

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

**THE URBANIZATION OF DISPLACEMENT IN INFORMAL
SETTLEMENTS:
THE CASE OF RAML-AL-ALI IN BEIRUT**

by

RACHA SHAWKI SINAN

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for the degree of Master of Urban Planning and Policy
to the Department of Architecture and Design
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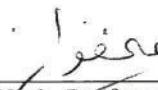
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ABSTRACT

OF THE THESIS OF

Racha Shawki Sinan for Master of Urban Planning and Policy
Major: Urban Planning and Policy

Title: The Urbanization of Displacement in Informal Settlements: The Case of Raml-al-Ali in Beirut

The thesis investigates the impacts of the flow of Syrian refugees in the neighborhood of Raml el Ali, in Beirut's southern suburbs, looking particularly at parameters of urban livability at the scale of individual apartments and urban quarters.

The thesis shows that the influx of refugees to the neighborhood increased the density in the area and added more pressure on the neighborhood's infrastructure. In addition, the thesis shows that the consequent impacts on urban livability have been severely negative for all dwellers, particularly in the quality of home, access to public space, and levels of privacy. However, the thesis shows that these impacts differ in intensity across areas within the neighborhood. The areas most affected by this increased densification are mainly located along the main artery and the alleyways. In these areas, homes are losing privacy and becoming an integral element of the street. These areas are mostly occupied by refugees who rent out apartments from landlords who typically live in better areas. Conversely, the neighborhood's internal areas have protected their privacy, albeit sometimes at the expense of access to sunlight and ventilation and/or the quality of public spaces. These differences indicate that living conditions for tenants in the neighborhood have become significantly worse than those of landlords.

The thesis further shows deep inequalities between renters and landlords in accessibility to public or privately held open spaces due to a number of powerful Lebanese landlords who control access to these spaces and secure them for their individual uses.

This thesis is significant in informing the differences in living conditions of the different groups who now share the neighborhoods (i.e., Lebanese renters, Syrian renters, migrant workers, landlords, resident-owners) in Raml al Ali. It argues that livability conditions differ considerably according to two factors: mode of tenancy (i.e., landlord/tenant) and nationality (i.e., refugee status/ residency status). The mode of tenancy considerably influences living conditions, with tenants living in denser urban area, with lower quality houses, poorer privacy and accessibility. Conversely, landlords as a group have a better quality of life in the neighborhood. Nationality also determines vulnerability, with non-Lebanese tenants suffering from easy eviction and household overcrowding. This makes the living condition of the Syrian renters inferior to those of the Lebanese renters.

The thesis findings build on extensive fieldwork conducted by the author in 2020-2021. The thesis concludes with a proposal to develop an area-based approach for the studied neighborhood as its main recommendation, adapting planning tools that can bank on the advantages of informality while mitigating its disadvantages. This research is significant since its findings help frame a set of planning recommendations that address the major challenges that face the residents of the neighborhood of Raml el Ali, and possibly derive lessons for others in Beirut.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
ABSTRACT	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	4
ILLUSTRATIONS	7
TABLES	10
INTRODUCTION	1
A. Thesis Topic:.....	1
B. Research Scope	4
C. Argument and Significance:	5
D. Methodology:.....	7
1. Data Collection and analysis:	8
E. Thesis Outline:.....	11
LITTERATURE REVIEW	12
A. Urbanization of Population Displacement:.....	12
B. Urban livability:.....	15
CASE STUDY: RAML EL ALI	18
A. Location and History of Raml el Ali:	18
B. Urban History and Land Tenure:	20
C. Urban Politics:	22
D. Planning Policies:	23

E. Infrastructure and Urban Services:	25
F. Livability:.....	27
G. Cluster Study (Urban Morphology):.....	28
1. Street pattern:.....	28
2. Buildings:	29
3. Building conditions:	30
4. Infrastructure:	31
H. Economic Activity:	32
1. Commerce & Services:	32
2. Socio-spatial conditions:	33
I. Cluster accessibility and Interaction:.....	35
URBAN LIVABILITY AT NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE.....	38
A. Building Expansion and Ad-hoc Additions:	39
1. Raml el Ali Area:.....	39
2. Methodology: Selected Block in Raml el Ali:	40
3. Block Analysis, Building Additions:.....	41
B. The Rearrangement of the Public/Shared Spaces in the Block:	47
1. A Methodology to Study Courtyards:	47
2. Open Spaces:	48
C. The Evaluation of the Public-Private Interface and its Impact on the Privacy of Dwelling Units in this Area:	53
1. A methodology for evaluating the consequences of density:.....	53
2. Criterion 1: Buildings Constituting the Street	54
3. Criterion 2: Inter-visibility and Density of Entrances:	56
4. Criteria 3: Topological depth:	59
5. Conclusion.....	60
URBAN LIVABILITY AT THE HOUSEHOLD/APARTMENT SCALE.....	63

A.	The Consequences of Density:	65
B.	Living Conditions:	65
1.	Household Overcrowding and Privacy:.....	65
2.	Natural Ventilation and Direct Sunlight:.....	70
C.	Neighborhood Facilities:.....	74
1.	Garbage Collection:.....	75
2.	Sewage System:.....	76
3.	Electricity Needs:	77
4.	Water Usage:	78
D.	Conclusion:	79
	ECONOMY OF THE RENT	81
A.	The Incidence of Rent.....	81
B.	Rental Value and Incidence of Rent on Expenditure:.....	82
1.	Sources of Income:	83
2.	Expenditures	86
	INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION.....	91
A.	Findings:.....	92
B.	Advantages and Risks of Informality in the Area of Raml el Ali:	94
C.	Stakeholder analysis:	100
D.	Area-Based Approach:.....	107
E.	Recommended Framework of Intervention:	108
F.	Conclusion:	116
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	119

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1.1: Map of Beirut and the Southern Suburbs (2003), highlighting the neighborhood of Raml el Ali.....	3
1. 2: Selected block, research case study. The block runs along the Ein el Delbe street which is a main road in the Raml el Ali area.....	7
1. 3:Map showing the division of the selected area in Raml el ali	9
3. 1 Satellite view of Raml al Ali area retrieved from Google map 2020	19
3. 2: Map taken from Khayat thesis (2008) showing the boundaries of the area (this map need to be updated).	19
3. 3: Map taken from Khayat thesis (2008) representing the development of the neighborhood from 1950's till 1970's.	20
3. 4: Map taken from Khayat thesis (2008) showing the administrative boundaries of Raml al Ali.....	20
3. 5: Aerial photograph, 1967 courtesy of the Lebanese Army.....	24
3. 6: Aerial photograph, 1991 courtesy of the Lebanese Army.....	24
3. 7: Map retrieved from Google Maps (2020), highlighted by the author to show a sample of the parallel main roads' networks network inside the neighborhood.	25
3. 8: Picture showing a sample of the incremental additions in Raml el Ali, photo taken by the author (2020).....	26
3. 9: Picture showing a courtyard in Raml el Ali converted into a parking lot for dwellers, photo taken by the author (2020).	26
3. 10: Picture showing one of the pedestrian courtyards in the area of Raml el Ali, photo taken by the author (2020).....	26
3. 11: Picture showing the poor infrastructure services in the neighborhood, photo taken by the author (2020).....	27
3. 12: Picture showing the poor paved roads, and the poor sewage systems of the area of Raml el Ali.....	27

3. 13: Pictures showing irregular electricity provision throughout the neighborhood, photos taken by the author (2020)	28
3. 14: Picture showing the sides of one of the alleyways roads, photo taken by the author (2020).....	29
3. 15: Picture showing a pedestrian path in a dire condition, photo taken by the author (2020).....	29
3. 16: Pictures showing the plastered, cladded, and incomplete buildings, photos taken by the author (2020).....	30
3. 17: Pictures showing some structures with light and re-used materials, photos taken by the author (2020).....	31
3. 18: Pictures showing the poor and exposed infrastructure, photos taken by the author (2020).....	32
3. 19: Pictures showing Ein el Delbe main road and one narrow streets of Bourj el Brajneh which function as business strips for the area of Raml el Ali, photos taken by the author (2020).....	33
3. 20: Pictures showing the incomplete and vacant buildings, photos taken by the author (2020).....	34
3. 21: Map retrieved by the author (based on observation) showing the eight independent sub-cluster that form the neighborhood.	35
3. 22: Pictures showing the pedestrian courtyard and corridor, or parking and narrow streets that connect the buildings, photo taken by the author (2021).	36
3. 23: Picture showing the entrances that lead to multiple buildings, photos taken by the author (2021).....	36
3. 24: Pictures showing concrete fences separating sub-clusters, photos taken by the author (2020).....	37
3. 25: Pictures showing the doors that control accessibility between sub-clusters, photos taken by the author (2021).	37
5. 1: A divided dwelling unit with a wood wall partition, photo by author.....	69
5. 2: An empty dwelling unit ready for rent, photo by author.....	70
5. 3: Narrows corridor of the divided apartments, photo by author.....	70
5. 4: Picture showing a fully furnished and decorated apartment dwelled by landlord, photo by author.	70

5. 5: Picture showing the deteriorated roof structure, photo by author (2021).....	70
5. 6: Picture showing a dwelling unit at the roof with a metal roofed ceiling, photo by author (2021).....	70
5. 7: Picture showing the density in zone one, photo taken by the author (2021).	72
5. 8: Picture showing the density in zone two, photo taken by the author (2021).....	72
5. 9: Dwelling space in zone three, photo by author.....	74
5. 10: Hanged-up electricity meters on rental dwelling apartment, photo by author.....	77
7. 1: Graph done by the author and showing the stakeholders in the area of Raml el Ali and their achievements.....	105
7. 2: Taken from Parker and Maynard (2015) and modified by the authors to show the characteristics of area-based approach in the area of Raml el Ali.....	115

TABLES

Table

a: retrieved by the author showing the criteria for urban livability at the household/apartment scale and neighborhood scale. Reference Mohit & Iyanda (2015), Dagher & Samaha (2016).	17
b: showing the results of the spatial analysis method.....	61
c: retrieved from the interviews done by the author showing the monthly financial support given to each group of dwellers.....	84
d: retrieved by the author showing the comparative expenditure value of the interviewed different group of dwellers.	88
e: retrieved by the author showing the rental value.....	88
f: done by the author and showing the advantages and the risks of informality in the area of Raml el Ali. Reference: NRC, 2021.....	100
g: retrieved by the author and showing the stakeholder characteristics, impact and influence to the over densification of the area of Raml el Ali.....	107

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Thesis Topic:

Like many cities around the world, Beirut experienced rapid urbanization as of the 1950s. This urbanization was accompanied by the development of numerous informal settlements in the peripheries of the city (Fawaz and Peillen 2002). By informal settlements, I point to neighborhoods where building development violates one or several of the property, zoning, and/or building regulations (Fawaz 2013). Among the residents of Beirut's informal settlements were numerous displaced populations from Lebanon and beyond. There were first rural migrants fleeing poverty and the repeated Israeli invasions in South Lebanon as of the fifties. Other groups were displaced during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990). There were also foreign migrant workers and refugees (e.g., Palestinian, Kurdish, Iraqi, Syrians). Today, most of Beirut's informal settlements are located in the southern suburbs of the city, a collection of towns engulfed in the capital city's urbanization and known as "Dahiya" (Harb 2003).

Since 2011, Lebanon has received very large flows of Syrian refugees, estimated at about 1.5 million individuals if one includes unregistered individuals (UNHCR, 2020). In cities, informal settlements and refugee camps have been the main spaces housing these incoming refugees in Lebanon. There, refugees have found shelter through housing rental markets where landlords have contributed to the expansion of the affordable housing stock, thus increasing the density of camps and informal settlements (Fawaz 2016, Yassine et al. 2019). Such supply accommodates the needs of

newcomers, yet it creates overcrowded neighborhoods and adds to the decaying physical conditions of existing buildings. None of the governing actors were able to control this growth or even support it, resulting in a poor living environment and difficult living conditions (Fawaz, 2016).

Raml al-Ali is an informal settlement located in the southern suburb of Beirut, within the Municipality of Bourj el Barajneh in Dahiya (fig. 1.1). The neighborhood developed since the 1960s as a result of conflicts over property rights that encouraged a number of users to occupy the district (Khayat, 2008). Since then, the neighborhood has grown to be a dense residential district with multi-story apartment buildings and homes. The arrival of Syrian refugees into this neighborhood introduced lasting transformations in the physical organization and everyday life of the neighborhood. Residents who were able to circumvent regulations have expanded the number of housing units by adding spaces or subdividing existing ones. Others have recovered make-shift structures as well as half-developed or abandoned structures that they rent out to refugees. This arrangement answers to the need for affordable housing. Yet, it does not secure a minimum standard of livability and safety. Thus, the new inhabitants have introduced to the neighborhood a community that is poorer, more vulnerable, and with weaker social networks than original residents. These new residents rent out housing accommodations from Lebanese landlords who receive a substantial income from the rents.



Figure 1.1: Map of Beirut and the Southern Suburbs (2003), highlighting the neighborhood of Raml el Ali.

B. Research Scope

The research seeks to document the mechanisms of incremental building development (e.g., adding floors, subdividing apartments, make-shift use of abandoned building) and the processes of housing acquisition (e.g., rent, buy) that respond to population displacement. In addition, this research aims to study the impact of this densification on urban livability in order to assess the extent to which these mechanisms offer viable modalities that refugee responses can learn from. The thesis further seeks to correlate the implication of national status (Lebanese/ non-Lebanese) and the modes of tenancy (Owner/Landlords) on the livability conditions of the household in order to assess the impact of these factors on generating vulnerability for specific population groups. Nationality and modes on tenancy become variables that could lead to policy recommendations if they are found to affect housing conditions.

The thesis raises two sets of questions, both explored in the neighborhood of Raml el Ali. The first set of questions aims to document the spatial transformations of the neighborhood spaces over the past decade, focusing particularly on the mechanisms of incremental residential building development. It specifically documents the impacts of increasing building densification on urban livability in order to assess whether the incremental mechanisms of residential development can inform refugee responses. The thesis looks at these questions at the scale of the neighborhood and the apartment. At the scale of the neighborhood, it explores the increasing density, street safety, and access to shared spaces. At the scale of the household/apartment, the thesis explores livability conditions for refugees and Lebanese households, including tenure security and spatial conditions.

The second set of questions analyzes access to shelter for Syrian refugees and assesses differences in living conditions between the different groups who now share the neighborhoods of Raml al Ali (i.e., Lebanese renters, Syrian renters, migrant workers, landlords, resident-owners). The thesis asks whether livability conditions are correlated with two factors: nationality (i.e., refugee status/ residency status) and mode of tenancy (i.e., landlord/ tenant)? In a context where the presence of refugees and migrant workers is increasingly criminalized through public policy (Saghieh, 2016), it is important to investigate how public policies are correlated with poor living conditions.

C. Argument and Significance:

The thesis shows that the influx of the refugees to the neighborhood of Raml el Ali increased the density in the area and added more pressure on the neighborhood's infrastructure. The thesis shows that the consequent impacts on urban livability have been severely negative for all dwellers, particularly in the quality of home, access to public space, and levels of privacy. However, the thesis shows that these impacts differ in intensity across areas within the neighborhood. The areas most affected by this increased densification are mainly located along the main artery and the alleyways. In these areas, homes are losing privacy and becoming an integral element of the street. These areas are mostly occupied by refugees who rent out apartments from landlords who typically live in better areas. Conversely, the neighborhood's internal areas have protected their privacy, albeit sometimes at the expense of access to sunlight and ventilation and/or the quality of public spaces. These differences indicate that living conditions for tenants in the neighborhood have become significantly worse than those of landlords.

The thesis further shows that renters are unable to use public or privately held open spaces due to a number of powerful Lebanese landlords who control access to these spaces and secure them for their individual uses. These landlords dominate and encroach on public and shared areas to either build individual entrances and separate their houses from those of renters or as private parking and/or private gathering spaces dedicated to their personal uses.

This thesis is significant in informing the differences in living conditions of the different groups who now share the neighborhoods (i.e., Lebanese renters, Syrian renters, migrant workers, landlords, resident-owners) in Raml al Ali. It argues that livability conditions differ considerably according to two factors: mode of tenancy (i.e., landlord/ tenant) and nationality (i.e., refugee status/ residency status). The mode of tenancy considerably influences living conditions, with tenants living in denser urban area, with lower quality houses, poorer privacy and accessibility. Conversely, landlords as a group have a better quality of life in the neighborhood. Nationality also determines vulnerability, with non-Lebanese tenants suffering from easy eviction and household overcrowding. This makes Syrian renters' living conditions inferior to those of Syrian renters.

