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Jabal al-weibdeh: a counter-memory of amman a case study in the resistance of memory

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Jabal al-weibdeh: a counter-memory of amman
a case study in the resistance of memory

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to my friends ...now, family

and to weibdeh, a home away from home within a home away from home
abstract

The neighborhood of Jabal al-Weibdeh is one of Amman’s most historic neighborhoods, founded in the 1930s atop one of Amman’s seven original hills. Using previous research on the construction of Jordanian national identity and the marginalization of Ammani identity, this paper aims to serve as a case study of the relationship between Amman and hegemonic discourses of Jordanian identity in Weibdeh. Through interviews with Jordanians who are connected to Weibdeh, this study examines the presence of collective memory and Ammani identity in Weibdeh. This paper argues that Weibdeh’s collective memory acts as an explicit counter-memory to Hashemite constructions of national identity.

Keywords: Urbanism, Collective Memory, Identity
i. introduction

Over the course of three short months spent studying abroad in Amman, Jordan, I have spent countless afternoons traversing the hills of Amman, searching for cafés, art, and good conversation. Although all three of these things are ever-present in the city of Amman, the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, I have found their convergence to be most readily available in Jabal al-Weibdeh (the mountain of Weibdeh), one of Amman’s original seven hills. There, I have spent an extensive amount of time drinking coffee, attending art openings and lectures, and making friends with Jordanians and expatriates alike.

Weibdeh, one of the oldest and most revered neighborhoods in Amman, is an especially attractive area of Amman because it reminds me of my hometown of Durham, North Carolina. Similarly to Durham, Weibdeh is a neighborhood that is both benefiting and suffering from the growth of business, a burgeoning arts and culture scene, and an influx of outsiders (both Jordanians and foreigners), who have descended on the region. Despite the fact that Weibdeh is primarily a residential area, it is quickly becoming a destination in Amman, with shoppers and café-goers crowding the narrow streets.

I am fascinated by urban identity and thinking about the ways that people define home—particularly as I find myself so far away from home this semester. Amman’s urban identity is complicated—entrenched in the geopolitical conflicts of the past century, and I found myself struggling to understand the ways that Ammani identity operates within the city of Amman. The word Ammani is curiously abstract: it is not used to identify all people who grew up or live in Amman, but rather is used to reference people or things with a specific, undefinable belongingness to Amman. This fact is emphasized by the anatomy of the word in Arabic, which doesn’t simply mean ‘from Amman,’ but also ‘of Amman,’ emphasizing a belonging to place.
Weibdeh seemed like a fascinating place to start—a deeply historical and distinctive place, high atop a hill in the center of the city.

Although my original research proposal posed the question: “how has Weibdeh’s historical and continuous transformation contributed to, represented, or challenged a collective Ammani identity?” my research shifted from understanding the role of transformation to understanding the role of memory in shaping identity within Weibdeh. These two concepts, however, are acutely intertwined: memory is a way of understanding change and imbuing it with meaning. Thus, memory becomes an intermediary between transformation and identity. Before performing this research, I hypothesized that Weibdeh would have a strong relationship to Ammani identity due to its entrenched history, central location within the city, and seemingly distinctive identity. Using theories of memory, this research aims to understand Weibdeh’s relationship to Ammani identity.
ii. a brief history of jabal al-lweibdeh

Beginning with its re-incarnation as a city in the 1870s with the Ottoman’s settlement of Circassian immigrants in Amman, Amman has been a city of refuge, welcoming diverse groups of people continuously since its advent as a modern city. After the completion of the Hijaz Railroad in 1903, merchants began to arrive from across the Mashreq*, followed by Arab Nationalists fleeing Damascus under French mandate and Palestinians immigrating over the waters of the Jordan river to the East Bank.¹ The early years of Amman were characterized by diverse populations living in harmony; Rami Daher describes Amman as a “city of many hats,” dotted with the “Circassian Kalbaq, the Lebanese and Syrian Tarboosh, the Palestinian and Jordanian Hatta or Kofiah” in the early 20th century.²

Amman was a modern city, built between seven hills and complete with electricity, cinema, and strong educational institutions. The city’s residential quarters began to expand from the wadi (valley) to the hills after the Earthquake of 1927 and as downtown Amman became increasingly crowded.³ This internal immigration to the hills divided the people of Amman socio-economically, with wealthier residents moving to the hills of Jabal Amman and Jabal al-Weibdeh. However, the settlement of the hills failed to divide people by origin, heritage.

*The term Mashreq refers to the Middle Eastern land now governed by the states of Lebanon, Syria, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq.

³ Daher, “Prelude.”
language, or religion, and despite a newfound differentiation by class, Amman remained a living, breathing amalgam of diverse peoples and cultures.

Jabal al-Weibdeh, settled in the 1930s, became home to a diverse community of Christians, Circassians, Jordanian-Jordanians, and Palestinian-Jordanians.** In the 1930s, the neighborhood could be seen creeping up Jabal al-Weibdeh, above Wasat al-Balad (downtown Amman) (Figure 1). As the community expanded in the 1940s and 50s, the hill became known as “Jabal al-Yasmine” for its abundance of jasmine plants. By the late 1950s, the jabal had been settled westward from the base to the flat area atop the hill (Figure 2). Many of Jordan’s early prime ministers lived in Weibdeh, as did many of Jordan’s most influential artists, poets, and political thinkers of the mid-20th century. Marwan Asmar, a longtime resident of Weibdeh, writes, “when you walk through [Weibdeh] you are treading in the footsteps of past and present intellectuals who make and continue to make such an indelible impression on Jordan’s cultural trail.”\(^4\) In fact, they create a literal trail, as many of these people are immortalized in the 99 street names of Weibdeh, most of which recognize notable Jordanian and Arab artists and authors.

