

Tentative Title of Dissertation:

"Ammani Youth: Urban Experiences, Regional Changes, and Uncertain Futures"

Abstract:

Profound social, political, and economic changes are transforming the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region in unpredictable ways. Despite the centrality of young people to hopes and anxieties about Jordan's future, very little academic work is being done to determine how being an urban youth in a context of regional instability and stagnant economic growth is impacting this generation's goals and desires for their own futures. Amman is an especially important site: compared to other cities in the MENA, as it is characterized by unique political stability. The social geographies of Amman's young people thus demand investigation and my research explores a crucial cultural and political moment of rapid social change with a central question: "How does the rapidly transforming built urban environment inform Ammani youths' perceptions of their future as citizens of the new MENA, and how do they navigate the regional social and political pressures that manifest themselves in the urban environment?"

I began my initial research in Amman at the end of 2016 and my local academic affiliate asserts that I have uncovered cultural transformations which urgently need further exploration. I have a fantastic opportunity to delve deeply into the shifting goals of even well-connected youth (with tribal advantages) who are expressing desires to leave Amman due to regional and global pressures. Increased understandings of this volatile region are necessary for both academics and policy makers and I seek to illuminate not only the challenges, but also the dreams of young urban people in the MENA.