This research is significant since its findings help frame a set of planning recommendations that address the major challenges that face the residents of the neighborhood of Raml el Ali, and possibly derive lessons for others in Beirut. The thesis proposes to develop an area-based approach for the studied neighborhood as its main recommendation, adapting planning tools that can bank on the advantages of informality while mitigating its disadvantages. Hence, the thesis hopes to serve as a reference for policy makers and humanitarian agencies facing similar crises.

D. Methodology:

This study is divided into two parts. The first part is based on the documentation of the mechanisms of incremental building development in the area of Raml el Ali in order to study the impacts of the refugee crisis in densifying the area and profile the urban livability at the neighborhood scale. The second part compares the effects of high density on the living conditions of three groups of dwellers (Lebanese landlords, Syrian and Lebanese tenants) in order to compare the conditions in which each of these groups dwells. It looks at both their access to public space and the quality of their private spaces.

First, in order to document the processes of incremental building development that respond to population displacement and through which the neighborhood is expanding, I selected and fully mapped a representative block in the neighborhood.



Figure 1.2: Selected block, research case study. The block runs along the Ein el Delbe street

Which is a main road in the Raml el Ali area.

The block (fig. 1.2) falls along the Ein el Delbe Street, which is a main road in the Raml el Ali area, and between two narrow streets of Bourj el Brajneh. The main road of Ein el Delbe is connected directly to the old airport road. I selected this block because it houses many refugees. My selection relied on my knowledge of the area.

Second, in order to investigate the different effects of neighborhood densification on refugees and Lebanese families, I conducted a survey measuring the quality and livability of both the urban fabric and the houses. I compared households along two lines: class and nationality. The criteria of landlord/homeowner and tenant was taken to reflect different social classes while nationality (Syrian/Lebanese) reflected status (refugee/citizen). Given that there are no Syrian landlords in my case study, I compare three groups of neighborhood dwellers: Lebanese owners, Lebanese tenants, and Syrian refugee tenants.

1. Data Collection and analysis:

In order to profile the neighborhood, I relied on primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources included relevant scholarly work such as thesis work conducted by students in the MUPP/MUD program and newspaper archives. In addition, I built on my familiarity with the neighborhood, having visited it frequently over the course of four years (2016-2020).

While the literature is fully developed in chapter II, the methodology entry points derived from this literature are outlined below:

1. In order to evaluate the impacts of refugee influx on living conditions within private and public shared spaces for Syrian refugees and Lebanese households, I divided

the block into three parts, in correlation to the street, since each part represents a space with different spatial conditions:

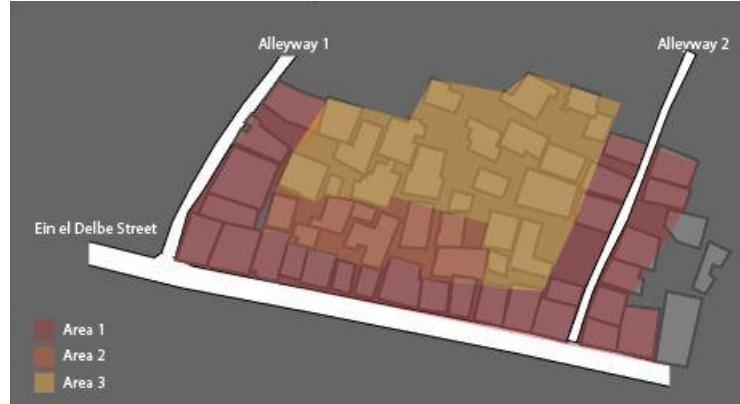


Figure 1.3: Map showing the division of the selected area in Raml el ali

Area one represents the set of buildings that are immediately facing the street of Ein el Delbe or the two alleyways that exist on the two sides of the block. Area two corresponds to the sum of buildings that are furthest away from the main street and its alleyways. Finally, area three representing a buffered zone which is separated from the street networks.

The neighborhood consists of 55 buildings located between one main street (Ein el Delbe street) and two alleyways. I documented through observation the multitude of forms in which the buildings expanded. I mapped (i) private extensions and rearrangements and (ii) rearrangements of shared/public spaces, including trespasses. I also documented the details of the block to be used as a way to analyze the transformation of the urban fabric and assess its implication. In addition, I mapped the different types of streets and corridors (main street, alleyways, and pedestrian corridors), and land-uses throughout the neighborhood. I did not fully study public

space and the practices. Instead, I focused on the shared spaces whether public or private spaces to study the continuity which affects livability and the tactics that are used to claim these spaces.

2. In order to assess the quality of the housing units and the livelihood of its dwellers, I conducted a survey in April 2021 covering 80 households selected among the different dweller groups in the area (20 interviewed Lebanese renters, 40 interviewed Syrian tenants, and 20 interviewed landlords). The selection of households in this survey varies around the block to include households from the three divided section of the block (zone 1 is facing the street, zone 2 is located in the middle, and zone 3 is inside the block). The questionnaire adopts the criteria articulated in the literature review. It is based on material concerns, social, environmental factors, and security. This allowed me to measure the quality and livability among the different types of households. Building on personal familiarity with the study area, I have come to know some of its residents, this allowed me to specify the type of occupancy in some units and the nationalities of the users with the help of a grocery store owner.

My original plan was to develop a sample based on targeted cluster but the pandemic prevented me from systematic recruitment. Instead, I left fliers in building entrances where I invited people to send me a whatsapp message if they are willing to respond to my questions. I have agreed with the local grocery store owner to leave a form in his store where people can leave me their numbers so I can call them back. I paid the grocery store owner a small compensation for the help in inviting people to join, but I made sure that none of the respondents was pressured before I asked them any other question. When people left their numbers, I called them back to schedule an

appointment. If they agreed, I scheduled an official appointment for a 20-minute phone interview.

E. Thesis Outline:

Following this introduction, chapter two covers the literature review that informed this thesis work. The chapter is framed and conceptualized in relation to urbanization of the population displacement, and urban livability. In chapter three, I profile the area of Raml el Ali as my case study, describing the urban history and land tenure, the socio-political context, urban services and planning policies, in addition to the urban morphology. The fourth chapter profiles the urban livability of the neighborhood of Raml el Ali in order to study the impacts of the densification after the refugee crisis. In the fifth chapter, I profile the urban livability at the household scale of Raml el Ali to measure the quality and livability among the different types of households (Lebanese tenants, Syrian tenants, and landlords). The sixth chapter covers the cost of housing and the incidence of these costs on household's income. Finally, in the last chapter, I conclude the thesis with a set of planning recommendations to address the major challenges that face the residents in the area of Raml el Ali. I also propose planning tools that accommodate the advantages and disadvantages of informality.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review covers two themes that helped me conceptualize the research approach: (i) The urbanization of the population displacement, (ii) Urban livability.

A. Urbanization of Population Displacement:

A quick look at the literature on cities shows that more than 50% of the world's populations reside in cities today. This percentage is projected to rise to over 70% by 2050 (Zhang, 2017). In addition, informal settlements are believed to provide housing for almost half of the world's population (Adeyemi, 2018). Almost half of the refugees in the world resides in cities (Zhang, 2017). Refugees in urban and peri-urban areas are sharing the same spaces with the local vulnerable populations, in informal settlements or in camps.

Due to the growing population, the formal real estate market has been unable to satisfy housing needs, especially in developing countries (Adeyemi, 2018). In some cases, if it satisfies the needs, it will not be affordable to low-income city-dwellers, especially that the public sector in most developing countries does not contribute to housing provision (Adeyemi, 2018). Housing policies are limited and do not provide access to affordable housing. Therefore, poor people settle in areas that provide shelter at affordable prices, often the informal settlements that can be either in urban areas or in their peripheries and lack the standard level of livability and safety. However, not all

informal settlement dwellers are poor (Adeyemi, 2018). There are indeed differences in the conditions of living of different groups in informal settlements, particularly along the lines of landlords and tenants (Fawaz et al. 2014).

In many cases, scholars have found that a city's ability to absorb refugees is related to the flexibility of the informal real estate market and its ability to respond to the increased demand on affordable housing (Fawaz, 2016). This is because the modalities of "self-help" or "spontaneous housing" allow for the adaptation of existing shelters to the needs of low-income city inhabitants (Fawaz, 2016). Although this ability to house refugees may be celebrated as an indicator of urban resilience, there is room for concern that the conditions in which refugees settle and the general outlook of districts is further deteriorating. Thus, a study conducted in the district of Nabaa in 2014 indicated that a predatory relationship had emerged between property owners and tenants in large urban area in Lebanon (UNHCR, 2014). The renters, especially Syrian displaced families and individuals, are in precarious conditions and subject to forced eviction due to the landlords' powerful position. With an often legally contested residency status and no work permits, they are vulnerable to violence and verbal harassment (Fawaz et al, 2019). In addition, the Nabaa study found that the clear advantage Lebanese landlords have over Syrian refugees (e.g., information, networks, and the credible threat of force), and the significant profit that are able to get out of their powerful position rendered them reluctant to accept any form of regulation that would undermine their influence (UNHCR, 2014). This emphasis on the idea that will be further demonstrated if one's livability conditions are affected by nationality or not, and the reason being if someone's presence is precarious. Conversely, Al-Harithy, Yassine and Boano (2019) found that the influx of refugees in Ouzai had brought life back to the

districts. While they also found that refugees were more vulnerable, their findings highlighted more hopeful dynamics for the cohabitation of refugees and host community members.

My observations as a regular visitor to Raml el Ali showed that refugees cohabitated in difficult conditions in this district. The neighborhood responded to the influx of Syrian refugees to Lebanon in 2011 by expanding its rental market. It is worth noting however that conditions changed since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, as the general impoverishment that followed the ongoing financial and economic meltdown since 2019 has meant that refugees are increasingly unable to pay rent and that landlords are showing more patience.

How has the neighborhood expanded? Most incremental building development in the area of Raml el Ali happened during and after the Israel's 2006 war on Lebanon and led to increasing the density of the area as a quick response to accommodate the needs of the newcomers. There was also a window in 2008 when informal settlers were allowed to add spaces through political pressure (Fawaz 2013).

Incremental developments in informal settlements often lead to high densities, overcrowding, and congestion that affect negatively living conditions. These can cause severe health concerns, as in the COVID crisis (Corburn et al., 2020). These high densities, in turn, reduce the livability of the neighborhoods, given high density, and the inadequate access to services and infrastructure (Adeyemi, 2018). Thus, incremental additions will also increase the density of the area, causing more deterioration in the built fabric and the infrastructure. As such, population increase triggers deterioration in the living conditions of the neighborhood.

To better understand the conditions of livelihoods in informal settlements, we should better understand the various approaches for studying and assessing urban livability across different social groups in these areas.

B. Urban livability:

The word “livable” means a space that is fit for living. Livability is related to the well-being or quality of life that is provided by a physical space (Iyanda, 2015). According to Amartya Sen (Rice, 2012), well-being is related to the person’s ability to function within a society. In turn, this is translated into four categories of indicators or factors that are: (i) material concerns (income), (ii) social concerns (children education, healthcare), (iii) environmental factors (density, water, air quality), and (iv) security (safety of life and properties, security services) (Rice, 2012). Thus, “well-being” is seen as a measure of the person’s or groups socio-economic position within society. Urban livability indicators are generally developed to study existing conditions in a certain area and measure dwellers’ existing situation against the standards they should match.

Housing is one key area where livability is studied in the city. Housing as a main urban livability indicator is usually measured in relation to accessibility (e.g., affordability), tenure security (e.g., threat of eviction), social conditions (e.g., segregation, density of social networks), housing quality, environmental factors, and safe and secure urban context (Iyanda, 2015).

To illustrate the well-being of persons and to study existing conditions and urban livability in the area of Raml, I take the case of the indicators used to measure livability in the public low-income housing estates in the Niger state of Nigeria. The

study relied on six grouped categories as indicators or dimensions of livability (Mohit & Iyanda, 2015): socio-economic characteristics (urban ecosystem services), social interaction (social networks), housing characteristics (unit size and division), economic vitality (income), safety situation (safety of life and property), and neighborhood facilities (urban services).

The access to shared spaces helps in understanding the ways in which the dwellers use the shared spaces of their neighborhood, their daily trajectories and commutes, identifying the areas of conflict or the practical agreements and arrangements they deploy (Dagher & Samaha, 2016).

Due to scarcity of space and high population densities, spaces in the neighborhood are prone to conflicts. They are constantly produced and reshaped in order to accommodate the versatility of functions that need to be served. For this reason, the boundaries between public/private, sidewalks/ streets, and inside/outside are often shifting and elastic (Dagher & Samaha, 2016). Livability can be substantially impacted by access to shared spaces.

Table A lists the indicators I'll be using to assess livability:

Criteria for urban livability at the household/apartment scale and neighborhood scale

Indicators	Characteristics			
Socio-economic characteristics	Density	Pollution (air and water quality, noise)		
Social interaction	Segregation	Density of social network		
Housing characteristics	Unit size	Unit division		
Economic vitality	Monthly income	Public transportation	Accessibility	
Neighborhood facilities	Urban services	Children education services	Access to healthcare	Garbage collection
Safety situation	Safety of life	Safety of property	Availability of security services	
Access and use of shared spaces	streetscapes	Parking spaces	Playground for kids	

Table a: Retrieved by the author showing the criteria for urban livability at the household/apartment scale and neighborhood scale. Reference Mohit & Iyanda (2015), Dagher & Samaha (2016).

Urban livability indicators can be used to assess the existing living conditions and the level of satisfaction or well-being among different groups sharing a particular residential area. Thus, these indicators help in understanding how residents perceive their living environment, and to acknowledge the factors that influence their level of well-being. In my thesis, I will research further ways to assess urban livability in contexts of informal settlements experiencing the influx of refugees.

CHAPTER III

CASE STUDY: RAML EL ALI

In order to conduct my research, I took for case study the neighborhood of Raml el Ali. This chapter begins by profiling the neighborhood of Raml el Ali in the city and providing a thorough description of its formation. The chapter also describes the social and political structures and profile the actors that are directly or indirectly influencing the neighborhood life. The chapter then covers the current situation of the infrastructure and urban services in the areas, and it sheds light on the quality of life in the area. Zooming in on a single cluster study, the chapter presents the urban morphology of the specified cluster as part of the methodology adopted in the thesis. The chapter concludes by profiling economic activities to highlight the importance of the neighborhood to its surrounding.

A. Location and History of Raml el Ali:

The neighborhood of Raml el Ali falls within the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Bourj el-Barajneh. As its name in Arabic indicates, the neighborhood of Raml el Ali developed historically on the sand dunes of Bourj el Barajneh, on the upper hills that once overlooked nearby villages. In Arabic, the word “Raml” stands for “sand”. Historically, the urbanization of this area dates back to the late 1950s, when less than 50 homes were scattered across its sand dunes (Khayat, 2008). Later, the neighborhood experienced rapid development during the years of civil war as the number of the inhabitants increased (Khayat, 2008; Charafeddine 1985).



Figure 3. 1: Satelite view of Raml el Ali retrived from Google Map 2020.

This neighborhood is built on a mixture of public (popularly referred to as mashaa) and private lands (Khayat, 2008). The dwellers of the neighborhood refer to the area as Burj Barajneh despite the fact that the area is popularly known as Raml or Raml al Ali. The area is bounded by the main road that leads to the airport to the west, the Burj el Barajneh Palestinian camp to the right, Ain el Sekke to the east, and the Cocodi to the south (Fig. 3.2). With time, the neighborhood had exhausted all the available horizontal expansion and developed vertically.



Figure 3.2: Map taken from Khayat thesis (2008) showing the boundaries of the area (this map need to be updated).

Figure 3.3: Map taken from Khayat thesis (2008) representing the development of the neighborhood from 1950's till 1970's.