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**I use the terminology Palestinian-Jordanian and Jordanian-Jordanian to denote the difference between those who lived in the West Bank (Palestinian-Jordanians) and the East Bank (Jordanian-Jordanians) before 1948. I use this terminology purely for functionality, and acknowledge that this terminology emphasizes both real and imagined divisions.

Throughout the 20th century, Weibdeh has been known for its role as a place of transgression, ideas, and resistance in Amman: as “the Nationalists’ Mountain” in the 1950s, “the American Quarter” in the 1960s (noting the presence of embassies in the neighborhood), a refuge for Fedayeen during Black September in 1970, and today, a center for Amman’s cultural and artistic movements. Weibdeh’s cultural and political life has been vibrant since it was first settled, beginning with the establishment of the Osama Mashini Theater, still open today, and with the presence of numerous political organizations and parties. Daoud Khoury remembers attending both Communist Workers Party meetings and Muslim Brotherhood meetings as a child, purely because they were interesting and accessible. Political and artistic thought was an integral part of daily life in Weibdeh, and was an inclusive experience, open to all.

Through the final decades of the 20th century, more and more arts organizations have found a home in Weibdeh, such as the National Gallery of Fine Arts in 1980, Darat al Funun in 1993, and Dar al-Anda in the late 1990s. These museums and galleries are not only important destinations for artists across the Middle East, but have also contributed to the preservation of historic buildings and Weibdeh’s distinctive legacy of culture and political activism.

Weibdeh has remained a closely linked community over the years, where most everyone knows one another. Although many families have moved away, many return for the community provided by Weibdeh. One woman I spoke to, who grew up in the neighborhood, noted that although she has moved out of Weibdeh, she returns to the same hairdresser that cut her hair for...
the first time as a child. Although the neighborhood retains many of its original residents and character, the community has experienced an influx of outsiders, businesses, and traffic over the past couple of years, because, as Linda Khoury notes, “the sound of Jabal al-Weibdeh went all over Amman,” bringing expatriates and Ammanis alike to enjoy the unique personality of Weibdeh. This has led to rising rents, conflicts with the Greater Amman Municipality and their process of granting business permits, and has forced families who have lived in Weibdeh for years to leave the neighborhood. Local activists organizations such as the Friends of Luweibdeh*** Cultural Association (FOLCA) have emerged “with the aim of preserving the unique architectural, environmental, and cultural heritage in Jabal Luweibdeh.” The destiny of Jabal al-Weibdeh, for years a quiet neighborhood in the center of bustling Amman, is now unclear.

***Luweibdeh is another commonly used alliteration of Weibdeh.

5 Interview with Linda Khoury
6 “Friends of Luweibdeh Cultural Association (FOLCA),” Pamphlet.
iii. literature review

Below I offer a review of the theories and research that serve as the groundwork for my personal research, reflections, and conclusions. These theories are contested, changing, and constantly being refined, but nonetheless offer a systematic framework for understanding identity in Jordan, Amman, and Weibdeh.

Collective Memory & Counter-Memory

While the idea of collective memory can sometimes be convoluted, shrouded beneath decades of theory, it is at its most essentialist, a reference to the work of Maurice Halbwachs, a protégée of French sociologist Emile Durkheim. Halbwachs’ ideas were detailed in his 1950 book, *La Mémoire Collective*, and have since been expounded by numerous theorists over the course of the 20th century. Now, the phrase “collective memory” not only references the work of Halbwachs, but has been prescribed to a much broader framework of meaning, contextualized and refined within different disciplines. When referencing collective memory in this paper, I refer to the discrete idea posited by Halbwachs in conjunction with contemporary theorists’ work within the confines of social memory studies.

Collective memory is the idea that memories of individuals together create a shared memory that is dependent on, but ultimately separate, from individuals’ memories. These shared memories can be recalled and experienced by individuals who did not explicitly experience them and construct a groundwork for conceptions of personal and collective identity. Halbwachs writes “it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories.”

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individuals what to remember, but how to remember, and in doing so, individual memory is morphed into a collective memory, a shared experience and understanding of one’s identity and relationship to community.

Social memory studies also rely on the idea that just as memory is inherently mediated, so is history, which is a form of collective memory itself. History is taught, related, and accepted as both a collective memory of the past and as a form of identity, a way of understanding one’s relationship to the world. Theorists of social memory Olick and Robbins posit that nationalism is a form of collective memory, often established by a sole source and understood by a collective through “a variety of mnemonic sites, practices, and forms.”8 These mnemonics include statues, memorials, rhetoric, and origin myths, which create and maintain narratives of identity by utilizing collective memory. Marita Sturkin, who writes about cultural memory, states, “cultural memory is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history,”9 an act of competition for hegemony and narrative dominance. Collective memories are not singular or objective, but rather are sites of contention, through which individuals and groups attempt to narrate both history and identity.

To clarify this competition for hegemony, Michel Foucault coined the term “counter-memory” to describe the memories that have been intentionally excluded from official discourses or histories. However, these marginalized memories are “not simply the raw materials to be coordinated in a heterogeneous…collective memory; rather, they remain counter-memories that make available multiplicitous pasts.”10 Counter-memories inherently uplift the plurality of

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9 Olick and Robbins, “Social Memory Studies,” 126.  
memory and collective memories. Thus, counter-memories encourage recognition of individual identities and histories, and negate hegemonic narratives of collective memory.

