environment: necessary activities, optional activities, and social activities. (Figure 1). (Gehl, 2011):

1. Necessary activities include those that are more or less compulsory (going to school or to work, shopping, waiting for a bus or a person) i.e. All activities in which those involved are to a greater or lesser degree required to participate. Because the activities in this group are necessary, their incidence is influenced only slightly by the physical framework.
2. Optional activities – that is, those pursuits that are participated in if there is a wish to do so and if time and place make it possible – are quite another matter. This category includes such activities as taking a walk to get a breath of fresh air, standing around enjoying life, or

sitting and sunbathing. These activities are especially dependent on exterior physical conditions. They take place only when exterior conditions are favorable when weather and place invite them.

3. Social activities are all activities that depend on the presence of others in public spaces. They evolve from activities linked to the other two categories. They develop in connection with the other activities because people are in the same space, meet, pass by one another, or are merely within view. Social activities as a direct consequence of people moving about. Social activities are not called so if they are carried out by a single person. Social activities include conversations in teahouses, public plazas, sidewalks, and various festivals, protests, and meetings. (South & Howse, 2011).

	Quality of the physical environment	
	Poor	Good
Necessary activities	●	●
Optional activities	●	●●●●●
"Resultant" activities (Social activities)	●	●

(Source: Gehl, 2011, p11).

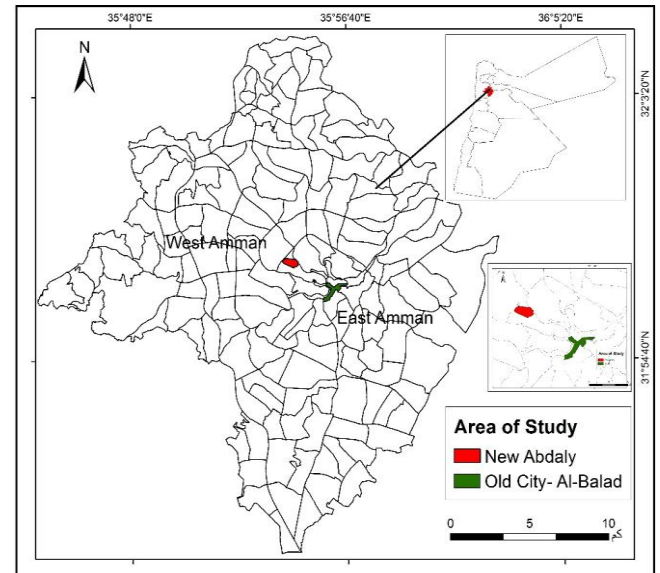
**Figure 1: The relationship between the physical dimension and the nature of the activities in public spaces.**

Lefebvre considered public space as continuous production of social relations, in other words, each group forms its own space through internal social interaction. Massey (1984, 1991) also confirmed that public space is constructed relationally. These interrelationships in public space that have new meanings are produced as a result of the interactions and practices in it (Cruz, Roskam and Charalambous, 2018).

Public spaces are greatly affected by globalization and neo-liberalism. Thus, social practices and activities have changed and varied depending on ongoing developments. These transformations have led the emergence of urban globalized spaces which offer upmarket services afforded only by specific categories of the society. Most of these spaces have become privately owned, whereas the old spaces have become the destination for the general public in the city of Amman. This study addresses the differences in the nature of activities and practices between the modern spaces in the New Abdali and the old traditional spaces in the old city center (downtown).

The study area consists of two different public spaces in the city of Amman were analyzed. The New Abdali (Abdali Project) in the city's west-central part is the largest regeneration project in the history of the Amman and Jordan, and an example of the partnership between the public and private sectors and the spread of globalization and neoliberalism. It includes many uses, including residential, recreational and commercial utilities, offices, hotels and health facilities. Its total built-up area is 2 million square meters. It has a modern style with state-of-the-art infrastructure, buildings, and spaces, and hosts top-notch activities and occupations that are different from all other adjacent areas (\*).

The study also surveyed the old city center (Al-Balad), as an example of the traditional spaces, which constitutes the oldest neighborhood in the city of Amman. There, public spaces reflect the historical dimension, authenticity, and originality. In this place, Amman witnessed the commercial prosperity before it expanded on the surrounding mountains. Saqf Al-Sail (formerly known as Sail Amman) was first inhabited the Circassian immigrants after their migration wave in 1878. They were considered the first residents in the modern history of Amman after it suffered from population decline for a long time. (Jaber, 2013).



Source: (the Greater Amman Municipality).

**Figure 2: Location of the study areas (New Abdali and Old City Center- Al-Balad).**

There were steady expansion and population growth in Amman as the case in many Middle Eastern cities. There was a fundamental urban transformation in the residential units from an independent house with a large courtyard to high-rise apartment buildings. Meanwhile, there was a major shift in the consumption patterns towards the modern shopping malls. Additionally, varied public spaces appeared in Amman.

Nowadays, public spaces play a prominent role in the life of the population in Amman. They represent the daily lifestyle through which people perform their various activities. Indeed, they provide people with a favorable opportunity for gathering, participation, interaction, entertainment, shopping, marches, and demonstrations. As a result of the remarkable discrepancy between Amman's public spaces, their visitors and their behavior patterns, the researchers chose to address the characteristics of the activities in such spaces and the extent of their differences based on the economic discrepancies between the neighborhoods of Amman.

The problem of the study addresses and explores activities, interactions and behavior in the public spaces in the city of Amman. It investigates two styles of spaces: The New Abdali which represents modern neoliberal spaces that started to emerge in the early twenty-first century. These modern spaces have led to social segregation and barriers since they target specific groups of people with a high standard of living. In particular, the study seeks to compare the activities of the New Abdali visitors with activities of the visitors of the old city center (Al-Balad). Public spaces include streets, sidewalks, stairs, public squares, parks, markets, libraries, cafes, restaurants, shopping centers, high blocks, modern globalized projects, and other (2016, Markandy & Shrinagesh.).

### The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of interactions and activities that occur in the public spaces in the study area?
2. How are activities, interactions and behavior Patterns in the New Abdali different from those in the old city center? What are the causes of these differences?
3. Do the neo-liberalism, privatization and the subsequent government reforms play a role in the emergence of modern projects and globalized spaces whose visitors' activities and interactions differ from those in the public spaces in the old city? What are the changes that have occurred in the old spaces in response to the latest developments?

The main objective of the study is to explore the variations in the nature of the activities, interactions and behavior patterns in both the New Abdali and the old city center. The study also seeks to highlight the role of globalization and neo-liberalism in promoting these variations and the widening gap between the social groups. The visitors to each of these spaces have their own characteristics that distinguish them from each other. There is a clear difference between modern and old spaces. The study aims to discuss the changes and initiatives that have appeared in traditional spaces as a response to the modern ones.

## 2. Materials and methods

The study used a set of resources for data collection.

### A. Primary sources

1. Interviews with officials from the Greater Amman Municipality, the New Abdali administration, researchers and concerned parties in the public spaces.
2. Personal observations.
3. Questionnaire: The study instrument (Questionnaire) comprised 290 respondents from the New Abdali and 350 respondents from the old city center. The study population consisted of all visitors of the public spaces in the New Abdali and the old city center.