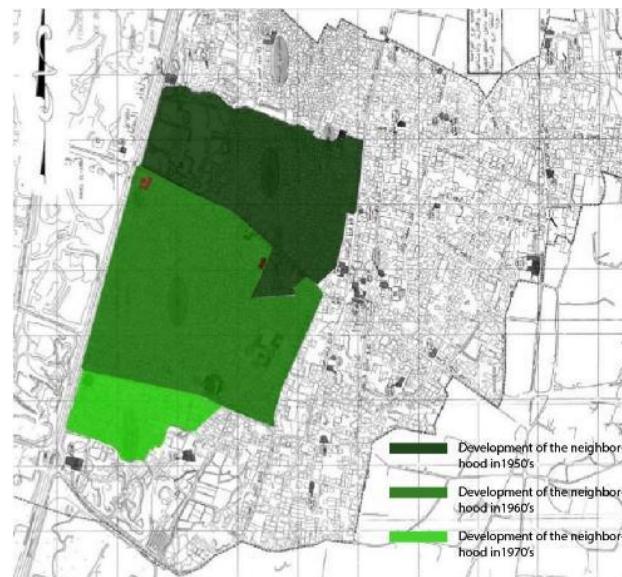


Figure 3.4: Map taken from Khayat thesis (2008) showing the administrative boundaries of Raml al Ali.

B. Urban History and Land Tenure:

Sources indicate that conflicts over property rights in the neighborhood of Raml el Ali started with the establishment of a land registry in Lebanon during the French Mandate period (1919-1942). Local narratives report that at the time, communal lands were transformed either into public land to private property (Bazzi, 1982). In later decades, the neighborhood was parceled and allocated to notables in Bourj Barajneh (Bazzi, 1982). Over time, conflicting claims over property generated by an irregular process of property registration encouraged the de-facto occupation of the sand dunes. As a result, property deeds show that some plots of land are owned by multiple claimants in shares. The property records were further complicated when rural migrant families purchased shares in large lots in the neighborhood from local claim holders

without obtaining legal deeds to the purchased land (Bazzi, 1982). To date, the property records of the area report conflicting claims and blurred ownership patterns.

The process of building development was equally problematic. Since early comers had bought shares in large un-subdivided lots, it was impossible to locate the actual size or location of their properties on the lots (Khayat, 2008). As a result, these residents relied on informal processes to delineate the boundaries of their lots. Furthermore, these and later rural migrants had to develop their houses in violation of building regulations, and hence in defiance of the police, since legal processes prevented them from obtaining official permits without appropriate property records. Poverty and the need to build fast in order to hide from the police meant that they built houses without foundations, incrementally, sometimes reaching several floors without sufficient structural support. They built houses either to live in or to rent to relatives and others who moved later. Much of the building occurred during the years of Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) and its immediate aftermath (through 1993). In addition, a building flurry occurred in 2008, when an informal authorization to build over a few weeks encouraged a rapid and haphazard development. The process of incremental building development has however become harder to implement since the neighborhood density has risen sharply over the past decades and policing illegal construction has become more severe, especially after the arrival of Syrian refugees.

Today, the neighborhood buildings and land property records reflect this process of growth. Property boundaries are ill defined, property claims conflicting, and those who claim ownership, live and/or rent in the neighborhood, cannot demonstrate the legal validity of their claims.

As for residents, earlier studies have shown that the early residents of Raml were mostly Shi'a households from Baalbeck (Charafeddine 1991). This pattern of inhabitance however changed during the civil war years when many Shi'a families from the south and from Jbeil relocated to the neighborhood (Khayat, 2008). Also, due to sectarian violence, Shi'a families moved from Christian areas (e.g., Antelias, Burj Hammoud) and relocated to Raml. These families constructed housing units next to their relatives and people from their village. As a consequence, the neighborhood became organized in sub-areas along kinship and geographic origins. For example, Hay al Mawla carries the name of members of the Mawla families who originally settled in the neighborhood.

C. Urban Politics:

Because the structure of political governance in Lebanon does not facilitate the transfer of voting rights to the area of residence (Khayat, 2008), most Raml al Ali dwellers cannot vote for the municipality supervising their neighborhoods and have no possibility of being represented officially at the local level. However, the fact that most residents are from the Biqa' or South Lebanon, where the same political parties control territories means that residents rely in their representation on networks linking them to the two dominant Muslim Shia parties, Amal and Hezbollah, who control also the district. Indeed, these two political parties have imposed themselves as representatives of the dwellers and mediators with public agencies and other political factions inside/outside the state to secure urban and social services for these districts (Harb, 2003). In addition, Hezbollah controls security in the district. Yet, the oldest and larger families in the area play a key role in its governance (Khayat, 2008). Studies conducted

in the area (Harb, 2003) have shown the links between families and political parties overlap, with parties often selecting their candidates through the influential family networks.

D. Planning Policies:

Since Raml al Ali is an illegal settlement, it was built without following the existing building codes and planning policies. Buildings in Raml consist of an average of four floors located along narrow streets and alleyways (Khayat, 2008). In addition, many houses are built around courtyard spaces which dwellers use as common space to sit together or with the neighbors. Most constructions were one story buildings and were enlarged later on as their sons got married through the additions on top of the first level. In some cases, they added rooms, bathrooms or staircases. In addition, most courtyard spaces which have car access to the street are converted into parking lots for the dwellers, while the other courtyards are kept for pedestrian access (Fig. 3.5 & 3.6).

Despite the fact that the construction of the incremental additions is related to social and political networks of the dwellers, these constructions are also related to the economic structure of these families (Fig. 3.7). Based on daily observation and interactions with some dwellers, findings revealed some cases where these incremental additions are constructed by one of the sons, who have higher income and savings, so that others (sons with low income) cannot profit from these additions for housing or rental purposes.



Figure 3.5: Aerial photograph, 1967 courtesy of the Lebanese Army.



Figure 3.6: Aerial photograph, 1991 courtesy of the Lebanese Army.



Figure 3. 7: Map retrieved from Google Maps (2020), highlighted by the author to show a sample of the parallel main roads' networks network inside the neighborhood.

E. Infrastructure and Urban Services:

Most the main roads of the neighborhood are parallel to each other so that they barely intersect (Fig. 3.5). The streets between the main roads are narrow and mostly function as alleyways. In addition, Raml al Ali lacks infrastructure services and suffers from having a poor infrastructure (Fig. 3.8). Roads are unplanned and poorly paved (Fig. 3.9) and the sides of the roads are used for parking if it does not block vehicular access. Moreover, the size and maintenance of the sewage systems is insufficient, leading to frequent overflow (Fig. 3.8 and 3.9). The dwellers rely on self-help and political networks to acquire minimum urban services (Khayat, 2008).

Electricity and water provision have been irregular throughout the neighborhood (Fig. 3.10). There are four different ways of accessing electricity in the neighborhood. Residents may access electricity through regular meters, circuit breakers, illegal hook-ups and/or by purchasing electricity from private retailer (generators) (Khayat, 2008). In the case of the water provision, there are two sources of drinking water. The majority of neighborhood residents buy their potable water from private retailers and a few

residents obtain their potable water free of charge from the Hizballah tanks dispersed around the neighborhood (Khayat, 2008). In addition, some residents obtain their free water from their water wells.

These urban services should be provided by the municipality, since this neighborhood falls under the jurisdiction of Bourj Barajneh municipality which is responsible for any work that has public character within its boundaries. However, Lebanese regulations also prevent the Municipality from providing services when construction and/or property access is illegal. This justifies the neglect of the Municipality but conversely encourage residents to rely on ad-hoc measures and illegal hook-ups.



*Figure 3. 8: Picture showing a sample of the incremental additions in Raml el Ali, photo taken by the author (2020).
Figure 3. 2: Picture showing a courtyard in Raml el Ali converted into a parking lot for dwellers, photo taken by the author (2020).*

Figure 3.10: Picture showing one of the pedestrian courtyards in the area of Raml el Ali, photo taken by the author (2020).

F. Livability:

The process of incremental development densified the neighborhood over the past decades. The implemented illegal constructions are built randomly without considering the proper building codes (Fig. 3.11 and 3.12). Adding floors in buildings located around narrow streets and alleyways has prevented the dwellers from receiving the needed air and sunlight, especially for the first two floors. This leads to poor livability standards, aggravated by pollution created by vehicles and electric generators. In some cases, the added floors were built to have the external wall of the buildings extruded. This prevented the access of sunlight onto the street. All of these practices are used to increase internal space and maximize profit, without taking into consideration the living conditions for the dwellers. This poor livability standards will be further investigated in the thesis.



Figure 3.11: Picture showing the poor infrastructure services in the neighborhood, photo taken by the author (2020).

Figure 3.12: Picture showing the poor paved roads, and the poor sewage systems of the area of Raml el Ali.



Figure 3.13: Pictures showing irregular electricity provision throughout the neighborhood, photos taken by the author (2020).

G. Cluster Study (Urban Morphology):

1. Street pattern:

Since most the main roads of the neighborhood are parallel to each other, they barely intersect. The streets between the main roads are narrow and mostly function as alleyways. The neighborhood falls along Ein el Delbe Street, which is a main road in the Raml el Ali area, and between two narrow streets of Bourj el Brajneh. The main road of Ein el Delbe is connected directly to the old airport road. It is hence a major street that leads to many other areas.

The inner urban fabric is a complex web of narrow streets. While they are accessible by car, these streets mostly function as alleyways. There are no sidewalks. Instead, the edges of the roads are used for parking, whenever it is possible to park a car without blocking vehicular access. Since the “acceptable” width to be left is negotiated rather than a clear rule, this parking becomes the subject of many fights among residents and their visitors (Fig. 3,14). The pedestrian paths are defined and maintained by

dwellers, especially that some buildings don't have vehicular access. Access to these pathways is mainly secured from the side of the Ein el Delbe Street (main road). The pathways create a connection between buildings and sometimes serve as shortcuts for dwellers within the neighborhood. It is noteworthy that all streets and passages are informally planned by residents, that they do not adopt official standards in their widths and sizes. These streets are poorly paved and suffer from poor infrastructure.



Figure 3.14: Picture showing the sides of one of the alleyways roads, photo taken by the author (2020).

Figure 3. 3: Picture showing a pedestrian path in a dire condition, photo taken by the author (2020).

2. Buildings:

A figure/ground map shows that the area is very dense, with few spaces left for pedestrian passages and open areas. Buildings are contiguous and developed incrementally, it is and sometimes hard to distinguish where one building starts and another ends. Finishes are also very poor: some buildings aren't plastered nor painted, and many buildings count an incomplete floor on their roofs (Fig. 3.16). Some apartments' windows are covered with plastic shields or wooden boards instead of actual windows. This incremental nature reflects the ability of the area to respond to the demand for additional housing needs. Thus, the influx of Syrian refugees has

encouraged a wave of new constructions, including the completion of floors or additional rooms (Fig.3.16).



Figure 3. 16: Pictures showing the plastered, cladded, and incomplete buildings, photos taken by the author (2020).

3. Building conditions:

In this cluster, most the dwelling construction occurs through process of self-help or self-management. Most of the times, houses are adjacent to one another, and even the pedestrian paths are defined and maintained by dwellers. They lack building permits and do not comply with official building regulations and standards. A large number of buildings suffer from bad quality conditions due to the incremental developments of additional floors without following the proper building process of construction and regulation.

According to the dwellers, it is important to build the first structure, such as a house, a fence, or any other development, as soon as possible. By doing this, people can demonstrate occupation and control over the land. Some of the dwelling structures are made first of light materials, sometimes re-used from another house, easy to assemble and disassemble (Fig. 3,17). Such dwellings are temporary. They can be eventually upgraded and become suitable for living. This reveals the cause of many developments

and structures that are still under construction for a long period of time. Nevertheless, new developments have become harder to implement since the neighborhood density has risen sharply over the past decades and policing illegal construction has become more severe.



Figure 3. 4: Pictures showing some structures with light and re-used materials, photos taken by the author (2020).

4. Infrastructure:

In the absence of the implementation of an advanced infrastructure model, the existing network (roads and utilities) can't cope with the new densification that have a negative impact on development. At the same time, the changed environmental conditions also have negative impact on the settlers. The unplanned housing added enormous pressure on the existing municipal infrastructure and the environment (Fig. 3.18). Water and sewerage systems and solid waste disposal cannot cope with the increased population density and poor sanitation behavior of the inhabitants.



Figure 3. 18: Pictures showing the poor and exposed infrastructure, photos taken by the author (2020).

H. Economic Activity:

1. Commerce & Services:

The neighborhood contains a vibrant local economy that serves the local population. It is therefore possible for residents to find everything they need in the area. This includes groceries and everyday small repair stores. The two alleyways form a small business strip that include supermarkets, mini-cafés, small industries, hairdressers, barbershops, and clothing shops. The commercial streets are highly active on weekdays, especially the main road that leads to several nearby areas.

Commercial facilities targeting city dwellers from outside the area are mostly located along the main roads. They align along the streets as a strip retail business street. Most of the workshops are car-repair businesses. Shops include car parts sales and car repairs, and further include everyday groceries, fruit and vegetable sales, as well as barbershops, mobile shops, and private clinics. Furthermore, there are some cafes, restaurants and bakeries in the area along the street (Fig. 3.19).



Figure 3. 19: Pictures showing Ein el Delbe main road and one narrow streets of Bourj el Brajneh which function as business strips for the area of Raml el Ali, photos taken by the author (2020).

2. *Socio-spatial conditions:*

Living conditions in the neighborhood are dire. The huge number of Syrian refugees increased the demand for housing units and consequently the neighborhood's density. It created more congestion in houses as well as passages. Some refugees settled in unfinished apartments. Others rented apartments in groups and shared the rent expenses. While others tended to live in un-serviced or commercial spaces unplanned for residential purposes. They modified and reproduced some spaces according to their

needs. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that several buildings have remained either under construction or vacant (Fig. 3.20). This was an intriguing finding that I may explore.

My knowledge of the area, as a regular visitor, indicate that many people stay within a close radius of their houses. Women stay at home where they cook, raise the children and smoke nargileh. Kids play in the streets even with little traffic. Youth and men gather in coffeeshops to play cards and smoke nargileh, in addition to socializing in barbershop, when they are waiting for their turn.

Most of the land is used for housing. There can be some plots for small industries and commercial activities. However, there is also another strand of thought that considers the value of the land as a form of financial security, since it can be a source of income at any time. For most inhabitants, land is the only family patrimony.



Figure 3. 20: Pictures showing the incomplete and vacant buildings, photos taken by the author (2020).

I. Cluster accessibility and Interaction:

This block is located along a main road in the Raml el Ali area. Within the block, I was able to identify 8 independent sub-clusters, each of which forming one unit. The clusters form together an irregular grid pattern (Fig. 3.21). Every cluster faces at least one street and access within the cluster can occur either through the main street or from within the cluster. Clusters can be either fully sealed or interconnected through direct openings between the buildings. They are connected either through courtyards and pedestrian pathways, or through parking areas and narrow streets (Fig. 3.22). It is also noteworthy that the sub-clusters along the Ein el Delbe Street form very crowded neighborhood that barely have setbacks between buildings, and, in some cases, two buildings share the same entrance (Fig. 3.23).



Figure 3. 21: Map retrieved by the author (based on observation) showing the eight independent sub-cluster that form the neighborhood.



Figure 3. 22: Pictures showing the pedestrian courtyard and corridor, or parking and narrow streets that connect the buildings, photo taken by the author (2021).



Figure 3. 23: Picture showing the entrances that lead to multiple buildings, photos taken by the author (2021).

In other cases, the clusters are separated by concrete walls that prevent direct interaction between clusters (Fig. 3.24). Nevertheless, these clusters are either connected through door elements that control accessibility from one cluster to another, or through buildings that have access from two different clusters (Fig. 3.25). Thus, this interaction can be seen at the level of inter-cluster porosity.



Figure 3. 24: Pictures showing concrete fences separating sub-clusters, photos taken by the author (2020).



Figure 3. 25: Pictures showing the doors that control accessibility between sub-clusters, photos taken by the author (2021).

CHAPTER IV

URBAN LIVABILITY AT NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE

This chapter profiles the urban livability of the neighborhood of Raml el Ali. It is based on the documentation of the mechanisms of incremental building development in the area in order to study the impacts of the refugee crisis as of 2012 in densifying the area. The chapter shows that the increase in density led to a decline in the quality of outdoor public spaces and the service infrastructure in the area.

In this point of research, I deduce that the physical densification impacts the quality of public spaces as the remaining public spaces in this area don't function like open spaces anymore, and they are appropriated by private owners for the personal use. In addition, this densification is affecting the public-private interface which in turn has an impact on the private space, and the privacy of the dwellers. This introduced three quality of spaces that ranges between the most and the least affected by this increasing densification and are losing privacy.