*State Construction of Jordanian National Identity*

When the Hashemite family gained control over Transjordan in 1921 with the support of the British, they began their rule over a land without any centralized government, and further, without any strong connection to the Hashemites themselves. In conjunction with the British, Emir Abdullah bin-Hussein began the extensive project of both creating and legitimizing a national Jordanian identity early in his reign. Abdullah’s project of identity creation attempted to develop a linear narrative connecting the Hashemites to the land of Transjordan, a technique utilized by many other nation-states of the 19th and 20th centuries to narrate the history of new nation states as primordial, inherently tied to the land, and to separate themselves from colonialism.\(^{11}\) This technique served the dual role of rationalizing the legitimacy of present-day leaders and framing them as savior figures to the land they took control of. Further, it enforced “the idea that the nationalist liberation movement of the new state government served as the inevitable culmination point of that narrative.”\(^{12}\)

The narratives of legitimacy articulated in Transjordan were framed within the success of the Hashemite’s leadership during the Arab Revolt, exhibiting the Hashemites as the logical leaders of an Arab nationalist state. State construction of Jordanian identity during the mandate period failed to emphasize a unique Jordanian national identity, instead characterizing Transjordan’s identity as simply “Hashemite” and “Arab Nationalist.” The British also worked to

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\(^{12}\) Anderson, *Nationalist Voices*. 
accentuate the idea that “Transjordan was Hashemite and the Hashemites were Transjordan” as a means of increasing loyalty to Abdullah and simultaneously mitigating anti-colonialist rhetoric.¹³ Hashemite imaginings of Transjordan emphasized Transjordanian tribes through a patronage system. Laura Yang notes that “by participating in the state’s patronage system, tribal identities became politicized, meaning that tribal identities were no longer just expressions of familial or social relations but were also expressions of differential power relations and used to access benefits from the state.”¹⁴

After the annexation of the West Bank in 1948, the Hashemites faced a fresh challenge of national identity creation within Jordan, now with the goal of creating a national identity for two distinctive populations—one that would bridge the East and West Banks while simultaneously retaining the Hashemites’ power. This project required the absorption of Palestinian identity into Jordanian identity, which the government accomplished by appropriating Palestinian spaces as Jordanian ones while retaining discourses of Arab nationalism and Islamic Hashemite legitimacy.¹⁵ Al-Aqsa Mosque was a key visual in this project, and King Abdullah I prayed at the mosque each Friday, before he was killed there in 1951 by a Palestinian who believed him to be an illegitimate leader. The challenges faced by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan after 1948 epitomize Jordan’s legacy of incorporating distinct political and ethnic bodies into its own, a project that continues to this day.

Yet another notable shift occurred following the events of the 1967 War, in which Jordan lost the West Bank to Israel, and Black September in 1970, in which the Jordanian army expelled

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¹⁵ Yan, “Changing Spatial Discourses.”
the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLO) from Jordan. Before the war, divisions between Jordanian-Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians were primarily socioeconomic, but following the war, Palestinian identity was marginalized in favor of tribalism and narratives of autochthony. Ali Kassay argues that this was not at all a conflict between Jordanians and Palestinians, but rather was re-narrated as a conflict between Palestinians and Jordanians following the conflict. This is underscored by the fact that many members of the Palestinian resistance forces were Jordanian, and many members of the Jordanian army were Palestinian. However, the primary recruiting grounds for the Fedayeen were Palestinian refugee camps within Amman, while the Jordanian armed forces were primarily recruited from the countryside. This dichotomy resulted in emphasis being placed on tribal authochtony as being truly “Jordanian” in opposition to the Palestinian “other” as a way to mitigate the loss of the ideological strength of pan-Jordanianism following the Six-Day War.

To this day, tribal identity is an important component of identity in Jordanian culture. Jordanian tribal customs and heritage are continuously being emphasized as being authentically Jordanian, and are constantly reasserted through tribal histories, museums dedicated to Jordanian tribes, and even popular culture, in the form of television programs dedicated to “Bedouin life” and the recordings of Jordanian folk songs. While tribes were certainly important social structures before the rise of the state of Jordan, the concept of tribalism can be differentiated from the presence of tribes, referencing instead “a discursive use of references to such organization in the past for political purposes in the present.” This is exhibited in the claiming

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17 Yan, “Changing Spatial Discourses,” 15.
18 Yan, “Changing Spatial Discourses,” 95.
of tribal identity by those who were not historically organized as a tribe, such as the Circassians. While the Hashemite discursive use of “tribalism” has changed over the past century, it has been continuously used to both legitimize Hashemite rule and to create a Jordanian collective memory. This collective memory rhetorically links Jordanian identity to tribalism, romanticizing a manufactured “tribal past,” and reconstructs national remembrance in relationship to tribal identity.

*Ammani Identity: “A Marginalized Reality”*

Over the past two decades, much literature has emerged identifying the lack of a distinctive identity in Jordan. Often, when you ask someone in Amman—a taxi driver, barista, cashier—where they are from, they cite somewhere outside of Amman as their place of origin, even when they are second or third generation residents of the city. People are apt to describe their identity in relationship to other major cities of Jordan, towns and villages in Palestine, and other points in the Mashreq, but Amman identity is rarely referenced. The research of Ali Kassay shows that Jordanian citizens reference themselves as being from “the tribe or village of origin from which their family descends,” even if they have never been there, or are third-generation residents of Amman. Perhaps, though, this trend is even more apparent in the fact that when someone *does* site Amman as their place of origin, the answer is not accepted, even by government officials. This phenomena is also stressed by the fact that Amman accounts for 42% of Jordan’s population, which one might assume would make it an acceptable place of

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19 Yan, “Changing Spatial Discourses,” 96.
20 Kassay, “The Exclusion of Amman.”
21 Kassay, “The Exclusion of Amman.”
origin, considering its centrality to the nation and its people. Current research attempts to explain this absence of a discrete Ammani identity, contextualizing this absence within the tribal nature of identity in Jordan and the work of the Jordanian state in manufacturing a distinctive Jordanian identity.