### B. Secondary resources

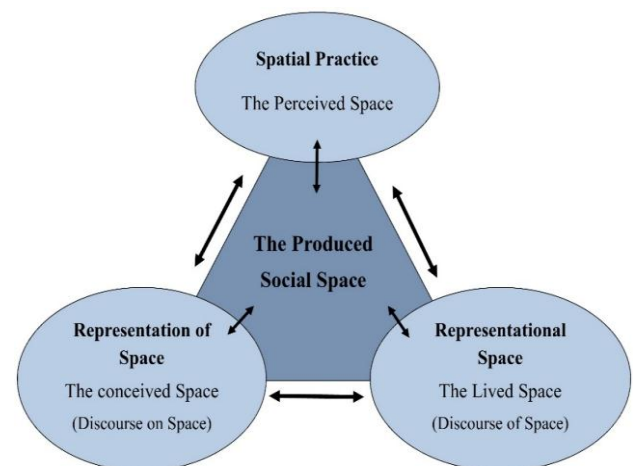
These included data obtained from various institutions, including Greater Amman Municipality, Department of Statistics, and the Center for the Study of the Built Environment.

The study used a descriptive, analytical method. It explored public spaces in Amman and the nature of activities and behavior patterns practiced by users of public spaces. Data from the questionnaire and interviews were also analyzed and processed. The comparative approach was used to compare the modern urban spaces in the New Abdali with the old traditional spaces in the old city center. Also, the behavior approach was used to analyze the visitors' daily activities, interactions and behavior patterns in the areas of study.

The study was mainly based on Lefebvre's concept of public spaces, who addressed their emergence, time development, diversity, and contradictions. Lefebvre's theory of spatial practice and space representations was heavily used to understand the current transformation of public spaces in Amman. In his theory, Lefebvre combined all kinds of spaces and their methods of evolution in the actual production of public spaces. He suggested that the production of space is a continuous process of social development of the dialectical relations of material engagement, scientific conception and cultural expression, (Pugalis, 2009).

Lefebvre's Model of the Production of Space is conceptually concerned with three immaterial elements: Perceived Space, Conceived Space, and Lived Space. Later, these immaterial spaces were converted into spatial terms: Spatial Practice, Representation of Space, and Representational Space. Each element of this Triad represents an aspect of the social production of public space (Carp, 2008). Figure (3) shows the Lefebvre's model of the production of public space.

Public space is produced via the interaction between different elements (Figure 3). Spatial practice is defined as the daily routines of a group of people living in a common area, including different routes and daily destinations (Carp, 2008). People in this area use and perceive space through their senses (Owhin, 2015). Representation of Space is the conceptualized space of planners, scientists, urban specialists, and it attempts to understand the material space (Carp, 2008). This space is usually imposed on individuals and does not represent the people's desires. Representational Space is the everyday space, and it refers to the actual experience of public space users. This space is produced as a result of dialectic interaction between material space and social practices (Leary, 2010).



Source: (Hansen, 2013).

**Figure 3: Lefebvre's Conceptual Model of the Production of Space.**

## 3. The nature of activities and interactions in the study areas

There are many subtypes of activities in addition to the main types of activities which people do in public spaces (necessary, optional, and social activities) (Gehl, 2011). The interaction between people in these spaces leads to social activities through the practice of necessary and optional activities. Social activities, such as attending festivals, celebrations and meetings, occur among a group of individuals. It is worth mentioning that interaction in public spaces through different activities leads to Lefebvre's model of social space (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre states that the public space is a continuous production of social relationships (social production).

There is a wide range of social, economic, and cultural activities in the public spaces in the study areas, which can be summarized as follows:

1. **Walking:** It's a way of sharing and experiencing milieu. It enables people to move around the physical space and also actively participate in the social and cultural dynamics of the

place. It represents a sort of spatial and social rhythm through which people can realize and live urban spaces through various activities (Matos, 2005).

Walking is one of the recreational activities practiced by the population in public spaces. This was evident in the New Abdali, especially in the Boulevard, which was originally designed for walking. The most prominent street advert was the Walk of the Town (Fig. 4). Additionally, the walking activity was observed in the old city center, especially on Faisal Street and the plaza around the Al-Husseini Mosque.

The sidewalks on Faisal Street were narrow because they were overtaken by shop owners and street vendors.

The satisfaction of people who used public spaces in the New Abdali and the old city center varied to a great deal. The percentage of those satisfied with the availability of public spaces and safe walking was 91.4% in the New Abdali and 51.9% in the old city center. In fact, the clean, equipped, spacious, safe, and noiseless environment in the New Abdali was more favorable for walking compared to the old city which suffered from traffic jam, noise pollution, and lack of sidewalks.

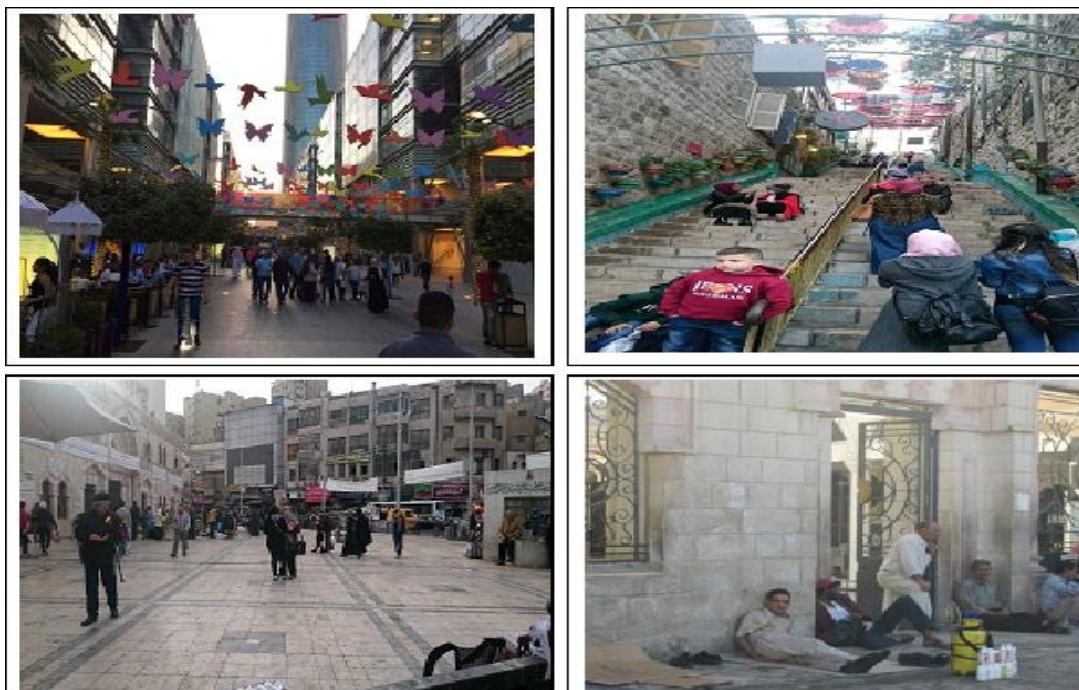


Source: (taken by the researchers on 1st Jan. 2018)

Figure: 4 Advert in the Abdali Boulevard on walking activity

2. **Standing and sitting:** People practice walking activity in public spaces through waiting for someone, standing, and chatting, or other. There were appropriate places for sitting in the New Abdali and the Boulevard, including benches, bleachers, coffee shops, and restaurants. However, sitting activity was less common in the old city than the New Abdali, and was mainly restricted to men. It was common in the square adjacent to the Al-Husseini Mosque, the Hashemite

Plaza, and stairs that connected the old city with the neighboring districts. The culture of standing and/or walking was also popular in other spaces in the old city such as King Faisal Street, King Talal Street, Quraish Street, and Al Hashimi Street. Furthermore, seats and benches were limited and badly damaged in the old city. The good benches were often used by males who dominated public spaces in the old city (Fig. 5).