The chapter is divided in three sections. The first section documents building expansion and ad-hoc additions (the mechanisms of the incremental development in the area). The second section documents the rearrangement of the public and shared spaces in the block, and the third section proposes an evaluation of the public-private interface and its impact on privacy of the dwelling units in this area.

A. Building Expansion and Ad-hoc Additions:

1. Raml el Ali Area:

As outlined in the case study profile, illegal building developments have occurred in Raml el Ali since the 1950s. This development however intensified during the post-civil war era (1975-1990), in its immediate aftermath during the early reconstruction phase (1991-1996) and, more recently, with the influx of Syrian refugees as a result of the war in Syria (2012-2015). In addition, incremental building development in the area of Raml el Ali occurred during and after the Israel's 2006 war on Lebanon and in 2008, when political divisions in the country encouraged a window where informal settlers were allowed to add spaces to their buildings (Fawaz 2013).

As such, the arrival of Syrian refugees into the neighborhood is one episode of among several others that have introduced lasting transformations in the physical organization and everyday life of the neighborhood. Between 2012 and 2015, Lebanon witnessed a huge wave of refugees fleeing violence in Syria. In the absence of a national policy, most of these refugees eventually converged towards urban informal settlements where they have dwelled with low-income city dwellers (Fawaz 2017). In Raml el Ali, residents were enticed to circumvent regulations and expand the number of housing units by adding spaces or subdividing existing ones in order to maximize profit by renting out homes to refugees. Others have recovered make-shift buildings, half-developed structures, and abandoned structures that they rent out to refugees. This arrangement answers to the need for affordable housing of the refugee and often provides a direly needed income for Lebanese households. Yet, it does not provide the level of livability and safety that must be secured for healthy living, as I will show below.

2. Methodology: Selected Block in Raml el Ali:

In order to study the impacts of the refugee influx into the neighborhood, I have selected and mapped an area in Raml el Ali, the Ein el Delbe street, which presents a major traffic artery with human activities at the ground level, including commercial facilities attracting clients from within and outside the area (e.g., car repair businesses, groceries, private clinics, cafes, restaurants and bakeries). On this artery, I analyzed one main block. I selected this area because of the high number of refugees, which helps me document (through observations) the multitude of forms in which the buildings expanded to analyze the transformation of the urban fabric and assess its implication.

The buildings facing the street consist of residential units added incrementally over the ground floor retail, in addition to some business offices and clinics (first floor). These buildings have 1-4 levels. Based on observation, it is clear that the area facing Ein el Delbe Street started as a ground floor retail strip, and later developed and expanded to a mixed-use zone with residential units added incrementally. This area lacks open or left-over spaces. Instead, only narrow corridors separate the buildings. This is because landlords in this area have exploited every piece of land to enlarge their existing units. This is shown in fig. 4,1, where one additional garage was protruded, and additional rooms was built on top of the garage to increase the width of the building and add spaces for rent. Thus, building additions in this area occurred in two ways, either through the use of the public open spaces or through the use of the leftover spaces between the buildings. These additions translate either through expanding the existing buildings, or through developing new ones. This is also the case for the two alleyways located between the main road that form a small business strip.

3. Block Analysis, Building Additions:

The developments in the area facing the Ein el Delbe street started traditionally as people have lived where they worked, where landlords built their housing units above or behind their shops. With time, the live-work model has shrunk. Instead, residents added floors that they could rent out and/or use to accommodate their children. These building additions have caused congestion, air pollution, and poor infrastructure services in this area. These spatial conditions are exacerbated by the fact many of the economic activities at the ground level are polluting small industries such as car repair businesses or carpentries. Consequently, the quality of life has deteriorated and many of the landlords left the area. They rent out their housing units and benefit from the rent to live in better conditions elsewhere. In many cases, these landlords add rooms and floors or subdivide housing units once they leave to maximize the profit from rent. Not all landlords have however left. Those who remained in their homes have also typically either expanded their housing unit or constructed a new building in an open or leftover space next to their existing building to rent out spaces and benefit from the presence of refugees. When they remained in place, most of these landlords have built additional entrances for tenants, protecting hence their privacy but extending the negative externalities of added rents.

This building expansion improved accessibility by introducing separate entrances for the additional floors. However, the separate entrances and staircases are located in the setbacks between the buildings, blocking the last open spaces. In addition, some entrances are added for business use only, and they consist of a staircase directly facing the main street that leads directly to the first level (Fig. 4.1). In some cases, a protruding common entrance joins two buildings and functions as an entrance to both. In other

words, the additional entrances of the buildings facing the street and the alleyways are built in the setbacks between these buildings (Fig. 4.1). While these entrances may have responded to a dire need for access and privacy, they also often generated narrow entrances and blocked passages. Many of these additions indeed obstructed public or private open spaces and instead generate narrow access corridors (pedestrian or car access) between the buildings. These additions, in turn, blocked the open spaces between the building which once secured ventilation, sunlight, and minimal privacy. Hence, they have negatively affected the livelihood in the area and led to a higher crowding level.

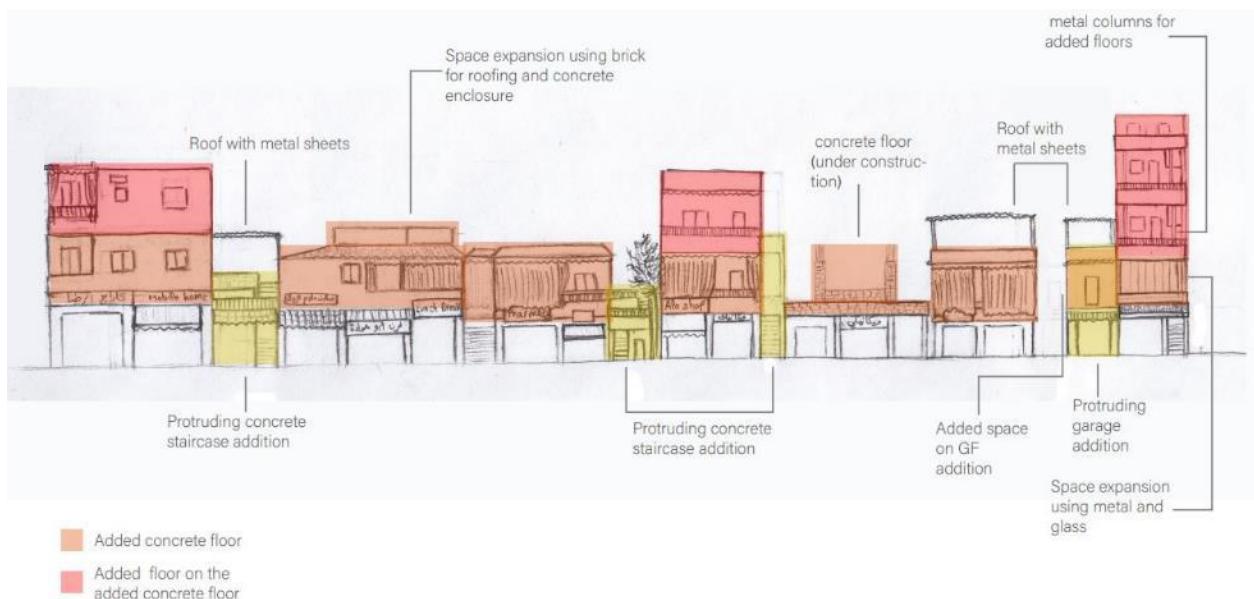


Figure 4. 1: Sketch retrieved by the author showing the incremental additions of some buildings facing the street of Ein el Delbe in Ram el Ali.

a. The multiple forms of building expansions:

i. The strategies of incremental additions:

In this block, the strategies of the additional incremental developments are commonly practiced and shared among the landlords in this area. They either expanded their existing building horizontally, or vertically, or they occupied an open space. All the buildings in this selected block were enlarged and extended vertically, although a few horizontal additions have also occurred (Fig. 4.2 & Fig. 4.3). Most additions were conducted to introduce separate entrances for the added upper floors or for adding rooms that could be rented out. This reflects the possible densification of the neighborhood, which responds to the fact that the ground floors were already fully expanded to respond to earlier demand. This is depicted through the appearance of a remarkable number of buildings that entail a multitude of levels and floors that remain under construction. This is a very common practice and trend for the dwellers of this area to climb at any price on the property ladder with full disregard to the consequences of their strategies on the neighborhood.

In addition to the enlargement of the existing building developments, new buildings were added to the built fabric, occupying the last remaining open spaces. These new buildings are either inserted in the shared spaces or in the leftover private open spaces between pre-existing buildings. Hence, this explains the random dispersion of new building developments in the block's map (Fig. 4.3) where we see small, scattered additions on the entire area.

Based on observation, the mechanisms and strategies of the incremental additions could be recognized around the block. The incremental additions used for buildings expansion consist of five commonly used strategies in this area (Fig.4.2):

- Horizontal extension through using one side of the building
- Horizontal extension through using two sides of the building

- Horizontal and vertical extension through one side of the building
- Horizontal and vertical extension through two sides of the building
- Horizontal and vertical extension through three sides of the building

It is noteworthy that already prior to the expansion, much of the horizontal development had been fully exploited, so landlords had very little space to expand horizontally. Instead, they typically added floors, subdivided rooms, and used available land spaces to introduce new entrances.

Needless to say, these expansions didn't account for the already crumbling infrastructure. As such, they created additional pressure on roads, water services, and electricity. Additional floors and buildings also undermined livability further, whereby most homes no longer receive direct sunlight or cross-ventilation, especially for the first two floors.

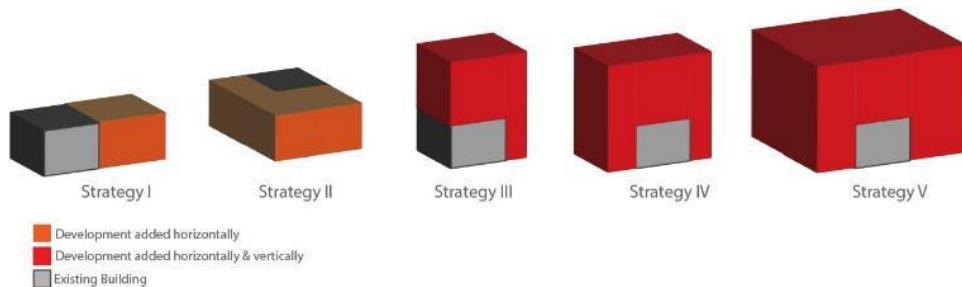


Figure 4. 2: 3D model retrieved by the author showing the used incremental additions strategies for existing building expansion in the selected area of Raml el Ali.



Figure 4. 3: Map retrieved by the author showing the incremental building additions and expansions in the selected area of Raml el Ali.

b. Landlord-renter housing models:

The strategies of the additional incremental developments are commonly practiced and shared among the landlords in this area, and most of these additions are related to landlord-renter housing models that are commonly used by the dwellers of this area.

My field observations showed that landlords adopted multiple approaches to add spaces for rent. Landlords either built another building attached to the pre-existing one to use it for rental purpose (Type A) or built additional floor on top of their housing units to rent them out (Type B). Furthermore, in some cases, landlords divided the additional built floors to be served as housing units for their sons in addition to one or two smaller unit to benefit from their rents (Type C) (Fig.4.4). In a few cases, the landlords left the area altogether and opted to rent out all the building.

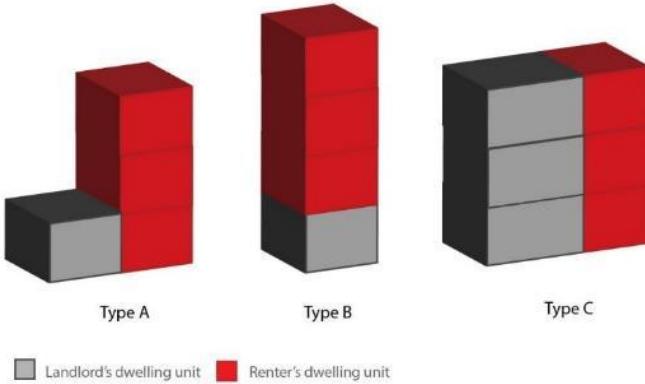


Figure 4. 4: 3D model retrieved by the author showing the different types of landlord-renter building model.

These three different landlord-renter building models reflect the different quality of livelihood for its dwellers, and thus, reveals a hierarchy between landlords who dwell in the area. As mentioned in the case profile, the ability to introduce incremental building additions is related to the social and political networks or capital of each landlord, and thus reflects a certain power and domination. The ability to construct depends also on the economic resources of each household. As seen in figure 4,4 above, Type A allows for a separate access to protect landlords and secure their privacy. These landlords either have a large plot to build new construction, or the social or political power to occupy an adjacent open space where they built new developments. I identified this type of additions on several buildings facing the street of Ein el Delbe. and this created a condensed area when going further away from the street.

Usually, landlords in Type B buildings model have separate access to protect themselves (they have two entrance), but they cannot secure their privacy completely especially that many renters and dwellers share the buildings with them. However, in Type C, landlord and tenant shares the same entrance and dwells next to each other where both groups are not able to secure their privacy. Usually, these landlords have a moderate to low income and rely on the rent for their living. This model is dominant in

the area where the buildings are facing the two alleyways with few developments following type B, in addition to some buildings that are all used for rent.

B. The Rearrangement of the Public/Shared Spaces in the Block:



Figure 4. 5: Map retrieved by the author showing the rearrangement of the public/ shared spaces after the densification.

1. A Methodology to Study Courtyards:

In order to study the impact of the additional developments on the remaining open spaces, and the use of these spaces in this area, I mapped a block and identified all the open spaces. I then studied in detail the uses and functions of each of the spaces to unravel users and users.

2. Open Spaces:

As seen in figure 5 above, the block contains open spaces that are used differently, although they are all controlled privately. As noticed in Fig. 4,5, the studied block still contains a few open spaces. However, most of these spaces are privately “owned” and they are fenced by landlords who seek to limit public access. Fieldwork indicated that these open spaces are not accessible to the renters who are also required to use separate entrances, as pointed above.

I documented block (A), a private major open space, and then I studied the remained public open spaces courtyards in the area as shown in figure 4.5 above.

In order to study how open spaces work, I documented Plot A (see Fig. 4.5), a major private open space in this selected block of Raml el Ali. Lot A is known as “Boura”, which means an empty space that does not have a clearly defined function. (In recent architectural narratives, it is often referred to through the French terminology of Terrain Vague.) This lot was emptied for building redevelopment, but construction has been on hold since 2010. Hence, the lot only has a concrete platform and columns. It is one of many developments and structures that are still under construction for a long period of time, and it is harder to be completed, since policing illegal construction has become more severe, and the municipality is not providing any construction permits to limit the neighborhood density that has risen sharply over the past decades. It is remarkable that despite the dire need for space, the lot is chained, and no one is allowed to use it. Since the property claimant is not a resident of Raml al Ali, he provides the keys to his relative who parks his car in the lot (Fig. 4.6). By doing this, the landlord demonstrates occupation and control over the land lot for the lot to remain in his possession, discouraging any other residents from considering to use it.



Figure 4. 6: Pictures taken by the author showing plot (A) in the selected area in Raml el Ali.

Similar scenarios appeared to also be deployed in all the other open spaces in figure 4.5, meaning that even *terrain vague* or empty lots were unused and closed off. Consequently, the only shared spaces in the entire block documented in figure 4.5 are four pedestrian corridors, four pedestrian courtyards. The other open spaces consist of two courtyards (3) and (4) documented in figure 4.5, monitored by certain dwellers and functions as inner parking for certain residents (courtyards converted to parking for certain the dwellers), and four closed ended streets. In my study I documented these six courtyards in order to analyze the impact of this urban transformation on the remaining open public spaces after the influx of the Syrian refugees to the area.

As noticed in the case profile, the houses are built around courtyard spaces, which dwellers used to use as common spaces to sit together or with neighbors. Based on observations, the pedestrian courtyards one and two (PC1, and PC2) used to be one courtyard, where one building construction occurred later and divided it into two spaces that are linked nowadays by a narrow-tented corridor. Nevertheless, like many other developments that took place in the area, this building has extended horizontally and vertically (Fig 4.7).



Figure 4. 7: Pictures showing the building between courtyard one and two and its expansion.