This dissociation of Jordanian identity from Amman is directly connected to the Jordanian government’s project of identity creation, which negates the legitimacy of the city in favor of tribal identity, and which is linked to ruralism. Seteney Shami writes, “the hegemonic discourse concerning Amman is one that negates its identity as a city…the answer partly lies in the ways that Amman’s inhabitants construct their identities through references to a multiplicity of cities as well as to alternate identities that work against consolidating an Ammani identity.”

The construction of a discrete Ammani identity and heritage is negated by the Jordanian government’s focus on historical continuity, which tends to negate the recent past and urbanism and presents Amman as being less authentic within a collective memory of Jordanian identity, history, and heritage.

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23 Seteney Shami, “Amman is Not a City,” in Urban Imaginaries: Locating the Modern City (Saint Paul: University of Minnesota, 2007).
iv. methodology

The vast majority of the data detailed in this study—qualitative, quantitative, and historical—was obtained during interviews. Over the course of two weeks, I performed ten interviews with people of diverse backgrounds and relationships to Weibdeh. Of the people interviewed, four grew up in Weibdeh and five presently work in Weibdeh, but all the interviewees held a strong connection to Weibdeh and spent much of their leisure time in Weibdeh. Interviewees included Muslims, Christians, Jordanian-Jordanians, Palestinian-Jordanians, Circassians, post-graduates, and people who are now retired. All of the people I interviewed spoke English and everyone that I interviewed was incredibly gracious and welcoming in allowing me to sit with them and pick their mind about Weibdeh for hours on end.

Many of the people I chose to interview are notable or well-known figures in Weibdeh. Omar Alfaouri, the president of the Friends of Weibdeh Cultural Association (FOLCA) and the Mukhtar (in arabic, “selected”, and meaning an unofficial leader) of Weibdeh was an essential figure to my research (Figure 3 shows Alfaouri’s grandfather, the first Mukhtar of Weibdeh, seated in Duar al-Hawooz). Alfaouri introduced me to and suggested other important people to speak to, including Daoud Khoury, a friend of his who also grew up in Weibdeh, a decade and a half earlier. I tracked down two people important to the arts in Weibdeh with distinctively different perspectives and backgrounds, Linda Khoury and Majdoline Al-Ghazawi; Al-Ghazawi led me to Saleem Ayoub Quna, who has written a book about Weibdeh. A
friend of mine, Sama Fraij, who is a frequent patron of Weibdeh, introduced me to a number of young Jordanians who spend time in Weibdeh (and some of which now work in Weibdeh): Reef Qubailat, Nuria Hijazi, Touma Hamarneh, and Abdullah Assi. The interviews occurred in a natural progression, as interviews led me to new people to interview.

My interviews were semi-structured, formatted loosely with the intention of gaining information about facts and history, but also in gaining information about the ways in which people with relationships to Weibdeh narrate their own identities and collective identities. In each interview, I asked the interviewee to describe both their relationship to Weibdeh, their life history in reference to Weibdeh, and their feelings towards Weibdeh. While these may seem like the same question, they elicited important information about the ways in which people narrate their own identities in reference to place and collective memory.

I also read extensively about urbanism in Amman, the history of Weibdeh, and read many personal accounts of Weibdeh, both published online and within Saleem Ayoub Quna’s book, *My Neighborhood: Cultural Guide to Jabal Luweibdeh*. These many works helped me to familiarize myself with both Amman and Weibdeh more fully before beginning my interviews.

One of the greatest obstacles in conducting this research was the constraint of time. With only four weeks to complete a comprehensive review of relevant literature, conduct interviews, analyze findings, and write the study itself, I was unable to do as many interviews as I originally would have liked to complete. However, I believe that the diversity of interviewees was a compromise that bolstered the study as a whole. Overall, the research period offered me the opportunity not only to meet incredible people, but also to engage with the community of Weibdeh and the local actors that have shaped Weibdeh today.
Another obstacle I faced, both in constructing and conducting it, was taking into account my positionality as a researcher. As a white, western woman, I was aware of my limitations in capturing the full scope of Jordanian and Ammani identity. To protect against a bias based on my identity, I made sure to phrase questions clearly, for example, when asking interviewees identify themselves, it was important to clarify that I was interested in how they would respond to a Jordanian, and not to myself, a foreigner. Outside of the logistics of conducting the study, however, I felt that it was important to be constantly aware of the ways that I was entering spaces (both literal and metaphorical) that I do not come from.
v. findings

*The Collective Memory of Weibdeh*

After conducting ten interviews, I identified a strong collective memory and narrative of identity in Weibdeh. The individual memories of the people interviewed over the course of this research are tied together through processes of collective memory, which are recalled by people who physically experienced them and those that didn’t, founding the framework of a collective identity that traverses time and individual memory and creates a shared experience of memory. By comparing rhetoric across interviews, I distinguished and isolated phrases and ideas that were repeated again and again in characterizing Weibdeh. I identify these remembrances as collective memory below using criteria detailed by Halbwachs in positing his original theory of collective memory, comparing across interviews and noting the recurrence of ideas that compose this collective memory. Below, I identify the major themes of Weibdeh’s collective memory by placing them in conversation with Halbwachs’s original theory.