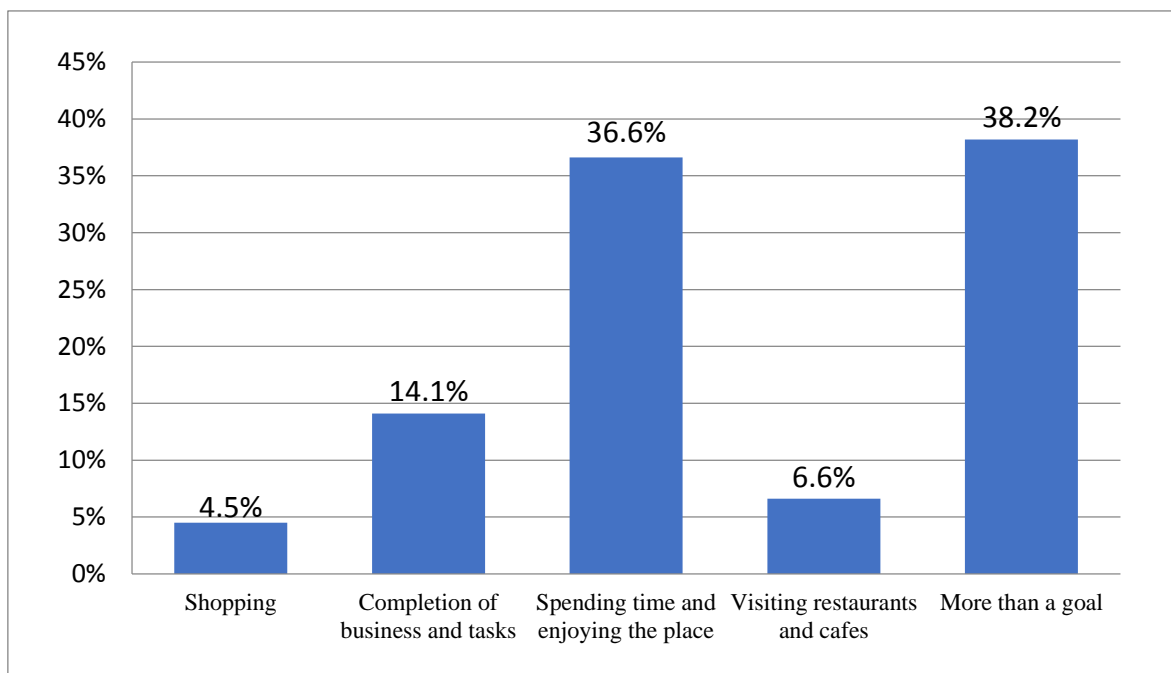
Source: (Photo taken by the researchers in 2018; Aljafari, 2014).

Figure: 5 Activities of sitting and standing in some public spaces in Amman.

3. **Celebrations, festivals, and events:** Many events occur in the New Abdali and the old city center. In the New Abdali, many important events are held, such as Spring Festival, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, as well as Christmas. Besides, many concerts are held by famous Western artists who perform popular Western music songs. These events are usually held on the Boulevard, which has spacious bleachers and theaters. Although entry is free, events are not for free. Certain events represent the culture of a certain country such as the French week organized by the French Embassy at the Boulevard. It is a regular event that celebrates French culture and art in all its forms. In addition, Chinese Culture Week is held in cooperation with the Chinese Embassy. These events aim to promote tourism to the New Abdali.

In the old city center, a number of events are held in the Roman amphitheater. But the people who want to watch them need to pay fees which are too expensive for most people. In reality, these events aim to promote tourism to the Roman amphitheater and gain profits from the fees which artists pay to the Department of Antiquities ( ). Other national and religious ceremonies and events are also held at the Roman amphitheater and the Hashemite plaza. Despite their limited occurrence, these events are free of charge for the public.

4. **Other activities** and practices include going shopping, completing work and tasks, visiting restaurants and cafes, commuting to work, home and university, spending free time, meeting people, and many activities that occur in the urban public spaces.
5. **Some activities** in public spaces are rather negative or unsuitable for local customs and traditions. These include (1) using cars for racing with loud horns and/or loud music, especially during public holidays, school and university ceremonies; (2) teasing and harassing girls in public places; and (3) throwing waste around and damaging public properties (Al-Jafari, 2014).
6. The analysis of the activities, interactions and behavior patterns of the daily lives of the visitors of the public spaces in both study areas shows that there are many differences between them. The New Abdali is a modern globalized space that attracts people and groups with outstanding features from other public space users in Amman, especially the old ones. Thus, they have created their separate spaces for socializing, which exclude other groups of users, forming an inaccessible island in a larger urban milieu. Figure 6 shows the most popular activities in the New Abdali.



Source: (Field Survey, 2018).

**Figure 6: Types of activities common in the New Abdali.**

Figure 6 shows the diverse of activities practiced in the New Abdali as well as the low percentage of shoppers, especially in the Boulevard (4.5%). The researchers observed the complaints of the shop owners there. In fact, goods for sale in the Abdali are expensive international brands. The number of those who can afford them is very limited; they are mostly foreign tourists or individuals from the Arabian Gulf states. Moreover, 14.1% of the Abdali users are businessmen and officials from local, regional and foreign companies and organizations.