In order to demonstrate occupation and control over the divided courtyard PC1 and PC2, the dwellers of this building built weak development out of light materials (used concrete blocks, fence) in each courtyard. The first structure in courtyard one is a two-story dwelling structure that is made from re-used concrete blocks, steel structure, and one stair that are not suitable for usage (Fig. 4.7). This structure blocks the access and hence prevents the use of this space by the public. This development is barely used by the dwellers even as a passage since the buildings in this sub cluster are more connected to the alleyway as a main daily passage. This explain why the passage through courtyard one is often monitored, and this what happened while visiting and observing the site. The structure in the second courtyard is a steel structure usually used for fences, and it is used for storage (Fig. 4.7). Based on observation, it is clearly shown

that this structure is built randomly and does not function as storage room or area. Unlike the first one, this structure cannot block the use of this courtyard since it functions as a main passage and a shortcut for the dwellers to the main street of Ein-el-Delbe. However, this courtyard is just used as passage due to the bad odor coming out of the existing municipal infrastructure (sewage system), in addition to the prevention of sunlight access on the courtyard due to the unplanned housing developments and the new densification strategies. Such structures are temporary. They can be eventually upgraded and become suitable for living. This reveals the cause of many developments and structures that are still under construction for a long period of time.

My observations showed that courtyard three has car access and forms the dead end of the closed street. This courtyard is half roofed with metal sheets, where it is used to park the cars that need repair for the benefit of the car repair business shop that exist at the ground level of the building at end of the street (Fig. 4.8). The owner of this shop is the landlord of the building, and by doing this, he can demonstrate occupation and control over the land. Therefore, this courtyard could be a potential area for future development in this area. However, courtyard four just functions as private parking for its sub clustered buildings and does not have any other function and usage.



Figure 4. 8: Picture taken by the author (2021) showing courtyard (3) in the selected area in Raml el Ali.

In the courtyard five and six (PC5, PC6), the added developments have exhausted all the potentialities of these spaces, so that these places just function as passage and served as linkages for the backside building entrances.

In conclusion, the remaining public spaces in this area don't function like shared open spaces. These spaces are fenced, they have limited uses, and they are appropriated by private owners for their personal use. In addition, these spaces form potential areas for some landlords to occupy the land in the future and build extra developments for their own use and benefit, especially that all the wide courtyards (PC1, PC2, PC3, PC4) are dominated and monitored by certain landlords. Hence, they hinder the different groups of dwellers to use and benefit from having some open spaces in this congested neighborhood. Furthermore, the renters are not able to benefit from any public or privately owned open spaces. Thus, these shared spaces are just used as passages because of the occupation and domination of some landlords over the shared spaces. This represents a difference in the livelihood at the urban scale between the different groups of dwellers in this area.

These models of landlord-renter buildings decrease inside the cluster, where most for the incremental additions and developments are built as dwelling units for the family members (siblings, or relatives). Thus, this area is the least condensed among the other areas in the block.

C. The Evaluation of the Public-Private Interface and its Impact on the Privacy of Dwelling Units in this Area:

1. A methodology for evaluating the consequences of density:

In order to study the impact of densification on public space and the public-private interface which in turn has an impact on the private space, especially after the densification of the 2012s that followed the Syrian refugee influx and changed the character of the area, I will adopt and adapt in my study the spatial analyses method that were developed and tested in the Dutch towns Alkmaar and Gouda in 2008. This method is made to measure the relationship between buildings and streets (urban composition). It is a method describing micro scale spatial variables in urban studies aims at defining the inter-relationship of buildings or private spaces and adjacent street segments. Therefore, a micro scale spatial analysis focuses on how dwellings relate to the street network, the way buildings' entrances constitute streets, the degree of topological depth from private space to public space (semi-private or semi-public areas that separate the private space from the public space), and inter-visibility of doors and houses across streets.

According to the methodology developed in this study, the impacts of density on privacy and the ability to separate public and private spaces can be measured based on these criteria's: how dwellings units relate to the street network, the position of the

buildings' entrances according to the streets (depends on how building entrances are connected to a street), the degree of topological depth (topological steps between the street and the private spaces that are counted), and inter-visibility of doors and houses across streets. In sum, the study measures various degree of urban active frontages, their impacts on the relationship between buildings and streets. In order to adapt this method, I divided the block into three parts, each of which represents a space with different spatial conditions.



Figure 4. 9: Map retrieved by the author showing the division of the selected area in Raml el ali.

Area one represents the set of buildings that are immediately facing the street of Ein el Delbeh or the two alleyways that exist on the two sides of the block. Area two corresponds to the sum of buildings that are furthest away from the main street and its alleyways. Finally, area three representing a buffered zone which is separated from the street networks.

2. Criterion 1: Buildings Constituting the Street

The methodology developed in the Alkamaar and Gouda study coins first the notion of “street constitutedness”, illustrating the differences between constituted and un-constituted streets. It is a difference between a building located adjacent to a street

and being permeable from a street or not. If the entrance is hidden behind high fences or hedges, or located on the side of the buildings, then the street is defined to be “unconstitutional” of the street (Van Nes, Lopez, 2008). This criterion helps to gain an understanding of the level of exposure and permeability of the buildings to the street.

Area 1: In Area 1, the large number of buildings have direct access to the street of Ein el Delbeh and the two selected alleyways, and hence constitute street segments. All the other building entrances located on this street have their access through the side or the backside of the buildings. This reveals the high densification of the urban districts on the main routes net.



Figure 4. 10: Map retrieved by the author showing the access of the building in area one.

Area 2: The buildings in this area are not adjacent to a street. These buildings get their access through pedestrian or car access corridors and courtyards that lead to the main street of Ein el Delbe.

Area 3: The streets in this area are closed roads, hence they cannot constitute a street segment. The main routes in the area are frequented by visitors as well as by inhabitants. The high density of entrances connected to the street often contribute its dwellers to street life by sitting outside on a chair or the staircase in front of their homes. From their windows, dwellers keep an eye on what is going on outside. This

implies a high inter-visibility and permeability in the area number one. However, in order to reach a back entrance for a building located adjacent to the street, one has to pass into the semi-public side streets or corridor and thus, less exposure to the public. This means that the dwellers in area one are more exposed to social control and daily monitoring than the people living in area two and three.

3. Criterion 2: Inter-visibility and Density of Entrances:

The study introduces another criterion, inter-visibility, which it defines through the way in which entrances and windows are positioned vis-à-vis each other, and the extent to which these positions influence the probability for social control (Van Nes & Lopez, 2008). Entrances and window facing each other makes the dwelling units visible to each other and thus, the dwellers are exposed to each other and monitored by the surrounding dwelling units and invade the privacy.

Area 1: Along Ein el Delbe street, as seen in the graph below, the adjacent buildings in this area that have a direct access to the street are aligned along the road, and hence not visible to each other. However, in the alleyways, the high density of entrances and the width of the roads led to high level of intervisibility between these entry points, in addition to the windows and openings that are not hidden away from public streets, and the other buildings. Thus, the level of privacy highly decreased in the alleyways compared to Ein el Delbe street.

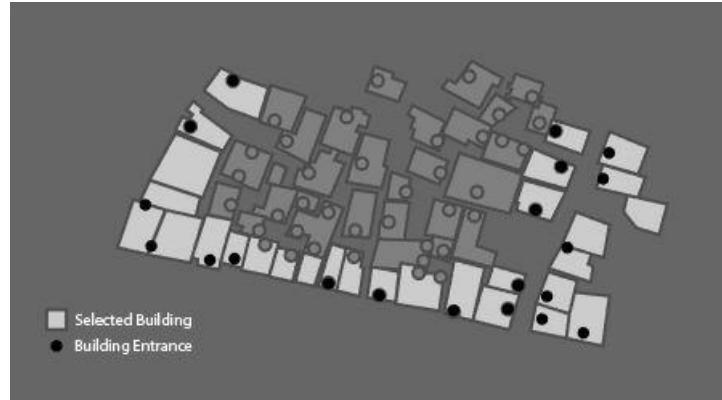


Figure 4. 11: Map retrieved by the author showing the building entrances in area one.

Area 2: Referring to Fig. 4.3 and Fig. 4.12, the map reveals that most the added building were implanted in area 2. This depicts the high densification in this area where the building entrances were implemented and added around courtyard and corridor spaces. Furthermore, some buildings adjacent to the main street (form area 1) have their access from these corridors and courtyards because of their side or backside building entrances. This led to a high density of entrances around these courtyards, so that they become positioned close and facing each other. This indicates a high level of doors inter-visibility.

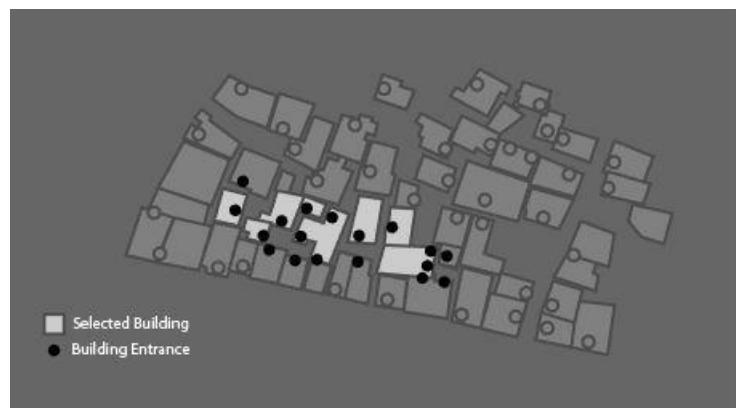


Figure 4. 12: Map retrieved by the author showing the building entrances in area two.

Area 3: The building entrances in this area are located on un-constituted streets of closed roads with high connections to the main routes net and represent a transitional

public to private zone, and hence decreased the percentage of intervisibility of entrances to public street. In addition, since the density of entrances is respectively affected by the number of buildings, this area has medium density of entrances due to the decreased number of buildings compared to the other specified areas. This indicates lower intervisibility especially that some buildings have a front garden, or it is covered behind hedges or fences.

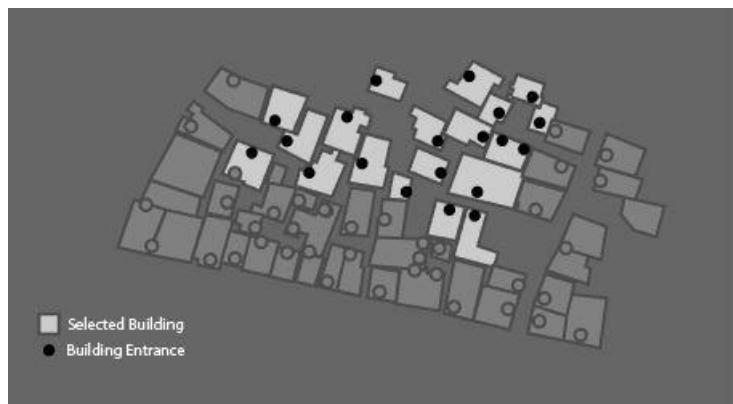


Figure 4. 13: Map retrieved by the author showing the building entrances in area three.

Consequently, the high inter-visibility and density of entrances are depicted in area two, in addition to windows position vis a vis each other invades the minimum level of privacy between the dwellers. In this area, in order to secure their privacy, the dwellers use outdoor curtains or wood panel to cover the windows and secure their minimal privacy. This is the reason behind the presence of large number of covered windows and balconies with outdoor or indoor curtains, in addition to other elements (wooden sheets...) especially in area one and two, and sometimes eliminating the windows by using concrete blocks to ensure at least their visual privacy. However, this prevented the access of sunlight and the proper ventilation into the dwelling units in this area and hence affects the quality of the urban livability in this area and deteriorate it more.

4. Criteria 3: Topological depth:

A third criterion is the number of semi-private and semi-public spaces one has to walk through to get from a private space to its public street. If an entrance is directly connected to a public street, it has no spaces between private and public space, then there is no topological depth value (Van Nes & Lopez, 2008). Having a transitional zone between the private and the public spaces creates a certain distance between the buildings and between the buildings and the street which helps the dwellers to ensure a certain level privacy.

Area 1: The further away a street segment is from the main routes net, the greater the topological depth between private and public space (Van Nes, 2008). Ein el Delbe street and the two alleyways function as main routes net in the area of Raml el Ali, then there is no topological depth for the buildings facing those streets. This is due to the direct connection to the public street with no spaces between private and public space.

Area 2: The buildings in this area get their access from the main street of Ein el Delbe either through pedestrian or car access corridors which lead to many buildings surrounding a courtyard space. In some cases, rooms, bathrooms or staircases were added and this resulted to a high level of intervisibility between the buildings in this area. These corridors and courtyards created a semi-public space between the public and the private space, and hence there is only one space between the closed private and the street.

Area 3: The buildings in this area get their access through using secondary roads that are one step away from the main routes net. These are closed roads with dead ends, hence represent one space between private and public space where a large number of

buildings have a front garden or covered behind hedges or fences then these buildings have a higher topological depth.



Figure 4. 14: Map retrieved by the author showing the topological values of the buildings around the block.

Hence, the closed ended streets in area three plays a major role as transitional zones between the buildings and the public street, and sometimes works as setbacks between its buildings. These streets along with some front gardens and fences provide a certain distance between the buildings which helps the dwellers to ensure the level privacy and social control. Unlike area one and two, most the dwelling units in this area are able to receive the needed air and sunlight, even the first two floors, and suffer less from the noise pollution and the vehicle emissions created from the high traffic roads (Ein el Delbe Street and the two alleyways).

5. Conclusion

Based on site observation, this area still maintains to some extent the rural setting and character. Thus, this part of the neighborhoods is the most suitable for liveliness among these areas in terms of urban safety, social control and the inter-relationship of buildings, however, area number one is defined by being the worst (Table, b).

	Area one	Area Two	Area Three
Street constitutedness	Constituted streets	—	Un-constituted streets
Intervisibility and density of entrances	High	High	Medium
Topological depth	—	Medium	High

Table b: Showing the results of the spatial analysis method.

Consequently, there are three qualities of space. The area most affected by increasing densification is the zone immediately on the main street. Here, dwellers are losing privacy, their homes are becoming an integral element of the street to the extent that it is impossible to distinguish between the street and the homes at the ground level. These specific homes, it is noteworthy, are allocated to refugees because they are lowest quality privacy area. Here, too, most landlords who hold buildings in the block have opted to leave the area and rent out the building fully to refugees.

Conversely, the areas inside have been able to protect their privacy better. In these inner districts, we find less refugees and a much higher concentration of Lebanese households. In these areas, landlords have typically stayed back and live with their families. They have also closed off open spaces that they mostly use as spill-over of their personal areas while blocking access to outsiders.



Figure 4. 15: Map showing the spread of Syrian refugees in the neighborhood, map showing the block division.

CHAPTER V

URBAN LIVABILITY AT THE HOUSEHOLD/APARTMENT SCALE

This chapter profiles the urban livability at the household scale of Raml el Ali. It specifically focuses on the living conditions of various groups of residents in the neighborhood, classified along the mode of housing occupancy (i.e., landlords and tenants) and nationality (Lebanese, Syrian).

In this chapter, I show that both national status (Lebanon/Non-Lebanese) and modes of tenancy (Owner/Tenant) have significant correlations with the households' livability conditions. The hypothesis followed in the thesis sought to compare households along two lines: class and nationality. The criteria of landlord/homeowner and tenant was taken to reflect different social classes while nationality (Syrian/Lebanese) reflects status (refugee/citizen). Throughout the chapter and given that there are no Syrian landlords in my case study, I compare three groups of neighborhood dwellers: Lebanese owners, Lebanese tenants, and Syrian refugee tenants. The study shows that Syrian and Lebanese renters are worse-off, living with higher density, losing privacy, poor direct sunlight access, improper ventilation, and inadequate infrastructure services. The findings further indicate that refugees are the most have the worst livability conditions of all three studied social groups.

The chapter's findings are based on the findings of a survey I conducted in April 2021 covering 80 households selected among the different dweller groups in the area (20 interviewed Lebanese renters, 40 interviewed Syrian tenants, and 20 interviewed landlords). All 80 households lived within the block selected for the thesis research and

outlined in the previous section. These households include an equal number of respondents from the three sub-sections of the block, zone 1, 2 and 3 defined in the previous chapter (fig. 4.9). This survey questionnaire covered material, social, environmental, and security factors. It allowed me to measure the quality and livability among the different types of households.