One of the most oft repeated theses among those interviewed were narratives of the exceptional diversity found in Weibdeh. This idea was expressed in every interview I performed, in different words but surprisingly similar language. Majdoline al-Ghazawi described Weibdeh as “a mélange, a mix of everyone,” while Omar Alfaouri described Weibdeh over time as “always a mosaic map.” The word “mixture” was used frequently, and mosaic imagery was repeated in three of the nine interviews I performed. Five interviewees—from a 23 year-old post-graduate architecture student to a man in his early 70s who moved to Weibdeh from Palestine following 1948—detailed the 1930s move from the *wadi* to the hills of Amman as an important component of the formation of Weibdeh’s diverse community. Halbwachs posits that collective memory “selects relevant symbols from the reservoir of history that it distills into idiendary
narratives,” which is illustrated in interviewees’ injection of meaning and long-term significance into Weibdeh’s origin story. This multi-generational collective memory of Weibdeh’s creation illuminates Weibdeh’s exceptionalism and forms a distinctive identity of tolerance and community.

The memories of Weibdeh are essentially emic, representing Halbwachs’ differentiation between the internality of memory and the externality of history. Yet another of the most frequent themes communicated about Weibdeh was the sentiment of “home.” One interviewee, who has never lived, but works in Weibdeh, noted that leaving the neighborhood feels like being in another city entirely, but when she returns to Weibdeh, she immediately feels at home, a similar sentiment to an interviewee born in Weibdeh, who describes returning to Weibdeh as the “sense of relief when you’re able to return home.” These narratives of home, reinforced by a diverse range of interviewees, differentiate the identity of Weibdeh from the externality of history, grounded in internal narratives of belonging and self that are jointly held by Weibdeh’s community within a collective reservoir of memory.

Physical features of Weibdeh were also important sites of memory in people’s narratives, highlighting a set of important locations within the neighborhood. Places referenced repeatedly included Duar al-Hawooz (water tank circle), now known as Duar al-Paris, the cafés of Shari’a Kullyat (College Street), gardens and public spaces for children to play, such as the National Gallery of Art Park, the Shari’a College Mosque and Bisharat Church, and various businesses such as Abu Mahjoob’s Falafel, Fattaleh Pharmacy, Fairuz Pastries, and the Duar Paris Stop and Shop. These places, identified by interviewees of all ages, favor what Halbwachs describes as the

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continuity of memory (as opposed to the discontinuity of history). Although some of the places described no longer exist, or have changed, they are described with a consistent rhetorical importance. Halbwachs argues that the collective memory of place “emphasizes what remains essentially unchanged” in a place.26 These sites have become sites of intergenerational memory, an example of “living memory,” which holds significance in groups’ consciousness over the course of time, rather than periodizing memory, as history does.

Analyzing the collective memory of Weibdeh as a shared narrative of identity implies a connection to Amman and Ammani heritage. The most emphasized features of Weibdeh’s collective memory and identity are ones that are similarly applicable to Amman as a whole. Amman is a city with a strong historical legacy of inclusion, diversity, and coexistence, which is conveyed decisively in the collective memory of Weibdeh. Further, the physical features accentuated in Weibdeh’s collective memory epitomize the places that are characteristic to Amman. Amman’s urban features depart from classical Oriental features such as congressional mosques, covered bazaars, public baths, and homogenous residential areas, instead featuring communal spaces such as the al-Husseini mosque downtown, specialty bazaars, hawooz (water towers), muntazah (gardens), and coffee houses.27 The original Weibdeh hawooz can be seen in

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27 Daher, “Prelude.”
Figure 4. Excluding specialty bazaars, these essentially Ammani features are prominent figures in the collective memory of Weibdeh, and are particularly notable because they epitomize Amman’s legacy as a space of inclusion. Weibdeh’s collective memory is both physically and ideologically representative of Amman’s most distinctive character traits.

*Ammani Identity in Weibdeh*

Just as Weibdeh’s collective memory identifies itself with key characteristics of Amman, the vast majority of people interviewed for this study identify themselves as being from Amman. Although Kassay’s research shows that residents of Amman more commonly identify themselves with their family’s tribe or village of origin when asked “Where are you from?” within Jordanian borders, of the ten people I interviewed, all but two of them said that they identify themselves as being from Amman. Of the two people who said they did not consider Amman to be their place of origin, one said that she would identify herself as being from Madaba, because that’s what “they’re really asking,” and the other said that he identified more strongly with Palestine. However, of those that said they did cite themselves as being from Amman, some were Palestinian-Jordanian, Jordanian-Jordanian, some were Muslim, and some were Christian.

Perhaps even more revealing, however, was the fact that of ten interviews, seven interviewees agreed that their relationship with Amman (regardless of whether or not they identify themselves as being from Amman) was strengthened by their relationship to Weibdeh (Figure 4). Of the eight who said that they identify themselves as being from Amman, six agreed with the above statement, and two disagreed, meaning that they do not feel as if their affiliation with Amman is connected to their relationship with Weibdeh. Of the two people who said they would not identify themselves as being from Amman, one explicitly disagreed with the above
statement, and one agreed, even though he identifies himself as being from Palestine. While the responses of solely ten interviews are not statistically conclusive, they reveal a trend towards affiliation with Amman among people with relationships to Weibdeh and further, identify Weibdeh as a key factor in their affiliation with Amman.

By identifying themselves with Amman, these eight interviewees are not only emphasizing their strong connection to Amman. Rather, they are also undermining their tribal affiliation, relegating it to a secondary identity.

Kassay writes, “on the social level, people have no choice but to identify with their tribe or village of origin because, regardless of who they perceive and seek to define themselves, society will perceive and treat them on this basis.”