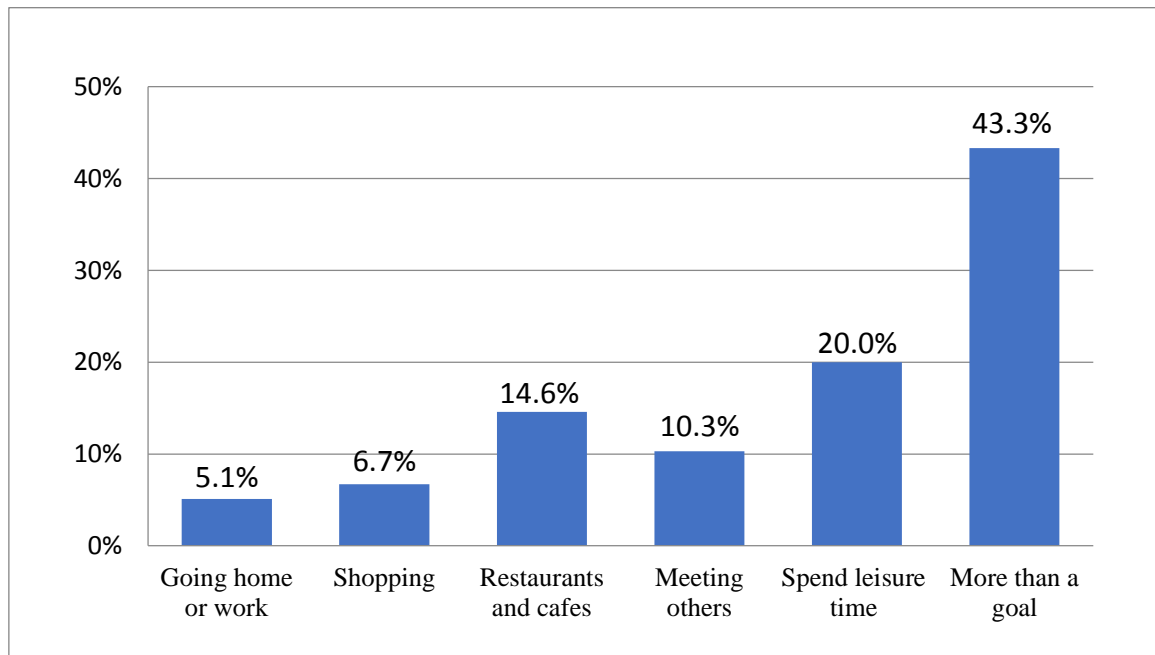
The New Abdali developers aimed to establish a lucrative commercial center with all services that encourage businessmen to visit and accomplish their work within the center. Since the New Abdali includes modern and distinctive spaces with all entertainment services, 36.6% of the visitors use the center for

spending leisure time, which represents one of the most important activities in public spaces. On the other hand, only 20% spend their leisure time in public spaces in the old city center. Indeed, spending leisure time in public spaces is an optional and recreational activity that requires appropriate benches and amenities. These matters are available in the New Abdali more than the old city. Besides, the Abdali's users are mostly families, whereas the users of public spaces in the old city are predominantly individual males.

On the other hand, Figure 7 below shows that 5.1% of the people pass through the public spaces in the old city to go home or to work. Crosstabs shows that 94.5% of people are from East Amman and other governorates. However, people from West Amman visit public spaces for leisure and passing time. Some

people pass through public spaces in the old city center because it constitutes a central area and a transport hub. These activities are deemed necessary by people (2011, Gehl). The different groups of users have different perceptions of public spaces. The public spaces in the old city center are used as a passage between work and home. Thus, families or groups rarely visit these spaces. But families or groups from West Amman visit public spaces in the New Abdali for leisure and fun. In addition, some people from West Amman or other Jordanian governorates visit cafes and restaurants in the public spaces in the old city. They often visit restaurants, cafes, and shops in the old city at the weekend because the places in the old city are still important for them.

Figure 7 also indicates that the highest rate of the users of the old city uses it for many reasons. They use it to go to work, and on the way back, they often buy their supplies due to the diversity of goods and services as well as affordable prices. 46.7% of them are from East Amman, while 17.1% are from other Jordanian governorates. They often sit in public places to rest or to pass time before going back home because sitting in these public spaces is for free. By contrast, people often visit the New Abdali in West Amman for the consumption of goods and services because the Abdali serves as the economic center of the city.



Source: (Field Survey, 2018).

Figure 7: Activities of visitors and their reasons for visiting public spaces in the old city center.

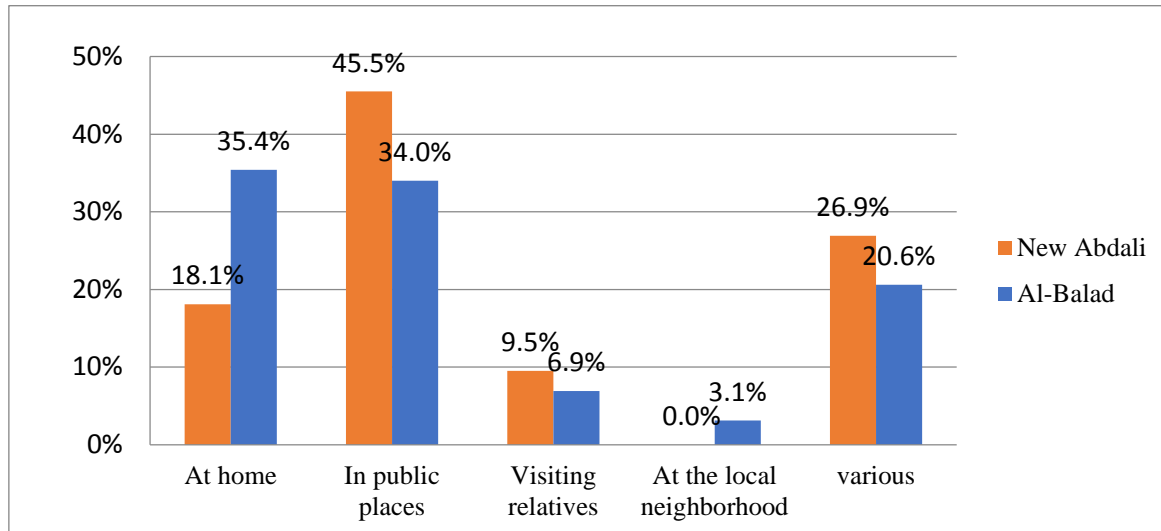
#### 4. The behavior of public space visitors in both study areas in leisure time.

Public spaces have become an important aspect of life in modern societies in light of the new social, economic, and cultural conditions in the new era. Considering the conditions and problems of urbanization, the issue of leisure time and leisure spaces has become one of the main axes of urban planning and management. Urban public spaces have long been the context of the social interactions of the people. (Rezazadeh & Yazarloo, 2017). However, urban public spaces in developing countries, such as Jordan, lack social interaction as in western countries. The culture of visiting public spaces in these countries is less popular due to social and cultural, behavior and political reasons. Planning of public spaces is not often satisfactory; it doesn't meet the needs of the local community, spaces are of lower quantity and quality, and they are often hard to access.

Figure (8) shows that the proportion of the study population who spend their free time in the public spaces in the New Abdali is

45.5%. It is relatively close to, but less than, the western societies. In Britain, for example, more than 50% of people usually visit green spaces, which are only a small part of the public spaces. The per capita area of public spaces in Europe and the United States is much larger than the Middle East. In addition, the adequate design of the public spaces there commensurate with the characteristics of the residents and thus encourages visitors (Carmona, et al., 2004; Miao, 2001).

The lower proportion of people in public spaces in Amman indicates that there is a state of isolation and social exclusion because people are either reluctant to interact with others or the spaces are inadequate or there is a state of insecurity that prevents people from participating as Habermas said. It should be noted that people from the old parts of Amman fear that they are not welcomed in the urban neoliberal projects. The graffiti on the external walls of the New Abdali project is an indicator of the young people's disapproval because they consider themselves excluded from those spaces.



Source: (Field Survey, 2018).

**Figure 8: of passing free time by the Abdali and the old city center visitors**

Figure 8 shows that only 34% of the study population in the old city spend their free time in public spaces, which is a small percentage compared to New Abdali visitors. The possible reasons for this are: first, public spaces in the old city and other areas in East Amman lack proper furniture, amenities, equipment, and care that encourage people to use them. Second, harassment and bullying, where continuous harassment of younger girls deters people from visiting traditional spaces and poor areas. Many respondents expressed their reluctance to visit public spaces with their families for fear of harassment - a rather rare phenomenon in the New Abdali.