Fig. 4.9: Map showing the division of the selected area in Raml el ali.

The chapter is divided in three sections. The first section highlights the consequences of living in living in urban densification. The second section reports the living conditions among the different groups of dwellers in terms of the households overcrowding and privacy, in addition to the direct sunlight access and ventilation in the dwelling units of these different groups. The second section covers the infrastructure services and its usage among dweller groups.

Noted that at the time of the interview the dollar fluctuated between 6,000 LBP and 10,000 LBP. At that time the prices of the rent were kept stable. The actual value of the rent had decreased by 4 to 6 time in U.S. Value, but the rent had not been adjusted. I don't have any information about the current state.

A. The Consequences of Density:

Urban densification is closely correlated to building densification and population densification (Meus, 2021). Several effects of urban densification are already known. It includes an increase in the air pollution and congestion. It modifies the urban morphologies and architectural typologies and hence neglects the urban heritage (Meus, 2021). Urban densification also adds more pressure on the urban infrastructure, networks and services, and poses a major challenge on urban greens areas. This leads to a reduction of daylight and solar access. These indicators are resulting to poor living conditions. Residents living in urban densification are often compounded by poor healthcare, and inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene services. They also tend to have high infectious disease transmission rates. This living condition poses unique challenges on the resident to managing the COVID-19 outbreak or any other pandemic situations.

B. Living Conditions:

1. *Household Overcrowding and Privacy:*

a. Overcrowding:

In this section, I assess overcrowding in the area of Raml el Ali using the most common measure of overcrowding, which is persons-per-room (PPR) in a dwelling unit. I base my assessment on the United Kingdom Office of the Deputy Prime Minister that defined overcrowding as more than one person-per room (Kellerson, 2007).¹ According to this standard, a household is considered to be “overcrowded” when PPR exceeds 1.50 (Kellerson, 2007). This ratio is obtained by dividing the number of people living in the

¹ published, in 2004, the impact of overcrowding on health and education.

house by the number of rooms in the households (excluding the kitchen and the restroom).

The survey of 80 household in Raml el Ali found that 33 out of 40 interviewed Syrian household dwellers have a high ratio of overcrowding, exceeding 1.50 and peaking at 4 in the most excessive case. This means that most refugees live and share the same room with other individuals. Sometimes, they share the same room with three other individuals. However, the percentage of Lebanese households measures less than 1.5 to all the other interviewed dweller's groups (Lebanese renters, and landlords) in this neighborhood, and it reaches a maximum rate of 1.3 in very few cases. This means that the Lebanese dwellers do not share their space with other individuals.

The survey found clear distinctions between the type of apartment and the profile of the tenant family. My survey found that Syrian tenants tend to occupy a single apartment as multiple families. The number of rooms for the Syrian households is systematically correlated with the number of people living in the apartment. Each room is a dwelling unit inside a household dwelling area (room dwelling unit), and each Syrian family settles in one room. These families share their apartments either with relatives, friends, or common friends. They share the apartment service areas: kitchen, bathrooms, and balconies in some cases. The rental cost is divided among families who share the same dwelling. Conversely, there are no Lebanese families who rent a single apartment in shared form.

Refugee families who share the same apartment are more exposed to eviction, with no prior warning, and without requiring the landlord to provide a reason. They can be evicted for any reason (i.e., if the landlord claims there is damage in the apartment, delay in payment), or just replaced by other renters. This form of rental is less sought

out among landlords who, in most cases, prefer to rent their units to a single family in order to avoid the run-down damage that ensues to their properties from overcrowding. Thus, most the large apartments (up to four rooms) in this area are either dwelled by their owners, rented by Syrian families, or divided into two or three apartment units. Noteworthy, the Syrian family also use small apartment units (two to three rooms) to dwell as several family considering each room as a dwelling unit for a single Syrian family. This is referred to as a divided dwelling units inside a dwelling unit. This pattern reveals the deteriorated quality of livability in these dwelling units and the high level of overcrowding in these households.

On the contrary, the Lebanese renters' dwell in a small apartment unit, which are built or divided to be used for rent. These apartments consist of two or three rooms, in addition to an individual services, kitchen and bathroom. Typically, Lebanese renters' do not share their dwelling unit with other families, and they are considered to be small families of two to four members living in the same apartment. However, landlords prefer to rent their apartments to a one single Syrian family, since it is much easier to be evict at any time and without any reason.

Landlords dwell in large apartments that consist of four to seven rooms. They either dwell as a single family (5 to 7 members and the siblings are adults) or considered as a family house (for the grandparents). These apartments are inherited later on to one of their sons. In all cases, the percentage of persons in room do not exceed 1. In sum, landlords and Lebanese renters' do not suffer from household overcrowding (ratio does not exceed 1.3). Only Syrian tenants suffer from overcrowding, and it reaches severe levels.

b. Privacy:

In addition, the level of privacy differs between these three groups of dwellers. On the one hand, Lebanese renters are typically only able to rent out subdivided units or small apartments. These apartments are built in close proximity to each other in most cases (Fig. 5.1). The apartments are only separated from each other by a narrow corridor, and they share common concrete walls that are used for dividing what used to be a single apartment unit. The rooms are partitioned either with wood panels, gypsum boards, or concrete walls depending on the pre-existing partition (already existed rooms) (Fig. 5.2 and 5.3). This architecture decreases the level of privacy in the inner spaces between the rooms, within a same dwelling unit and between housing units. In addition, the interiors of Lebanese tenants' houses are not fully furnished. In some cases, the walls of the rooms form a barrier between the rooms, without acting as full partitions, as they do not extend to the ceiling, and hence the rooms are not completely separated (Fig. 5.3). This architecture creates a flutter echo since sounds bounce between the walls and conversations seep from room to another, undermining the privacy of rooms and apartments. On the other hand, landlords dwell in large apartments with separate entrances, where rooms are subdivided by concrete walls and fully furnished and decorated interiors (Fig. 5.4). Privacy is relatively well protected. The quality of life for landlords is much higher.

All in all, the conditions for all tenants (Lebanese and Syrian) are considerably worse than landlords. However, conditions also differ between Syrian and Lebanese renters, with Syrian tenants being worse off than Lebanese tenants with the lack of privacy and overcrowding.

Syrian refugee tenants also dwell in poorer physical conditions: units with visible physical damage (holes in the walls), makeshift building conditions, and/or units roofed with metal sheets. The apartments that are still under construction are divided into rooms and they are rented out as rooms with cladded walls to refugees. In addition, the units added on the roof sealed with roofing metal sheets need to be painted and renovated every year (Fig. 5.5 and 5.6). From inside, these metal sheets are covered by a layer of plastic panels forming a false ceiling. However, this false ceiling does not protect the dwelling unit from the weather conditions and the heavy rain. These dwellings units may become unbearably uncomfortable in hot weather especially during the middle of the day. In addition, these dwelling units are hard to be heated sufficiently when the temperature drops. Such households struggle to afford or insure the repair of their houses every year. Usually, these dwelling units are settled just by a single Syrian family, since they have an affordable rental value (100,000 to 150,000 LBP)² for depending on their conditions.



Figure 5. 1: A divided dwelling unit with a wood wall partition, photo by author.

² At the time of the interview the dollar fluctuated between 6,000 LBP and 10,000 LBP. At that time the prices of the rent were kept stable. The actual value of the rent had decreased by 4 to 6 times in U.S. Value, but the rent had not been adjusted. I don't have any information about the current state.

*Figure 5. 2: An empty dwelling unit ready for rent, photo by author.
Figure 5. 3: Narrows corridor of the divided apartments, photo by author.*



Figure 5. 4: Picture showing a fully furnished and decorated apartment dwelled by landlord, photo by author.



*Figure 5. 5: Picture showing the deteriorated roof structure, photo by author (2021).
Figure 5. 6: Picture showing a dwelling unit at the roof with a metal roofed ceiling, photo by author (2021).*

2. Natural Ventilation and Direct Sunlight:

Another set of factors measure the quality of life in the apartments of the three groups of dwellers (Lebanese renters, Syrian tenants, and Lebanese landlords): access to direct sunlight and natural ventilation.

The quality of direct sunlight and proper ventilation varies considerably between blocks, depending on the density of buildings, the presence of the leftover and open spaces between these buildings, the existence of industries next to the residential buildings, in addition to the implementation of the windows and openings in these buildings.

As revealed in chapter 4, the area most affected by increasing densification is the zone immediately on the main street (zone one), where there are small industries at the ground floor level. In this zone, almost all the setbacks and leftover spaces between buildings have been used for building additions (Fig. 5.7). Similarly, in zone 2, there is an excessive incremental development and additional building entrances and windows. Almost all apartments surveyed in these two zones suffer from the lack of direct sunlight and poor ventilation. These poor spatial conditions are the outcome of the incremental addition of rooms and floors in buildings located directly on narrow streets and alleyways. This affects severely the first two floors and leads to poor livability. The situation is aggravated by a high street-level pollution generated by emissions from vehicular activities and the presence of electric generators directly on the ground floor. In some cases, additional floors protrude over the street, reducing further sunlight on the street level.

The dwellers in zone one and zone two are mostly renters. Hence, these groups of dwellers (Lebanese and Syrian renters) are the mostly affected by the increasing densification in the area, since most landlords who hold buildings in area one and two have chosen to turn their apartments into rental units for refugees. This pushes the residents in these two zones to introduce outdoor curtains or wood panels to cover their windows (Fig. 5.8). In these cases, households have chosen privacy over sunlight and proper ventilation, though affecting the quality of life of households in these two areas.

In the same zones some apartments do not have windows. Instead, these windows are replaced by openings directed to the building shaft. Some other apartments have windows directly facing a wall. These dwelling units typically suffer from humidity and bad odors, and they are unsuitable for housing and living (no access for the sunlight and

the needed air). These dwelling units represent small dark places generated either from the unplanned housing divisions, or from built empty spaces between the dwelling units. These apartments exist in the areas with excessive building development where the setbacks between the buildings are eliminated.



Figure 5. 7: Picture showing the density in zone one, photo taken by the author (2021).
Figure 5. 8: Picture showing the density in zone two, photo taken by the author (2021).

Even though zone one and two is categorized to be dwelled by the renters (Lebanese and Syrian tenants), some landlords still dwell in these areas. This creates a hierarchy in the quality of livelihood between landlords who dwell in this block. Landlords who dwell in Zone one and two (facing the street) either use the first-floor level or the ground floor level (at the back of their retail stores) for dwelling. They are sharing the same quality of livelihood with the renters (Lebanese and Syrian renters).

This group of landlords are adapted to their living conditions and attached to it. They do not aim to ameliorate the quality of their livelihood. Instead, all what they aim for is how to build extra additions to increase their monthly rental profit.

The other groups of landlords play a mediator role between protecting their quality of living and gaining additional developments. This group built extra developments without affecting their quality of livability or invading their privacy. They added extra floors and developments and preserved part of their open space for their own benefit. This group of landlord dwell in area three, where just few added building developments are related to the landlord-renter building model (fig. 5,9). These buildings follow Type A as a building model used to isolate their open space from the other dwellers and renters in the area. Hence, these left open spaces are kept and used just by the landlords without taking into consideration the quality of livelihood of their renters. However, the existence of these open spaces in the area enhances the living condition of these renters as the surrounding becomes less congested. There are enough spaces between the buildings to penetrate the direct access of the sunlight to the dwelling units, maintain the proper ventilation, and preserve their level of privacy.

Box 1: The Story of Abou Hassan,

Abou Hasan is one of the people who's related [do you mean he is a landlord?] to this group of landlords. He owns a car repair store on Ein el Delbe Street, and dwells in his apartment, which is a backward horizontal extension of his store. With time, he extended the development to build an extra apartment detached from his own apartment for rental purposes. Later, Abou Hasan added an additional floor level connecting the apartments using the whole leftover space next to it to expand the area of the first-floor level. However, this floor is still under construction for a long period of time, and it is harder to be completed, since policing illegal construction has become more severe, and the municipality is not providing any construction permits. This structure covers the whole ground floor and the surrounded open leftover spaces. Hence, it hinders the direct access of sunlight and the proper ventilation of the ground floor apartments and deteriorate the quality of the livelihood to both the renters and the landlord. Despite all, Abou Hassan is still waiting for the construction permit to continue the construction of the floor disregarding these consequences.



Figure 5. 9: Dwelling space in zone three, photo by author.

C. Neighborhood Facilities:

The unplanned housing added enormous pressure on the existing municipal infrastructure and the environment. Municipal water and sewerage systems and solid waste disposal cannot cope with the increased population density and poor sanitation behavior of the inhabitants of the neighborhood of Raml el Ali. The WHO report identified infectious diarrhea as the largest single contributor to ill-health associated with water, hygiene and sanitation inadequacies (Pieper, 2011). In low-income communities, especially the squatter settlements that characterize many megacities, the facilities for proper disposal of human wastes are seldom available; hygiene practices are generally poor; and water for household use is often inconvenient, and insufficient. Diarrheal and respiratory infections that result from these conditions continue to be among the most frequent causes of sickness and death for infants and children (Unicef, 2015). Thus, informal densification was found to create unintended public health risks.

In this section, I assess infrastructure services (water usage, electricity needs, sewage system problems, and the garbage collection services) in this neighborhood and its usage among the three different groups of dwellers (Lebanese and Syrian renters,

landlords). As will be detailed below, infrastructure is largely insufficient. Indeed, the old self-help systems that date back to the Lebanese civil war are unable to sustain the added pressure of higher density. This is particularly the case of garbage, water and electricity networks that are deficient everywhere in Lebanon, but acutely so in this neighborhood. This deficiency, as I will show below, is harder to mitigate for refugees and Lebanese tenants who suffer a higher cost.

1. Garbage Collection:

The neighborhood does not have waste containers. These waste containers are located in nearby neighborhoods. For this reason, there is a private garbage collector for this area who collect the garbage bags from the houses to the containers.

Based on the conducted interview, only a few renters (Lebanese and Syrian) subscribe in this service with a monthly fee of 7,000 LBP (before the collapse of the Lebanese Lira). Most of the Lebanese renters uses their motorcycle to bring their garbage bags to the containers, while the Syrian renters send their children to the containers to throw their garbage bags. There are few cases where landlords bring a small municipal container, which is emptied every few days by the municipal garbage collector, and it could be used also by their renters. However, most the interviewed landlords have subscribed to the garbage collector service and pay 10, 000 LBP per month. This reveals that there is a difference in the service provision between the renters and the landlords, and between the renters themselves.

2. Sewage System:

The sewage system in Raml el Ali was installed through a self-help system when the neighborhood density was considerably lower (Khayat, 2008). Today, the size of the sewage systems is insufficient, leading to frequent overflows. Conditions are worsened by the lack of maintenance.

Landlords rely on self-help and political networks to acquire minimum urban services and to solve sewage system. Some of them use their municipal networks and political powers to fix or maintain the infrastructure that is causing a problem. Some others rely on their self-help and their finances to solve their own problems privately. However, this does not exclude all the landlords, some of them still suffer from sewage system problems (especially bad odor) without finding any solution. Renters suffer from sewage system problems (bad odor, frequent overflow...), and they are not able to afford and fix the problems without the help of their landlords. This is a reason for some renters to move and look for another appropriate dwelling unit. In this way, when landlords become unable to rent their properties, they work on renovating the space and fixing the problems.

On the contrary, there are many cases where landlords evict the renters if any problems occur in the property. Usually when a sewage system problem occurs in a dwelling units rented to a large number of household members, landlords put the blame on the renters. In this case, landlords either force the renters to maintain and fix the problem or to evacuate the house. This happens mostly to the Syrian family renters who are the only groups of renters with large family members.

3. Electricity Needs:

As noticed in the case profile, the electricity provision has been irregular throughout the neighborhood. There are different ways of accessing electricity in the neighborhood. Residents may access electricity through circuit breakers, illegal hook-ups and/or by purchasing electricity from private retailer (generators).

All the group dwellers in the area receive their electricity needs from circuit breakers and purchase electricity from private retailers. The renters receive their electricity from the landlords, and the fee is either included in the rent or it is provided through a hanged-up electricity meter placed on the exterior wall of the apartments (Fig. 5,10). since state electricity is insufficient (regular power cut), these groups depend on private power generators. Renters normally share the 5-amper subscription so that it serves two dwelling units (2.5-amper for each household) and divide the fee among them. In this way, renters will be able to light-up at least one room and to turn on the television. However, landlords usually purchase 5-15 amps, subscription and this depends on the number of people living in the house. This shows the difference in the quality of living conditions between the landlords and the tenant.