Thus, identifying oneself as being from Amman is both intentional and inherently political, and further, undermines the Hashemites’ revision of Jordanian collective memory that emphasizes the relationship between tribalism and Jordanian identity.

Through interviewees’ subversion of tribalist narratives of identity, Weibdeh and Amman become rhetorical tribes. Because the Hashemites clearly link tribalism to Jordanian autochthony, this destabilization of tribalism allows a simple identification with place to become an assertion of the autochthony of Amman. Daoud Khoury remembers the summer of 1954,

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28 Kassay, “The Exclusion of Amman.”
when his family bought the first refrigerator on his street. Families from up and down Bouneyah Street came to see it, open it, and leave their food in it. Even though the people on Bouneyah street came from all over—from Syria to Palestine to Circassus—they operated as one family, one tribe, working together to keep their food cold and care for one another.

_Weibdeh as a Counter-Memory_

Thus, the collective memory of Weibdeh, which celebrates fundamentally Ammani qualities and supports identification with Amman, becomes a counter-memory of Amman, subverting the Hashemite project of marginalizing Ammani identity. The collective memory of Weibdeh retells dominant discourses of Amman’s history by imbuing the city with exceptional qualities, such as its distinctive diversity and inclusion, and asserting it as worthy of celebration. This rhetoric re-writes Hashemite imaginings of tribalism, which essentially exclude individuals and groups from narratives of Jordanian identity—such as the tribe-less Circassian ethnic identity—and envisions a tribalism of inclusion and of caring for one another. The diversity celebrated in Weibdeh’s collective memory not only celebrates Amman, but negates the hegemony of memory and offers an alternative retelling.

Sociologist Lipsitz writes, “counter-memory is a counter-discourse that reframes the dominant narratives (which profess to represent universal experiences) by altering the focus toward ‘localized experiences’ of expression.”29 Weibdeh becomes a localized site of memory, a physical space that argues for the legitimacy of Amman. One interviewee, who has never lived

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or worked in Weibdeh, but who spends much of his time there, stated, “[Weibdeh] introduced me
to the beauty of Amman, [it] allowed me to touch and sense it…it’s the true sense of Amman.”
vii. conclusion

While Jordanian national narratives of identity diminish the importance of Amman, the collective memory of Weibdeh uplifts it, acting as a counter-memory to the rhetorical marginalization of Amman. In “Amman Is Not a City,” Seteney Shami writes, “the overarching urban narrative in Amman is one that paradoxically emphasizes its fragmentation and deprives the city from claiming a unique urban identity.” However, the collective memory of Weibdeh creates a counter-memory that works to negate hegemonic discourses of identity and reclaims the exceptionalism of Amman’s urban identity, celebrating it as a significant, unique place and a legitimate place of origin. Weibdeh itself becomes a site of memory, grounding memory in place through the collective thoughts and identity of the community, and fortifying urban social memory in a discrete location. The collective memory of Weibdeh continues the neighborhood’s legacy as a neighborhood of resistance, a nexus of political opposition and art, a place that celebrates itself as distinctively and unapologetically Ammani.

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30 Seteney Shami, “Amman is Not a City,” 209.
viii. study limitations & recommendations for further study

While this study offers insight into the ways that Weibdeh’s collective memory subverts narratives of Jordanian identity and legitimizes Ammani identity, it fails to illustrate Weibdeh’s affiliation with Ammani identity statistically. Thus, the study illustrates and explains correlation, but fails to prove causation. To strengthen this research, statistical data should be performed with a random sample and much larger sample size. Many of the people I interviewed were particularly invested in Weibdeh (one wrote a book about Weibdeh and another was the mukhtar, for example), which likely skewed my results slightly, as people had stronger relationships to Weibdeh.

As Weibdeh and Jordan continue to urbanize and change, there are many opportunities for further study of Weibdeh and Ammani identity. As Weibdeh continues to grow, transform, and become gentrified, it will be important to expand upon the ways that the collective memory of Weibdeh is impacted by these shifts. Further, the research performed in this study could be performed in other locations around Amman, providing a geographic map of Ammani identify in different neighborhoods and locations across the city. Spatial data could better isolate the variables that contribute to individuals’ identification of places of origin, and better illuminate the ways that resistance to Hashemite constructions of Jordanian identity is carried out.
ix. bibliography


“Friends of Luweibdeh Cultural Association (FOLCA).” Pamphlet.


*Images of Weibdeh*. 1930s-1940s. Department of the National Library, Jordan.


x. appendix

*Interview Framework*

1. First, tell me a little about yourself (origin, childhood, background).
2. What’s your relationship to Amman? To Weibdeh?
3. What does Weibdeh mean to you/represent?
4. What makes Weibdeh different than other places in Amman/Jordan/the World?
5. Do you think that there is a distinctive Ammani identity (re: people not identifying as Ammani)? What does this identity look like?
6. Do you think that Weibdeh represents a unique Ammani identity?
7. Why do you think Weibdeh has been able to avoid becoming another development like Abdali or Abdoun?
8. What does art mean to Weibdeh and how has it impacted Weibdeh’s identity?
9. How has Weibdeh changed in the last (10, 5, 2) years?
10. What are your thoughts on the ongoing transformation of Weibdeh?
11. What do you think will happen to Weibdeh?
12. Who else is important to speak to?
Written Consent Form: English

Title: Jabal al-Weibdeh: A Counter-Memory of Amman
Gwen Dilworth/University of Virginia:
School for International Training—Jordan: Geopolitics, International Relations, and the Future of the Middle East

1. The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between the transgressive history of the neighborhood of Jabal al-Weibdeh as a space of resistance, art, and political activism to a discrete Ammani identity. Through historical research, literature review, interviews with residents and patrons of Weibdeh, and observation, this research aims to explore the transformation of Weibdeh both historically and continuously to identify Weibdeh’s significance as both a physical space and representation of Ammani identity.