Figure 8 also shows that the largest proportion of the public space users in the old city prefers to spend leisure time at home, indicating a tendency towards social isolation. Recent research has focused on the importance of public spaces in the lives of urban residents in the light of the urban transformation, characteristics of modern life, and the increased importance of urban public spaces. Therefore, 35.4% of the respondents in the old city prefer to spend their free time at home. In fact, Arab-Muslim customs and traditions support gender segregation, and thus girls and women find it hard to spend their leisure time in public spaces. In Western societies, public spaces are common and essential parts of urban life. Therefore, people always go in large numbers to urban public spaces on the weekend to spend time or watch concerts. It should be noted that the recent wave of leisure activities in the Arab and Islamic countries was greatly inspired by the Western lifestyle

through modern means of communication and social media (Martin & Mason, 2003).

Gehl and Brigitte mentioned a set of criteria for the evaluation and design of urban public space. (UN- Habitat, 2015):

1. Protection against traffic and accidents.
2. Protection from crime and violence.
3. Opportunities to walk, stand and stay.
4. Opportunities to see, listen and talk.
5. Opportunities to play and exercise.
6. Availability of basic services.
7. Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate and positive sensory experiences.

If we apply these criteria to the study areas, we note that they apply to the New Abdali, which has been designed according to global standards to create a favorable and enjoyable setting that attracts visitors and make them comfortable and safe. On the other hand, most of these criteria do not apply to the old city of Amman and its public spaces because of the heavy traffic that makes it difficult to walk, stand or stay. Besides, the sidewalks are almost occupied with goods, so there are no places to sit or stay except for the Hashemite Plaza and the Sahat Al Nakheel. Even the latter has become unfavorable and unsafe due to the presence of drug addicts and lack of care (Figure 9).

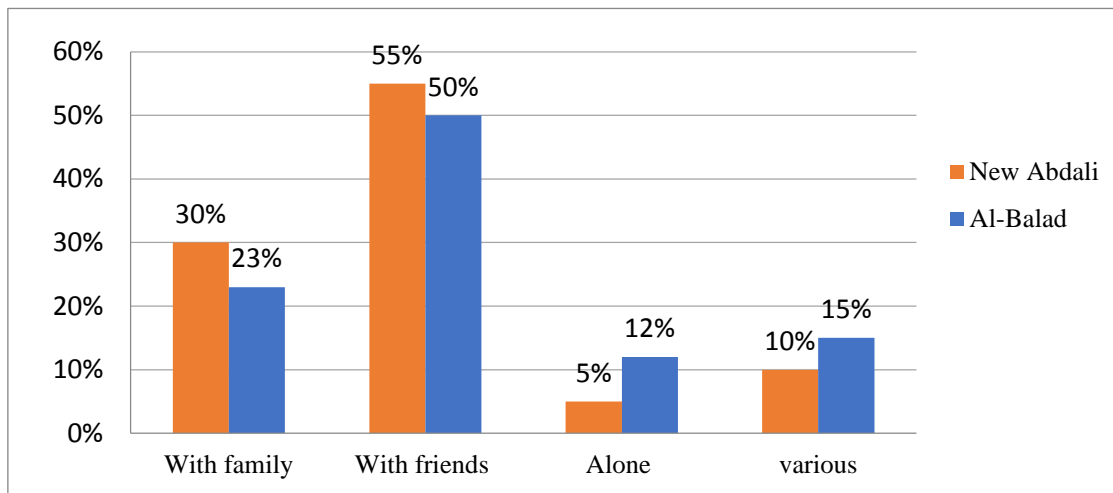


Source: (Photo taken by the researchers, 2018).

**Figure 9: Pictures of the Sahat Al Nakheel at different times - almost nobody there.**

Figure 10 shows that 30% of the study population in the New Abdali prefer to visit public spaces with families, whereas 55% prefer to visit them with friends. The largest percentage of respondents who prefer urban public spaces are young people, aged 20-29. They prefer to visit the New Abdali in groups of male and female friends or single-sex friends. However, the issue of gender integration in the Jordanian society is still limited, even in the New

Abdali where integration is more common than in other places. People who come to visit the New Abdali on their own are often from East Amman and lower-income social classes. These people claim that they enjoy seeing this clean, organized, attractive place, however, they do not bring their own wives and/or children along because of the unaffordable prices.



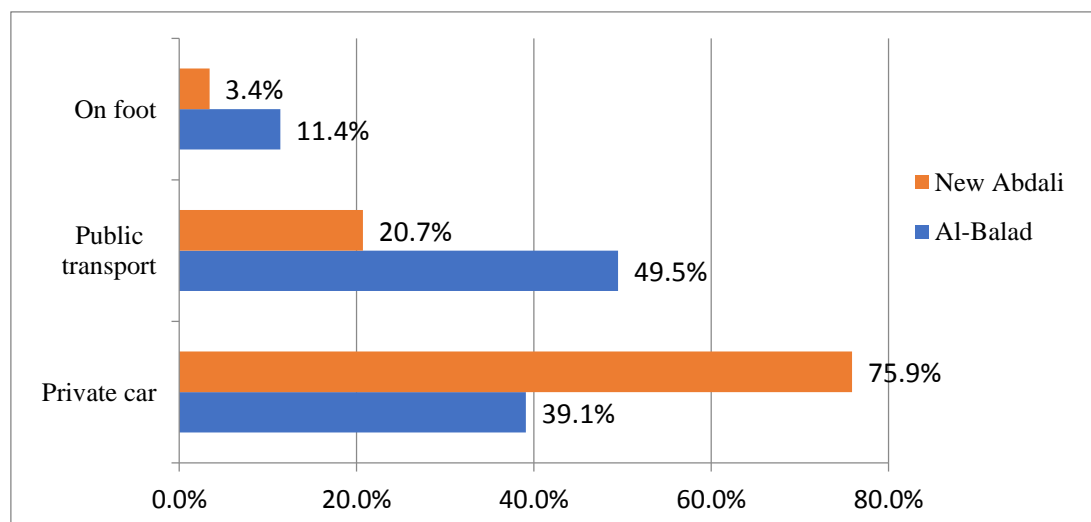
Source: (Field Survey, 2018).

Figure 10: The nature of the visits to the public spaces in the New Abdali and the old city center of Amman

Figure 10 also shows that people visit public spaces in the old city either individually or with friends, especially males. However, girls and women prefer to visit these spaces with families. The percentage of those who prefer to visit with family is only 23%, and this small percentage is due to prevailing customs and traditions. Residents of East Amman are rather conservative and they believe that home is the best and safest place for females. Additionally, most people prefer to visit public spaces individually or with male friends due to lack of cleanliness, seats, benches, and safety. Thus, public spaces in the old city are dominated by males. In contrast, the proportion of family visits to the New Abdali is rising because its spaces are cleaner and equipped with furniture. Also, the presence of security officers makes people feel safer from all sorts of harassment. The percentage of respondents who visit public spaces individually in the old city is 12%, most of them are

older persons and pensioners who prefer to sit alone and not to mingle with younger persons.