Figure 5. 10: Hanged-up electricity meters on rental dwelling apartment, photo by author.

4. Water Usage:

Dwellers in Raml al Ali, especially the landlords, rely on their social networks with political party members and the municipality members to be provided the privilege of digging water wells (illegally, sometimes with informal permits). In the case of the water provision, buildings in the neighborhood receive their water for daily usage either from the poor infrastructure or water wells. The existing infrastructure provides a poor water service since illegal developments occur in the area, and the regulations prevents the municipality from providing services when construction and/or property access is illegal. However, some buildings have water wells which are used by both the landlords and renters. Renters obtain their free water from the water well, or it is provided at a lower price (5,000 LBP to 10,000 LBP per month). However, in the case of maintenance or repair, many landlords share a percentage of the financial cost with the renters as it is a basic need for all the groups of dwellers.

There are two sources of drinking water. The majority of neighborhood residents buy their potable water from private retailers. These private retailers circulate daily with their trucks around the neighborhood to fill their customers' jars. Their customers are landlords and renters. Most landlords use this source of water just for cooking and buy the drinking water bottles from the supermarkets (Sohat, Rime, Tanourine). However, some renters who buy this source of water use it for both cooking and drinking purposes. In addition, few residents (belong to the renter group of dwellers) obtain their potable water free of charge from the tanks provided by Hezbollah around the neighborhood (Harb, 2003).

The infrastructure services are major elements to assess the quality of livability in the households, as they form a daily basic need for the different groups of dwellers.

Renters suffer from poor water provision and look for housing in buildings with water wells to be provided with water free of charge. This is a reason that leads many renters to relocate, as they wait for the eviction of other renters to take their place. Conversely, easy access to water is considered a privilege for landlords who have better authority over the renters especially foreign ones and Syrian refugees. The renters of these houses are easily evicted to be replaced by others that suit more with the owners' conditions (such as a small family). These refugees become extremely vulnerable to access affordable shelters with water provision. Indeed, housing becomes the most serious concern for refugees in terms of quality and monthly cost.

D. Conclusion:

Findings indicate the differences in the living conditions between the local urban poor renters, the foreign renters (Syrian refugees) and owner-occupiers, as it is seen through the service provision, security, and housing quality. Dwellers especially the landlords rely on self-help and social and political networks to acquire services, access privileges and use exceptions in planning policies for their own benefits. Conversely, renters seem to be extremely vulnerable especially the foreign ones (Syrian refugees). Their main concerns become accessing housing with affordable prices, adequate service provision, and being protected from eviction.

These findings show landlords as the most powerful group of dwellers especially the old generation landlords. This group of dwellers is manipulating and modifying the block radically with different capacities depending on their political and economic power to achieve their personal interests. This group of dwellers is the major player and influencer in the modification of the built urban fabric of the neighborhood. They use

and exploit every single piece of land, and in most cases, they are responsible of the bulk of constructions in the neighborhood and the further deterioration of the quality of livelihood in the neighborhood.

Consequently, nationality and mode of tenancy are factors on generating vulnerability. Nationality is a factor for easy eviction, and household overcrowding which makes the living condition of the Syrian renters inferior to living of the Lebanese renters. However, the Syrian renters, despite those who dwell illegally, receive financial support unlike the Lebanese renter families. These Syrian renters usually receive a higher monthly income from some Lebanese families, especially the old generation Lebanese ones. However, they are living in dreadful conditions regarding the other groups of renters. The mode of tenancy is another factor that generates vulnerability through the dispersion of the landlord and tenants according to the three qualities of space (zone 1,2, or 3). Thus, it is a factor for living in urban densification. Area one and two are classified to be the most congested where the renters are allocated. Nevertheless, landlords have typically stayed back to live with their families in zone three.

CHAPTER VI

ECONOMY OF THE RENT

In this short chapter, I analyze “rent” and its impacts on the expenditure of the different types of households (Syrian and Lebanese renters,) in the neighborhood. Thus, the chapter looks at the “housing burden” imposed by rent on Lebanese and Syrian tenants. In addition, the chapter looks at how collected rents gained by landlords contributes as a source of income to their living conditions. By looking at the costs and benefits of housing, I try to also identify the economic repercussions of housing on the living conditions of these three groups of dwellers.

A. The Incidence of Rent

The incidence of rent is one of the classical measurements that evaluates the cost of housing on the living conditions on households to assess the “housing burden”. Housing policymakers generally assume that rent should not exceed 30% of the expenditure of a household (FEDS, 2017).

In order to assess the incidence of housing, I have conducted a survey of the monthly expenditure of Lebanese and Syrian tenants. I also compared the sources of income between these two groups of tenants, noting that Lebanese renters and refugees with illegal status do not benefit from the financial support or subsidies from international organizations. In order to assess expenditure, I used a comparative expenditure value which is the sum of money spent on the basic needs for livelihood (food, healthcare, and transportation). I surveyed household spending on food, healthcare, transportation, and rent, comparing the incidence of the latter on the overall

spending of the household. Hence, the aim is to determine the sufficiency of income left after paying rent, especially that most dwellers are low-income renter. They have little income remaining after the rent. Thus, the rent may displace other fundamental needs especially for the ones who does not rely on any financial support.

B. Rental Value and Incidence of Rent on Expenditure:

The surveyed rental value for the 20 interviewed Lebanese renters and 40 interviewed Syrian renters is similar. Rent ranges between 250,000 LBP and 500, 000 LBP³ depending on the number of rooms and the area (zone 1, 2, or 3) of the dwelling units. All in all, it seemed that the rent values in the neighborhoods were fixed in the range of 250,000 LBP for a two-room dwelling unit, 350,000 LBP for three rooms dwelling unit, and 500,000 for the four rooms dwelling unit.

According to the conducted interviews, the percentage of the rent is approximately 50% of the total comparative expenditure value (table d) for the Syrian families who lives in an apartment unit as a single-family rent. This is a very heavy “rent burden”. This ratio decreases when several families dwell in the same apartment unit since a higher number of working members share the rent. Thirteen out of 40 Syrian interviewed renters share the apartment across several families (8 to 11 Members in the house) in two to four rooms apartment units. Moreover, 16 out of 40 Syrian renters dwell as single family in two to three rooms apartment unit, with minimum one child working illegally to pay off a part of the family monthly expenses. However, as noted above, all interviewed Lebanese renters live in two to three rooms apartment units

³ At the time of the interview the dollar fluctuated between 6,000 LBP and 10,000 LBP. At that time the prices of the rent were kept stable. The actual value of the rent had decreased by 4 to 6 time in U.S. Value, but the rent had not been adjusted. I don't have any information about the current state.

as a single family with one or two working members. The percentage of the rent is approximately 40% of their comparative expenditure value (table d). This is also considered undesirably high rent burden. These families spend more money on their health, food, and transportation than Syrian tenants.

1. Sources of Income:

a. Working Members:

As mentioned above, most of the Syrian renters dwell with other Syrian families and divide the rental value between them. This strategy decreases the rental costs incurred by these families. Though, the case is different when it comes to the Lebanese renters who dwell as one single family per housing unit and bear all the rental price.

Based on my knowledge of the area, there are two groups of Lebanese renters. The first group represents the old Lebanese family renters that have, in most cases, one working member in the family. Some of these renters conduct menial services for the landlords (e.g., cleaning, cooking, sewing, and shopping for them) in exchange of rent value reduction. The second group represents a new generation of young renters that consists of two working members. This group has been introduced to the area with time, as many siblings of the first group (old family renters) got married and moved to rent and dwell in the same area. In addition, some outsider youth, mostly coming from South Lebanon and Baalbeck, are workers that dwell in this area since rent is affordable, in addition to its location at the edge of the capital. Thus, the rent becomes more affordable for the new generation of Lebanese tenants (second group).

b. Financial Support:

Registered Syrian Refugee families and Lebanese landlords typically have a second source of income that provides them with an additional source of income that secures their daily basic needs. Furthermore, registered Syrian refugees spend less on food and health as they rely on the food subsidies and healthcare provided by UNHCR, in addition to free education for their children. This group receives also financial alimonies of about 400,000 LBP⁴ per month (UNHCR, 2021). However, the Lebanese renters do not have any financial support, instead of their families, especially for the first generation of renters (old generation) who relies, in many cases, on their siblings to manage their financial shortage and ensure their health support. In addition, the Syrian refugees whose status is illegal are unable to receive any financial support. Instead, some secure occasional help from neighbors. Thus, the old generation Lebanese renters and the illegal Syrian dwellers are the weaker groups in the neighborhood.

	Financial Support
Syrian Renters	0 – 400,000
Lebanese renters	0
Lebanese Landlords	250,000 – 1,000,000 (Rental profit)

Table c: retrieved from the interviews done by the author showing the monthly financial support given to each group of dwellers

²The cash assistance and the transfer amount of cash increased to 400,000 LBP in July 2020 due to the devaluation of the currency in Lebanon (UNHCR, 2021).

c. Rent as a Source of Income: Landlords:

For landlords, the household income can be measured by the rental cost/rental value collected, the wages/income of the working members of the household, and any financial support they may receive. Landlords can also be divided between old and new generations. Based on my knowledge of the area, most the new generation of landlords who dwell in the area rely on the old generation landlords to insure their housing units. The old generation of landlords is the most powerful group of dwellers in Raml el Ali. They are either retired or unemployed landlords who rely on the monthly rental value to attain their daily needs (e.g., food, health). Some have a single working member, typically one of the children. On the other hand, the new generation of landlords represent the landlords' siblings. As landlords' siblings got married, some of them moved to dwell in their added built developments. they introduce in the neighborhood a young generation of landlords. Most of these young landlords' generation are working members (army, banking sector), with a moderate to intermediate salaries, and rely on their incomes from the rent as a second major source for living.

The rental profit for the landlords varies from 250,000 LBP to 1,000,000 LBP per month (20 interviewed landlords), depending on the number of units that they rent out. A large number of landlords relies on rent for living, while others consider rent an additional income that increases their monthly profits. This introduces two groups of landlords, with different financial abilities, that can be classified as more or less modest income earners.

2. Expenditures

a. Monthly expenditure on food:

The Syrian renters either get their food support from the UNHCR or expend a budget on food that varies between 250,000 LBP and 500,000 LBP depending on the number of their children (40 interviewed Syrian renters). This is comparable to the Lebanese renters who spend between 400,000 LBP and 500,000 LBP on food per month (20 interviewed Lebanese renters). However, this percentage of expenditure on food sharply increase for the landlords to range between 1,000,000 LBP and 2,000,000 LBP (20 interviewed landlords). This rise of budget on food expenditure in these households are related, in many cases, to the old generation landlords. Most these old generation landlords present their households as family houses (grandparents' house) where the siblings gather with their children. According to the conducted interviews, the new generation landlords spend money on food between 500,000 LBP to 1,000,000 LBP depending on the number of children which is closely related to the other groups of dwellers.

Accordingly, Syrian renters have support that helps them ensure their daily basic needs unlike the Lebanese renters. In addition, landlords rely on the rental profits to ensure at least their daily basic needs. This makes the Lebanese renters and the illegal Syrian dwellers the weakest groups who do not have any safeguarded source that guarantee their access to their basic need if they suffer from any work complication.

b. Monthly expenses on transportation:

Most renters rely on their motorcycle or on walking as sources of transportation. Most the interviewed Syrian renters do not own any tool of transportation (motorcycle

or car), as most of them work in the neighborhood or in surrounding area and rely on walking as a source of transportation. Nevertheless, all the interviewed Lebanese renters just on their own motorcycles. Renters do not have the right to park their car in the leftover spaces, because these spaces are used by the owner-occupiers for parking purposes (landlords). This is also due to the fact that it is a congested neighborhood, and the roads network is tight and irregular since it grew originally as a result of leftover spaces between houses. However, the renters can park their motorcycles. In some cases, landlords specify a space for the renters to park their motorcycles.

Since there is no public transportation, this makes it hard for the group who does not own a source of transportation (Syrian refugees) to move in and out of the area easily. Thus, most Syrian dwellers either work in this area, or use a certain side of a street waiting for any job opportunity as a daily worker or helper to be picked up by residents or people passing. However, Lebanese renters rely on their motorcycles as an essential source of transportation, since they do not limit their work in this specific area. They use their motorcycle even in the bad weather conditions (heavy rain...). Thus, this represents a poor living condition for both groups (Lebanese and Syrian renters), that each of these groups try to adapt to it in a different way. This shows a diversity of techniques used by different groups of dwellers for adaptation as an individual recovery planning.

c. Monthly expenses on health:

Most the Lebanese groups, from tenants and landlords, have social security for health insurance. In addition, most the Syrian families rely on UNHCR for their health insurance. Furthermore, all the groups of dwellers in this area relies on Al Najda and Al

Hussein dispensary which are in the nearer neighborhoods. These dispensaries offer consultation and eligible treatment at a moderate price. However, some landlords prefer to have private medical insurance so that they can cover their fees in private hospitals if any case of health emergency occurs.

d. Comparative expenditures:

Type of Dwellers	Food Expenses	Transportation Expenses	Health Expenses	Comparative expenses
Syrian Tenants	250,000 – 500, 000 LBP	0	0 – 150,000 LBP	250,000 – 650,000 LBP
Lebanese Tenants	400,000 -500,000 LBP	0-200,000 LBP	0 – 600,000 LBP	400,000 – 1300,000 LBP
Landlords	1,000,000 – 2,000,000 LBP	300,000 – 400,000 LBP	200,000 – 800,000 LBP	1,500,000 – 3,200,000 LBP

Table d: retrieved by the author showing the comparative expenditure value of the interviewed different group of dwellers.

Type of Dwellers	Rent
Syrian Tenants	250,000 – 500,000 LBP
Lebanese Tenants	250,000 – 500,000 LBP
Landlords	0

Table e: retrieved by the author showing the rental value.

The results show that the monthly comparative expenditure value for the Syrian households varies depending on the number of families dwelling in the households. Hence, the minimal value (250,000 LBP) represents the monthly expenditure of a single Syrian family. However, the monthly comparative value of expenditure for the Lebanese tenants varies depending mostly on the health conditions of the members in the households. The minimal value of expenditure (400,000 LBP) is referred, in most cases to the monthly expenses of the new generation Lebanese tenants, and the maximum of this value is referred predominantly to the monthly expenses of the old generation Lebanese renters (1,300,000 LBP). Nevertheless, the total value of the

monthly expenditure duplicates between the new generation landlords and the old generation ones. This is related to the expenses on food and health, especially that most the old generation are family houses (for the grandparents).

The results also show the difference in the monthly expenditure between the landlords and tenants, especially in terms of foods expenses, and this is related to the difference in the livelihood between landlords and tenants.

e. Housing Burden:

As mentioned before, the percentage of the rent is approximately 50% of the comparative expenditure value. The result shows that the rental value according to the Syrian tenants is equivalent to their monthly expenses for food, even for the households with several families (Table, d and e). Thus, most the income left after paying the rent is spent on food. However, the percentage of the rent for the Lebanese renters is around 40% of their comparative expenditure value (table d and e). This shows that Lebanese renters spend more money on their food and health. Thus, they have a higher income from the Syrian ones, despite the fact that they do not benefit from any financial support of subsidies.

f. Rent Profit:

The rental profit for the landlords does not cover the minimal value of the comparative expenditure. The minimal value coming from the rent (250,000 LBP) does not even cover the transportation expenses of the landlords. The highest rental value which is 1,000,000 either cover the food expenses or the monthly expenses spent on the health. This shows that the profit coming from the rent is not sufficient to cover all the

expenses for the basic needs for livelihood. Hence, landlords relied on the rental profit as a secondary source of income to improve their livelihood.

CHAPTER VII

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

This chapter begins by briefly summarizing the major challenges that face residents in the neighborhood of Raml el Ali before it frames a set of planning recommendations to address these challenges. The chapter recognizes the intertwined nature of formal and informal mechanisms of governance and organization and seeks to propose planning tools that can accommodate the advantages of informality and mitigate the disadvantages.

As shown in the previous chapters of the thesis, the refugee influx to Raml el Ali has led to an increase in the density of people and buildings in the neighborhood, in turn leading to increasing pressure on the infrastructure of the neighborhood and worsening living condition. These effects were nonetheless unequally felt, with distinction in livelihood conditions particularly sharp between landlords and tenants, but also among tenants (refugees/migrant workers/Lebanese households). These distinctions materialize in the access and use of public spaces, the quality of the housing venue, and protection for the renters from eviction and/or harassment.