2. Rights Notice
If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.
   a. Privacy - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
   b. Anonymity - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
   c. Confidentiality - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

3. Instructions:
Please read the following statements carefully and mark your preferences where indicated. Signing below indicates your agreement with all statements and your voluntary participation in the study. Signing below while failing to mark a preference where indicated will be interpreted as an affirmative preference. Please ask the researcher if you have any questions regarding this consent form.
I am aware that this interview is conducted by an independent undergraduate researcher with the goal of producing a descriptive case study on the transformation of Jabal al-Weibdeh.

I am aware that the information I provide is for research purposes only. I understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study.

I am aware that I have the right to full anonymity upon request, and that upon request the researcher will omit all identifying information from both notes and drafts.

I am aware that I have the right to refuse to answer any question and to terminate my participation at any time, and that the researcher will answer any questions I have about the study.

I am aware of and take full responsibility for any risk, physical, psychological, legal, or social, associated with participation in this study.

I am aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for participation in this study, but a copy of the final study will be made available to me upon request.

I [ do / do not ] give the researcher permission to use my name and position in the final study.

I [ do / do not ] give the researcher permission to use my organizational affiliation in the final study.

I [ do / do not ] give the researcher permission to use data collected in this interview in a later study.

Date: ___________________________ Participant’s Signature: ___________________________

Participant’s Printed Name: ___________________________

Researcher’s Signature: ___________________________

Thank you for participating!

Questions, comments, complaints, and requests for the final written study can be directed to:
Dr. Ashraf F. Alqudah, SIT Jordan Academic Director
Telephone (962) 0785422478
Email: ashraf.alqudah@sit.edu
العنوان: جبل اللويبدة: ذاكرة مضادة للأمان
جوين دلورث/ جامعة فرجينية:
مدرسة التدريب الدولي. الأردن: التحديث والتأثير الاجتماعي

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو استكشاف التحول من جبل اللويبدة و حوية امني

4. تتيح الحق:

إذا شعرت في أي وقت أنك في خطر أو أنه قد يلحق بك الأذى، يحق لك ايقاف وانهاء المقابلة.

5. أ- الص�بية:

الخصوصية: كل المعلومات التي تقدمها في هذه المقابلة سيتم تسجيلها والحفاظ عليها. وفي حال لم ترغب بحصول ذلك يجب عليك اعلام من يعقد المقابلة.

ب- إلغاء الهوية

كل الأسماء في هذه الدراسة سوف تبقى مجهولة إلا إذا رغب المشاركون في ذلك.

ج- السرية

كل الأسماء ستبقى سرية ومحيزة من قبل عقد المقابلة. بالتوقيع أعلاه ، سوف تعطي المسؤولية الكاملة للمقابل في الحفاظ على هذا العقد ومحتوياته. حيث أنه هو أيضا سوف يوقع نسخة من هذا العقد ويعطيها للمشارك.

6. التعليمات

الرجاء قراءة التصريحات التالية ووضع اشارة على ما يناسبك في المكان المذكور أدناه. توقيعك يشير إلى موافقتك على كل ما ذكر ومشاركتك التطوعية في الدراسة. في حال قمت بالتوقيع بالأدنى من دون وضع اشارة يرجى الاجابة على هذا النص. الرجاء إكمال الطلب في حال كان لديك أي سؤال بخصوص استمارة الموافقة هذه.

أنا أدرك أن هذه المقابلة أجريت من قبل طالب جامعي باحث مستقل يهدف إلى انجاز دراسة وصفية عن جبل اللويبدة.

أنا أدرك أن المعلومات التي أقدمها ستستخدم لأهداف بحثية فقط. وأدرك ذلك كذلك أن اجاباتي سوف تكون سرية وأن اسمي لن يكون معلوماً.

أنا أدرك أن في الحق في إخفاء هويتي بالكامل، وأنه عند الطلب سوف يزيل الباحث أي معلومات قد تشير إلى الهوية أو المسودة.

أنا أدرك أن في الحق في عدم الإجابة على أي من الأسئلة وإنهاء مشاركتي بأي وقت. وأنه يجب على الباحث الإجابة عن أي سؤال أطرره عن الدراسة.

أنا أذكر المسؤولية الكاملة على أي مخاطر جسدية، نفسية، قانونية أو اجتماعية مرتبطة بالمشاركة بهذه الدراسة.

أنا أذكر أنني لن أتلقى تعويض مادي عن المشاركة بهذه الدراسة، ولكن سيتاح لي نسخة من الدراسة النهائية عند الطلب.

أنا (أوافق / لا أوافق ) على السماح للباحث في استخدام اسمي ورتبتي في الدراسة النهائية.

أنا (أوافق / لا أوافق ) على السماح للباحث في استخدام البيانات التي تم جمعها في هذه المقابلة في دراسة لاحقة.

التاريخ:
_______________________________
اسم المشارك:
_______________________________
توقيع الباحث:
Access, Use, and Publication of ISP/FSP

Student Name: Gwendolyn Dilworth

Email Address: gbd5df@virginia.edu

Title of ISP/FSP: Jabal al-weibdeh: a counter-memory of Amman a case study in the resistance of memory

Program and Term/Year: Jordan: Geopolitics, International Relations, and the Future of the Middle East (JOR), Fall 2017.