Western societies are different from Arab societies in terms of access to public spaces. Fig. 11 shows that 75.9% of the Abdali's visitors use their own cars, which means that walking culture is virtually non-existent in Amman. A small proportion (3.4%) walks on foot because they live closer. Consequently, the majority of visitors to the New Abdali use privately-owned cars. It is noted that 20.7% of them use public transport. Indeed, the increasing usage of private cars is further deteriorating traffic jams in the city. Respondents say that they use their cars because there are no safe sidewalks for walking. This is sadly true because the city of Amman has not been planned for walking, and the public transport sector is still suffering from many problems.



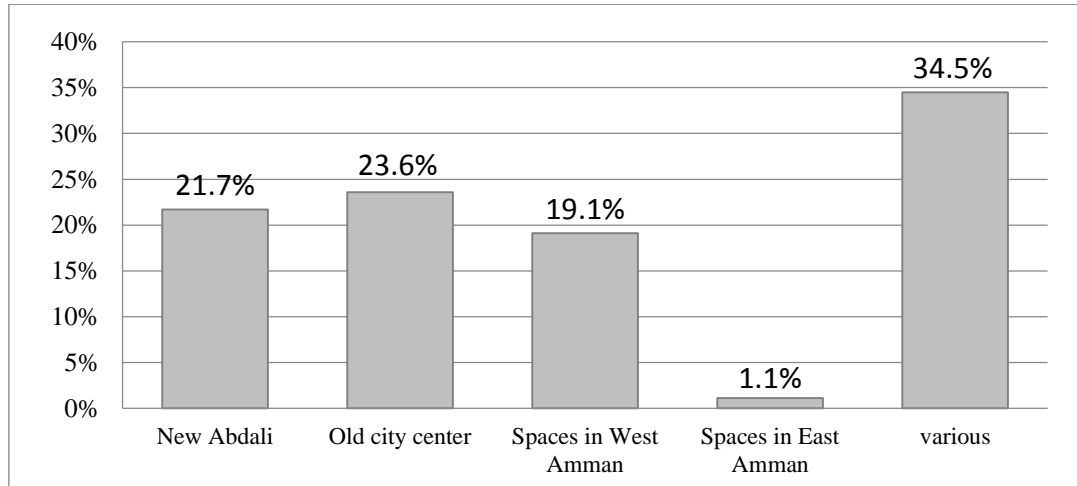
Source: (Field Survey, 2018).

Figure 11: Methods of access to the New Abdali and the old city center.



Figure 11 shows that 39.1% of the study population visit public spaces in the old city by their own cars. 62% of them are from West Amman and other Jordanian governorates. In effect, the rate of residents who own private cars in the New Abdali is much higher than the rate of people who own cars in the old city. This is a strong indicator of the different standards of living. Citizens of West Amman have a higher standard of living, own private cars, and rarely use public transport. In contrast, 49.5% of the citizens in the old city use public transport because they cannot afford cars, thus 11.4% of them visit public spaces on foot because they are closer to the old city center.

The analysis includes a question about the most favorite destination for New Abdali visitors. This question aims to identify their trends and preferences, and find out whether they have a culture of visiting modern urban spaces or other reason. Figure 12 shows that 21% of the respondents prefer to visit the urban public places in the New Abdali. In fact, their economic and financial characteristics enable them to visit such spaces. On the other hand, 23.6% prefer to visit the historic old city center. In contrast, public spaces in East Amman are the least visited (1.1%). This lower rate is rather predictable due to the lack of entertainment facilities, bleachers and seats.

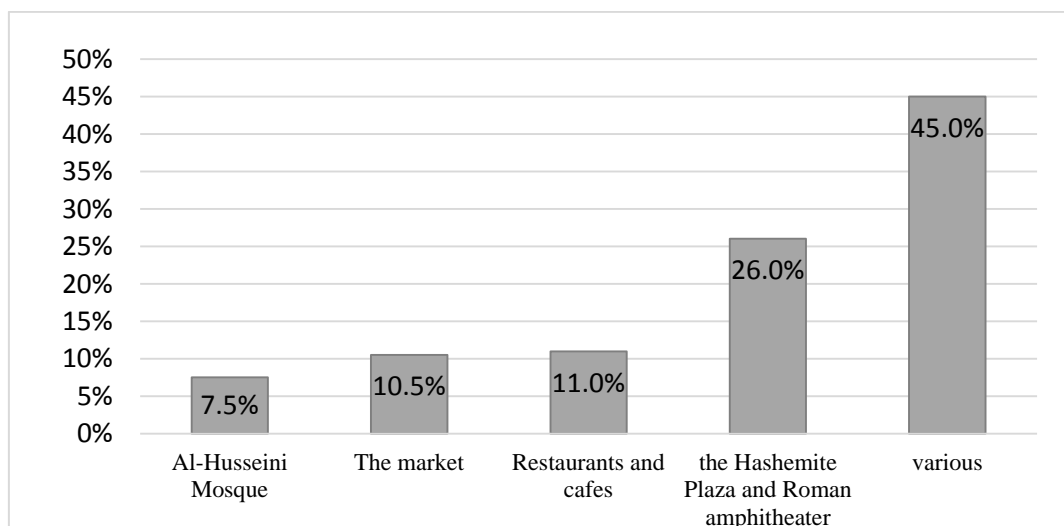


Source: (Field Survey, 2018).

Figure 12: Public spaces preferred by the New Abdali visitors in Amman.

Crosstabs of the preferred public spaces and place of residence shows that 62.1% of those who prefer to visit the New Abdali come from West Amman, 13.8% come from East Amman, and 19% of them are tourists from the Gulf States, other Arab countries or foreigners. These figures confirm that the New Abdali customers who come from West Amman have higher standards of living. Survey questionnaire and interviews show that most of them work abroad so that visiting modern and globalized spaces have become part of their culture of exclusion and social isolation. They prefer to visit high-class spaces which provide them with expensive services, security, and tranquility. They often try not to socialize with people from East Amman.

The respondents from the old city (Figure 13) give mixed views on public places they prefer to visit. The highest percentage (45%) prefers to visit various spaces, while 26% prefer to visit the Hashemite Plaza and the Roman amphitheater that is considered one of the most famous historic sites in the old city center. Crosstabs shows that all respondents from East and West Amman, other governorates, and even tourists, prefer to visit the Roman amphitheater and the Hashemite plaza, which represent an example of Lefebvre’s model of absolute space. 10.5% of respondents claim that they prefer to visit the market to buy their daily needs, while 7.5% prefer to visit Al-Husseini Mosque. This mosque, located in the center, is the oldest mosque in Amman, and it has great historical and religious significance.



Source: (Field Survey, 2018).

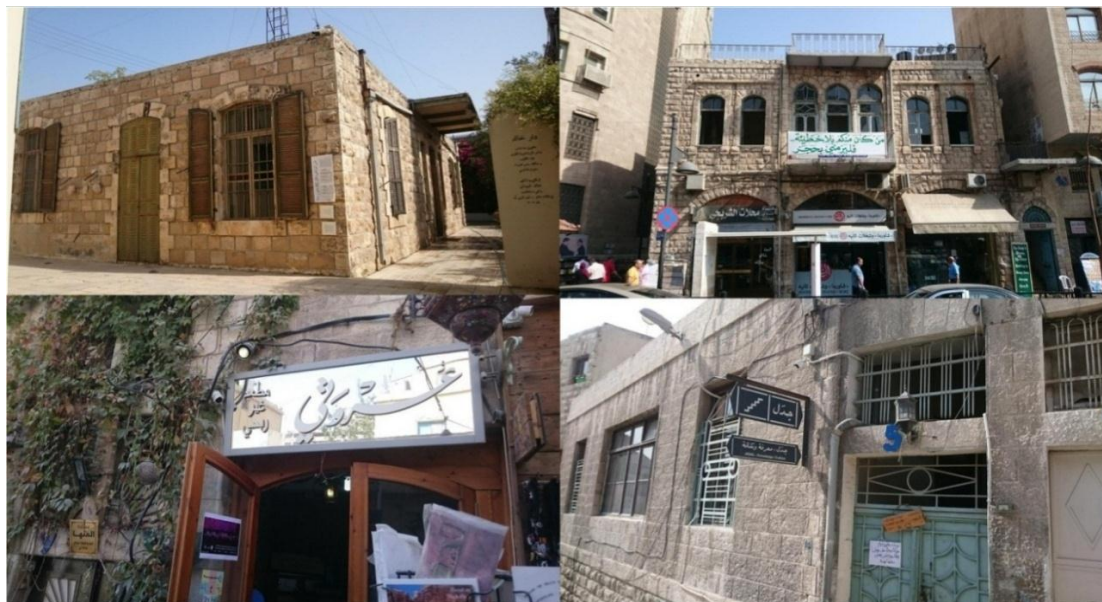
Figure 13: Public spaces favored by the old city center visitors.

Figure 13 shows that 11% of the study population in the old city prefer to visit coffee shops and restaurants which restore the traditional heritage - neoliberal ideas attempt to preserve vintage heritage. Many old houses were bought and refurbished distinctively to attract visitors, yet they offer expensive services. Most of their customers are locals from West Amman, Arab nationals from Arab countries and the Gulf states, or tourists. The most notable cafés and restaurants are Rakwet Arab Cafe and Sakeyat Addaraweesh in Jabal Al-Weibdeh, as well as Cafe Jafra, Zajal Restaurant and Afra Cafe in the old city center. Many of these refurbished are owned by one person or one company. The refurbishment of old buildings is best described as segregating neoliberal practices. Thus, despite the diversity of customers from different socioeconomic groups, they are still separated from each other in the urban spaces. In the stylish vintage places with classic interiors, there are high-income customers from West Amman as well as foreign tourists. However, in the traditional and open public spaces, you see lower-income people from East Amman.

### 5. Initiatives of heritage regeneration and preservation of the old spaces in the old city center.

There are many public spaces in the old city that have been regenerated and restored through personal, youth and community-based initiatives. These initiatives aim to revive the heritage, preserve the symbolic identity of the old spaces, promote social solidarity among the city's citizen's, revive old culture and art in the old city center, and promote social gatherings, social relations, and social integration. These renovated places provide semi-free services, and the profits from paid-services are spent on the poor and the needy. (1) The Duke's Diwan on King Faisal Square, old city Amman, is a cultural and tourist landmark and a museum. The

house also hosts numerous informal events and concerts. This historic townhouse, which dates back to 1924, was restored by Mamdouh Bisharat. (Hamouda, 2015). (2) Darat al Funun is located in Jabal Al-Weibdeh near old city Amman (Khalid Shoman Foundation). It showcases a wide-ranging collection of contemporary art from the Arab World. The Darat also organizes a wide selection of indoor and outdoor events, including concerts and readings. It also supports talents, film screening, book publishing and student scholarships (Khaled Shoman Foundation, 2018). (3) Jadal Cultural Center is situated at Al-Kalha Stair, Jabal Al-Weibdeh, and it was renovated by Fadi Amirah. Its courtyard houses a small café. Jadal hosts lectures, public talks, and discussions, movie screenings, performances, plays and stories that show the revival of ancient traditions. It offers music and Arabic lessons for foreigners. Its profits are donated to the poor. (4) Ezwetti Initiative and Restaurant is situated at Al-Kalha Stair in the old city. Mahmoud Nabulsi mimicked the renovation style of a shawarma restaurant in Lebanon called Shawarma Al-Heit. The idea was inspired by a coffee shop in Italy, which offers free coffee for the needy. This non-profit restaurant aims to promote solidarity and cooperation among people. For every meal a customer buys, a free meal is given to the poor. (5) The Beit Sitti Restaurant offers cooking lessons in traditional Arabic meals prepared by women from the local community. Other personal and community-based non-profit initiatives include Najla Restaurant and Naqsh Cultural Cafe. These initiatives can be considered as attempts to revive the ancient heritage, art, and culture, and promote cooperation and interaction among people. They counteract the culture of globalization and neo-liberalism that promotes social segregation and inequality and endeavor to privatize urban public spaces and turn them into urban generators of profitability and segregation (Figure 14).



Source: (Photo taken by researchers, 2018)

**Figure 14: Private and community initiatives to restore the old spaces in the old city**

Finally, the analysis of the questionnaire shows that most people are satisfied with the New Abdali services. This integrated project was originally designed to offer all services, including housing, shopping, leisure, and entertainment. It has parking for more than 25,000 vehicles (Abdali, 2018). It also offers a clean, attractive and secure environment that makes visitors feel comfortable. At the same time, many customers complained about access to the New Abdali, and only 51.2% of the respondents are happy with easy

access. This result says a lot about traffic jams in the city of Amman, especially in the New Abdali area, which represents the important transport node along with many important official institutions.

There is a general dissatisfaction with issues and services related to the public spaces in the old city center. Citizens and shop owners grumble about the lack of parking and daily traffic jams in the city center, which drive people away from shops and public

spaces in the area. Only 51.9% say they are satisfied with sidewalks and safe plazas because the streets are overtaken by heavy traffic. The Greater Amman Municipality is continuously renovating the sidewalks on Faisal Street, they remain occupied by the goods of shop owners and street vendors, making them inaccessible especially at the peak times. People also express their dissatisfaction with cleaning issues and public services, including public toilets and sitting areas. Therefore, people are reluctant to visit them regularly.