Student research (Independent Study Project, Field Study Project) is a product of field work and as such students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical field work, as stipulated in the SIT Policy on Ethics, results in products that are shared with local and academic communities; therefore copies of ISP/FSPs are returned to the sponsoring institutions and the host communities, at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved.

By signing this form, I certify my understanding that:

1. I retain ALL ownership rights of my ISP/FSP project and that I retain the right to use all, or part, of my project in future works.

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Given your agreement to abide by the SIT Policy on Ethics, withdrawing permission for publication may constitute an infringement; the Academic Director will review to ensure ethical compliance.

☐ I hereby withdraw permission for World Learning/SIT Study Abroad to include my ISP/FSP in the Program’s office permanent collection.
Reason:

☐ I hereby withdraw permission for World Learning/SIT Study Abroad to release my ISP/FSP in any format to individuals, organizations, or libraries in the host country for educational purposes as determined by World Learning/SIT Study Abroad.
Reason:

☐ I hereby withdraw permission for World Learning/SIT Study Abroad to publish my ISP/FSP on its websites and in any of its digital/electronic collections, or to reproduce and transmit my ISP/FSP electronically.
Reason:

GWENDOLYNE DILWORTH                      Dec. 10, 2017
Student Signature                           Date

Academic Director has reviewed student reason(s) for withdrawing permission to use and agrees it does not violate the SIT Study Abroad Policy on Ethics.

GWENDOLYNE DILWORTH                      Dec. 10, 2017
Student Signature                           Date

Academic Director Signature               Date

Note: This form is to be included with the electronic version of the paper and in the file of any World Learning/SIT Study Abroad archive.
ISP Ethics Review

(Note: Each AD must complete, sign, and submit this form for every student’s ISP.)

The ISP paper by Gwendolyn Dilworth does conform to the Human Subjects Review approval from the Local Review Board, the ethical standards of the local community, and the ethical and academic standards outlined in the SIT student and faculty handbooks.

Completed by: Ashraf F. Alqudah, Ph. D.

Academic Director: __Ashraf F. Alqudah, Ph. D.

Signature:

Program: JOR Fall 2017

Date: Dec. 14th 2017
Human Subjects Review

**LRB/IRB ACTION FORM**

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<td>LRB members (print names):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashraf F. Alqudah, Ph. D. Chair</td>
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<td>Ismael Abu Aamoud, Ph. D.</td>
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<td>Badr AlMadi, Ph. D.</td>
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<td>LRB Chair Signature:</td>
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<td>Date: Nov. 13, 2017</td>
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**Form below for IRB Vermont use only:**

**Research requiring full IRB review. ACTION TAKEN:**

| __ approved as submitted | __ approved pending submission or revisions | __ disapproved |

_____________________________  ______________________________
IRB Chairperson’s Signature Date
Statement of Ethics  
(adapted from the American Anthropological Association)

In the course of field study, complex relationships, misunderstandings, conflicts, and the need to make choices among apparently incompatible values are constantly generated. The fundamental responsibility of students is to anticipate such difficulties to the best of their ability and to resolve them in ways that are compatible with the principles stated here. If a student feels such resolution is impossible, or is unsure how to proceed, s/he should consult as immediately as possible with the Academic Director (AD) and/or Independent Study Project (ISP) Advisor and discontinue the field study until some resolution has been achieved. Failure to consult in cases which, in the opinion of the AD and ISP Advisor, could clearly have been anticipated, can result in disciplinary action as delineated in the “failure to comply” section of this document.

Students must respect, protect, and promote the rights and the welfare of all those affected by their work. The following general principles and guidelines are fundamental to ethical field study:

I. Responsibility to people whose lives and cultures are studied
Students’ first responsibility is to those whose lives and cultures they study. Should conflicts of interest arise, the interests of these people take precedence over other considerations, including the success of the Independent Study Project (ISP) itself. Students must do everything in their power to protect the dignity and privacy of the people with whom they conduct field study.

The rights, interests, safety, and sensitivities of those who entrust information to students must be safeguarded. The right of those providing information to students either to remain anonymous or to receive recognition is to be respected and defended. It is the responsibility of students to make every effort to determine the preferences of those providing information and to comply with their wishes. It should be made clear to anyone providing information that despite the students’ best intentions and efforts, anonymity may be compromised or recognition fail to materialize. Students should not reveal the identity of groups or persons whose anonymity is protected through the use of pseudonyms.

Students must be candid from the outset in the communities where they work that they are students. The aims of their Independent Study Projects should be clearly communicated to those among whom they work.

Students must acknowledge the help and services they receive. They must recognize their obligation to reciprocate in appropriate ways.

To the best of their ability, students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. They should inform individuals and groups likely to be affected of any possible consequences relevant to them that they anticipate.
Students must take into account and, where relevant and to the best of their ability, make explicit the extent to which their own personal and cultural values affect their field study.

Students must not represent as their own work, either in speaking or writing, materials or ideas directly taken from other sources. They must give full credit in speaking or writing to all those who have contributed to their work.

II. Responsibilities to Hosts
Students should be honest and candid in all dealings with their own institutions and with host institutions. They should ascertain that they will not be required to compromise either their responsibilities or ethics as a condition of permission to engage in field study. They will return a copy of their study to the institution sponsoring them and to the community that hosted them at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved.

III. Failure to comply
When SIT Study Abroad determines that a student has violated SIT’s statement of ethics, the student will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program.

I, ____________ Gwendolyn Dilworth ____________, have read the above Statement of Ethics (Printed Name) and agree to make every effort to comply with its provisions.

Student Signature: ___________________________  Date: 8/11/2017 __________________