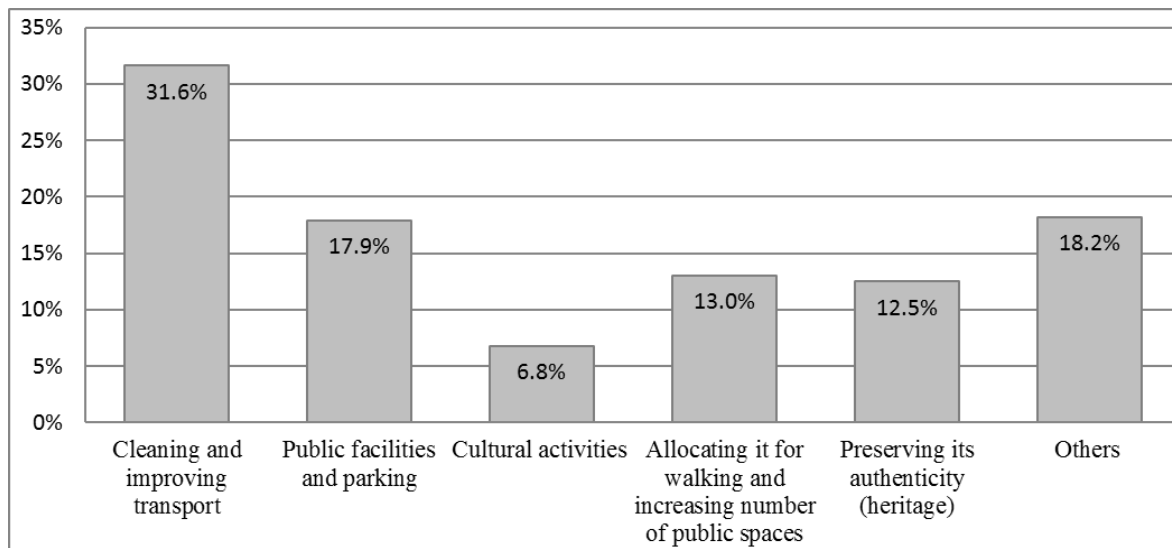
60.6% of the respondents are satisfied with the prices of goods and services since the shops in the old city offer the cheapest prices in Amman. This area hosts various markets, especially traditional old markets, and people come from everywhere for shopping.

**10. Suggestions for the development of the public spaces in the old city**

The questionnaire examines the perspectives of the public space visitors in the old city and asks them for suggestions for development. The question is: How would you like the old city center in order to visit it more often? The respondents are given enough space to express their views on the most important undesirable aspects in public spaces in the old city. Here are the most remarkable responses:

1. Sanitation and transportation improvement.
2. Provision of public facilities and parking lots.
3. Holding cultural events.
4. Allocating the old city center for walking only.
5. Increasing the number of public spaces.
6. Restoring it and preserving its heritage (authenticity).

Figure (15) below shows the most important suggestions from the respondents in the old city center for development.



Source: (Field Survey, 2018).

**Figure 15: Respondents' suggestions for public space development in the old city center**

Figure 15 shows that the suggestions regarding hygiene and transport receive the highest scores among the respondents in the old city. Indeed, these are the critical issues incurred by the people in their daily lives. Obviously, the old city center is facing problems of clean public spaces, in addition to traffic jams that hinder easy access to the area. People find it to walk or stay because the streets are packed with cars, and the sidewalks are overtaken by stalls and/or merchandise. Additionally, respondents recommend the need to provide sufficient parking lots, and other

public facilities, especially toilets. Respondents also suggest that banning vehicles from entering the old city center will make it more attractive public space. Preserving the authenticity of the old city is also proposed. Many people disapprove any plans to change the vintage character of the old city center through neo-liberal projects. Finally, various artistic and cultural events are suggested to attract people from all regions to the old city Amman, hoping that such events may well help bridge the gap between East and West Amman and encourage more social interaction.

**Table 1: Summary of certain comparison criteria between the New Abdali and the Old City Center**

Comparative criteria	New Abdali	Old City Center
<b>Types of jobs &amp; land use</b>	Residential, commercial, leisure and medical uses, & hotels, organized offices, world restaurants and cafes, various high-quality goods and commodities.	Commercial uses & public spaces; mixed & unorganized commercial uses, public spaces are unclean & not well-equipped
<b>Type of customers</b>	Majority from West Amman and the Gulf States, rich people	Majority of East Amman, lower classes, and tourists
<b>Prices</b>	Upmarket goods & commodities, international brands	Suitable for shoppers from the general public
<b>Favorite shopping place</b>	Modern malls and markets	Downtown markets
<b>Gender interaction</b>	Gender integration and interaction, clear female participation, family visits to spaces	Gender disintegration with male dominance, & individual visits only
<b>Logos and signboards</b>	Logos target specific groups in English	Local, popular and religious logos
<b>Mixed cafes</b>	All cafes are mixed	Only tourist cafes are mixed
<b>Hijab</b>	Less commitment to Hijab	More commitment to Hijab; a conservative society

<b>Access</b>	Gates and security guards, & some restrictions on access	Entry for all; no restrictions
<b>Hygiene, services &amp; facilities</b>	A clean environment with needed services, benches and facilities	Not sufficient hygiene, services, furniture, and benches
<b>Type of occasions</b>	Christian & Islamic holidays, Spring celebrations, celebrations of events from other countries eg French week & Chinese week, concerts in the public spaces, especially in the Boulevard	Some national and Islamic events are held in the Hashemite square. Art events are held in the Roman Amphitheater but not fee, attendance is restricted to certain groups.
<b>Art modes</b>	Mostly western	Eastern traditional and conservative
<b>Store names</b>	Foreign names	Local, traditional and religious
<b>Political activities</b>	Nonpolitical; Economic, social and cultural activities only	Political activities, e.g marches & demonstrations from Al-Husseini Mosque, & economic and social activities.

Source: (researchers, 2018)

## The Conclusion

1. There were necessary and optional activities in the public spaces in the study areas. The interaction among people through such activities contributed to the emergence of Lefebvre's social spaces. However, these spaces excluded certain groups, and the interaction remained solely between similar socioeconomic groups. The necessary activities have overtaken other types of activities (optional and social) in the old city. This means that people visit the old city center only to meet their daily needs. On the other hand, optional or social activities were more prevailing in the New Abdali. These activities included walking, staying, sitting, shopping, business, restaurants, cafes, and regular needs. There was general satisfaction with the availability of services, amenities, and entertainment that enabled people to do their usual activities in the New Abdali Project. By contrast, there was a clear dissatisfaction with old city spaces which lacked the necessary services that enabled visitors to carry out their daily activities and enjoy their time in the public spaces.
2. The behavior of the New Abdali visitors in leisure time was similar to the western style. The percentage of those who spent their leisure time in public spaces in the New Abdali was 45.5%, compared to 35.4% of the old city visitors. Besides, the percentage of New Abdali visitors who spent their free time at home was 18.1%, compared to 35.4% of the old city visitors. Thus, there was a difference among the citizens in term of places of passing leisure time. Furthermore, families visited the New Abdali without noticeable gender restrictions. Nevertheless, males or male groups were the prominent element in the old city with limited female presence. East Amman was a more conservative society than western Amman.
3. The New Abdali's favorite shopping destination was the urban shopping centers and spaces that have become the landmarks of western Amman. But the old city visitors preferred the popular markets in the old town due to their affordable prices.
4. The vintage and antique coffee shops and teahouses have emerged in recent years could be regarded as neoliberal upmarket efforts which promoted social inequality and disintegration because they attracted only high-income customers. Thus, the public spaces in the old city center attracted groups with certain economic and social characteristics. For example, residents of western

Amman and high-income and middle-income people visited the antique luxurious cafés and teahouses. In contrast, residents of East Amman and low-income people visited free public plazas, cheap restaurants, and popular cafes. However, this wave of globalization and neo-liberalism in the old city was counteracted by youth, community and individual private initiatives which offered free and semi-free services to the lower social classes.

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