In developing recommendations for the thesis, I propose a bottom-up approach that adopts the area-based approach currently advocated by a number of international organizations. The area-based approach, I will argue, fulfills residents' needs for a comprehensive intervention integrated and defined within a specific location. This is a participatory process that allows for the community to come together as a collective to

design the neighborhood. A real testing of the area-based approach is outside the scope of this thesis. I however suggest it as a method that has succeeded elsewhere in improving living spatial and living conditions for city dwellers.

This chapter is divided in four sections. The first section restates the major findings about problems facing Raml el Ali. The second section develops a stakeholder analysis in order to provide an understanding of the main influencers in the area. The third section frames a solution to the occurred problems, and the last section provides recommendations to the proposed option.

A. Findings:

In this section, I highlight the main findings that I consider critical from the thesis:

- The absence of planning and the heavy reliance on informality does not guarantee a just outcome. The refugee influx increased the density of people and building and put more pressure on the infrastructure of the neighborhood. The impacts are severe everywhere, but they are most pronounced along the main artery where the separation between street and home is almost lost. In these areas of very low privacy, apartments are mostly rented out to refugees who live in the lowest quality areas. Meanwhile, Lebanese households are leaving the main street and retreating to the internal streets that are becoming residential zones for landlords and their families.
- In looking at the effects of this densification, and, more generally at living conditions, we find that conditions for the tenants (Lebanese and Syrian) are considerably worse than the landlords. Moreover, the Syrian renters are worse off the Lebanese renters in terms of overcrowding and poor housing conditions.

Landlords are the group of dwellers that have a better quality of life in the neighborhood. This creates a distinction between landlords and tenants living conditions.

- Renters are unable to benefit from public or privately held open spaces. Instead, these spaces are controlled by a handful of well-backed landlords who determine the uses of public spaces. Conversely, a reading of space can help reveal power structures and relations, with the stronger Lebanese households dominating public/open spaces and locking them up to their individual uses. In addition, the Lebanese landlords are building individual entrances to separate their living quarters from those of renters instead of finding collective options. These accesses encroach on public and shared areas, and they reduce the quality of shared passages and public spaces by exploiting these areas for additional development.
- The old generation landlords are responsible for the bulk of constructions in the neighborhood and the increasing deterioration of the quality of life in the area. This group is manipulating and modifying blocks. They are able to do so because they command strong political and social networks, in addition to their financial capital. This group is, hence, the major player and influencer in the modification of the built urban fabric of the neighborhood. They affect the livelihood of the renters that are typically vulnerable, especially foreign ones (Syrian refugees). Their main concerns are to access housing with affordable prices, adequate service provision, and to be protected from eviction. Thus, nationality and mode of tenancy are factors for generating vulnerability. Non-nationals are typically more vulnerable to eviction, and household

overcrowding, which makes the living condition of the Syrian renters inferior to living of the Lebanese renters. Mode of tenancy is a factor for living in urban densification.

B. Advantages and Risks of Informality in the Area of Raml el Ali:

The kind of inequality detected on the Syrian refugees and the poor Lebanese families shows that these areas did not evolve in a proper way and in need for planning. The neighborhood suffers from a high level of informality. This section discusses five forms of informality dominant in the studied neighborhood:

1. *Informality in ownership (or illegal land tenure):* This neighborhood is built on a mixture of public (referred to as mushaa) and private lands (Khayat, 2008). Some landlords purchased shares from local claim holders and cannot demonstrate the legal validity of their ownership, and others occupy land lots illegally without any documentation or claim of legality. The shares are bought in large un-subdivided lots, it was impossible to locate the actual size or location of their properties on the lots (Khayat, 2008). As a result, landlords relied on informal processes to delineate the boundaries of their houses. This created an opportunity for poor rural migrants to settle in the area especially during and after the Lebanese civil war. Hence, the developments in the area were adapted to fulfill the needs to housing and increase the number of affordable housing units.

There are advantages and disadvantages to this process. On the one hand, squatting and informal purchases allowed a low-income group to access property and homes they would have otherwise been unable to claim. Their

“illegal” condition furthermore creates a submarket where prices are kept low due to the stigma of illegality, hence allowing for affordable housing when it is direly needed. On the other hand, the fact that property boundaries in this area are ill defined means that there are conflicts over property. This conflict spills over to public spaces where access also relies on informal processes and violate building regulations. Since only powerful or well-backed individuals can occupy space, this access is also far from democratic.

2. *Informality in building construction:* Early comers to the neighborhoods built their houses in violation of building regulations (e.g., no permit, no compliance with legal zoning and/or building law), and hence in defiance of the police. They built one-floor houses without foundations, then added floors incrementally, sometimes reaching [number] floors without sufficient structural support. They built houses either to live in or to rent to relatives and others who moved in later. Much of the building construction activity occurred during the years of Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) and its immediate aftermath (through 1993). In addition, a building spur occurred in 2008, when an informal authorization to build over a few weeks encouraged a rapid and haphazard development (adding additional floors, expanding the houses with additional rooms, and adding new building developments in the empty lots or public spaces). Nowadays, the additional developments become harder to implement since the neighborhood density has risen dramatically and policing illegal construction has become more severe, especially after the arrival of Syrian refugees.

There are advantages and disadvantages to this process. On the one hand, incremental building development is a direly needed source of income for the

landlords in this area. It also increases the number of affordable housing units and absorb the market needs for affordable housing. On the other hand, these incremental additions create public health hazards since buildings are structurally unsound and they densify the neighborhood and exhaust all the potential areas for developments.

3. *Informality in the rental agreements:* Rental transactions are typically oral and favor the priorities of the landlord. As a result, renters –who are the vulnerable group of dwellers- lack tenure security. They do not have the power or support to defend their rights. They are easily exposed to eviction, especially the refugees and the old generation Lebanese renters. This is due to the fact that there is no restraint or any contract that control this rental process or clarity in this transaction. Despite the affordable cost of rent and the higher flexibility to change their housing, these renters are not able to stabilize and establish their livelihood in one specific place.
4. *Informality in service provision:* Electricity and water provision have relied on informal modes and processes throughout the neighborhood. Since regulations prevent the Municipality from providing services when construction and/or property access is illegal, residents can only rely on self-help and political networks to acquire minimum urban services (Khayat, 2008). Informal services are sometimes more affordable and they secure direly needed facilities. However, they leave dwellers dependent on political parties in order to get their irregular service provision.
Furthermore, most residents access electricity through illegal hook-ups and purchase electricity from private retailer (generators). The presence of the

electric generators directly on the ground floor and between the residential buildings creates a high street-level pollution generated by emissions coming from these generators in addition to the vehicular activities. This creates a poor environmental health condition in the area (air pollution, spread of diseases).

In the case of the water provision, the dwellers obtain their free water from their water wells. In addition, they buy their potable water from private retailers and a few residents obtain their potable water free of charge from the Hezbollah tanks dispersed around the neighborhood (Khayat, 2008). Most of the dwellers in the area (landlords and renters) are using water from the illegal water wells without being tested or sanitized. This exposes the dwellers of the neighborhood to an unintended public health risk, and the spread of diseases. It also harms the underground water table that is increasingly salinized.

5. *Illegal residency status of dwellers:* Foreign migrant workers and refugees without legal status represent the weakest group of dwellers. They do not have any safeguarded source that guarantee their access to their basic need if they suffer from any work complication, their presence and work is criminalized. The Syrian refugees whose status is illegal are unable to receive any financial support. Instead, some secure occasional help from neighbors. These people find shelter in the neighborhood; however, they must succumb to the landlords' conditions in order to secure tenure. Hence, most of these people are dwelled in poor housing conditions, and they are exposed to sudden threat of eviction.

The table below puts things together, showing the ways in which informality provides advantages and disadvantages:

	Description	Advantages	Risks	Remedy
Informality in ownership: property rights are clouded	<p>The neighborhood is built on a mixture of public and private land held in multiple ownership.</p> <p>Some landlords purchased shares from local claim holders and cannot demonstrate the legal validity of their ownership.</p> <p>Some landlords occupy land lots illegally without any documentation or substantiated claims.</p>	<p>Opportunity for poor rural migrants to settle in the area especially during and after the Lebanese civil war.</p> <p>Building development in the area fulfill the needs for affordable housing.</p> <p>Increase the number of affordable housing units.</p>	<p>Conflict over Property due multiple claims.</p> <p>Shareholding landlords are unable to assess the actual size or location of their properties within a lots.</p> <p>No protection for public spaces.</p> <p>Dependence on political parties for political protection.</p>	<p>Develop an informal land registry in which ownership is clarified.</p> <p>Institute a framework to protect public/shared/ open spaces.</p>
Informality in building constructions: zoning and building regulations are not observed.	<p>Original building development doesn't follow urban and zoning regulations, and all recent building development is also in violation of these regulations.</p> <p>Expansion of the number of housing units by adding floors and rooms or subdividing existing ones.</p> <p>New entrances encroach on passages.</p>	<p>Increase the number of affordable housing units.</p> <p>Source of income for the those who can claim a landlord status (rental profit).</p> <p>Absorb the market needs for affordable housing.</p> <p>Help create higher levels of privacy for some of the residents by circumventing regulations.</p>	<p>Poor living conditions: overcrowding, loss of privacy, lack of sunlight access, poor ventilation.</p> <p>Poor construction quality and security risks.</p> <p>Densification of the neighborhood.</p> <p>Exhausting all the potential areas for developments.</p> <p>Loss of all open spaces.</p>	<p>Establish and coordinate a local governance body such as a neighborhood committee to control and manage urban transformations in the area.</p> <p>Establish a <i>Zone of Special Social Interest</i> where building and zoning regulations can be developed and adapted on the basis of participatory planning.</p>

			Dependence on political parties for protection.	
Informality in service provision: water and electricity rely on informal provision and illegal hookups.	<p>All residents rely on illegal hook-ups as well as informal/illegal service provision in the area.</p> <p>Legal regulations prevent the municipality and service agencies from providing services legally when construction and/or property access is illegal.</p>	Rely on self-help to get accessibility to the basic service's needs.	<p>Environmental costs (illegal water wells, sewer).</p> <p>Poor environmental health conditions, potential pollution, sources of disease spread, and deviant behavior</p> <p>Safety issues with the quality of water, electricity networks.</p> <p>Dependence on political parties for political protection and services (e.g., water)</p>	<p>Interventions need to move beyond the scale of the individual household, towards neighborhood level interventions potentially through local committees and coordination with local authorities.</p>
Informality in the rental agreements	<p>No written agreement for rents.</p> <p>No clarity in the transactions/agreements.</p>	<p>Reduces the cost of rent</p> <p>Provides higher flexibility.</p>	<p>Easy eviction.</p> <p>Low tenure security for tenants.</p> <p>Conflict between landlord and tenants.</p>	<p>Create a committee for the tenants of the neighborhood.</p> <p>Template contracts to facilitate agreement terms and protect tenants.</p>
Illegal residency status of dwellers	Foreign migrant workers and refugees cannot secure legal residency status or work permits.	Do not have to submit to Kafala regulations and/or oppressive public regulations.	<p>Criminalized presence</p> <p>Low tenure security for tenants.</p> <p>Landlords taking advantages from the vulnerability of the illegal dwellers.</p>	<p>Involve human rights organizations to help legalize their status, or to find what is acceptable for them.</p> <p>Change the regulatory framework that organizes the presence and</p>

			Dependence on political parties for protection.	labor of migrant workers and refugees.
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*Table f: Done by the author and showing the advantages and the risks of informality in the area of Raml el Ali.
Reference: NRC, 2021.*

C. Stakeholder analysis:

Several groups of stakeholders in Raml el Ali display unequal interests and power. This section discusses the role of each of these stakeholders and analyzes their impact, influence and power in the area of Raml el-Ali. Among these stakeholders are residents (landlords, tenants of different nationality), public actors (e.g., municipality), political parties (i.e., “Amal”, “Hezbollah”), in addition to NGOs (includes politically affiliated NGOs and international organizations, particularly UNHCR). These actors are profiled and placed together on a single graph (Fig. 7.1).

The Municipality of Bourj el Barajneh: The neighborhood falls under the jurisdiction of the Bourj Barajneh municipality which is responsible for the regulation of the building environment (e.g., building permits), its cleaning and public services (i.e. connecting to service agencies). However, public regulations prevent the municipality from allowing for service provision when construction and/or property access is illegal (Khayat, 2008). Thus, the municipality declines an official responsibility to respond to the increasing pressures in their localities (Harb, 2003). However, the municipality is taking the responsibility to police the illegal construction in the area and declines the provision of any new construction permits since there are illegalities on all property lots which legally prevents it from providing permits. Although the official position of the Municipality is to limit density, it is in reality unable to control fully illegal constructions. This is because of the presence of powerful family networks and the two political parties in the area, Amal and Hezbollah, who are the most powerful stakeholders in the area. In reality, the municipality is itself

controlled by these political parties so that it serves their interests through disregarding the building process of some constructions for their networks or acquire certain urban services (e.g., paved a road, repaired a sewage system) (Table g).

Political Parties (Amal & Hezbollah): Two political parties, Amal and Hezbollah, are the most powerful and influential stakeholders in the area. They have imposed themselves as the representatives of the dwellers and the mediators with public agencies to secure urban and social services for these districts (Harb, 2003). Locally, their main role is confined on providing a safety and security measure in the neighborhood and supporting dwellers through providing dispensaries and some services (potable water), in addition to demanding that the municipality provides limited urban service in the area. Furthermore, the dominance of these two political parties limits the ability of other actors, particularly UNHCR, from interfering in the area in order to enhance the livelihood of the Syrian refugees and the host community.

It is important to understand the basis of the parties' support to these areas: Since most of the Lebanese residents of the neighborhood are Muslim Shi'a whose rural areas regularly elect members of these political parties, the mutual relation and support with Amal and Hezbollah makes them the actual political representatives of the neighborhood both through local (municipal) and national (parliamentary) elections (Table g). This helps displace the typical problem faced by local authorities where residents are not allowed to vote in local elections and hence unable to connect to place demands on municipal authorities.

INGO's and NGO's (UNHCR): The UNHCR and other NGO's are unable to play their role to be involved in the neighborhood to enhance the living conditions of both the Syrian refugees and the host community, which is blamed on the dominance of the

two political parties Amal and Hezbollah. Hence, their role remains precarious and limited. The UNHCR, at the neighborhood level, provides access to education for the refugees in some official schools located in the area during the afternoon hours. In addition, it provides the Syrian refugee with financial support and some type of allowance, which contains money to buy food from Lebanese suppliers and some supermarkets in the area (Table g).

Owner residents and landlords: These residents have either acquired a plot in shares where they have built a house or a building, or they have strong social or political power to occupy a public open space and build new developments. They either built another building attached to the pre-existing one (to be used for rent) or built additional floors on top of their housing units to rent them out and securing a monthly rental value. These developments represent the power and capacity of their owners and their influence on the neighborhood. The occupation of space is a solid indicator of the relative power of property holders: Those who are able to build new development in the remaining open spaces are more powerful and have influence on the neighborhood. Still powerful, but less so are those who can add floors on top of their existing building. Power is typically the outcome of family relations, relations with the political parties, or with the Municipality. These relations are typically overlapping. These owner residents and landlords play a major role in providing the market with affordable housing stocks through their additional developments and housing divisions depending on their political networks and their capacities (Table g).

Landlords living outside the area: These landlords left the area and rent out their housing units. In some cases, they added additional floors and subdivided their housing into many units to maximize the rental profit. Despite the fact that they are living

outside the area, their developments still represent their power, capacity and their influence on the neighborhood, as they are providing the market with affordable housing stocks. These landlords control access to land even though they are not residents of Raml al Ali. It is remarkable that despite the dire need for space in the neighborhood, their lands are chained, and no one is allowed to use it. By doing this, they can demonstrate occupation and control over the land in order for the lot to be perceived by other residents as a “private” land. Hence, despite their absence from the neighborhood, they still impose their power and authority on the area (Table g).

Homeowners: These people are not involved in this power game among the diverse stakeholders. They do not provide housing stocks and try to preserve a certain distance from the urban densification that occurs in the area. Their aim is to detach themselves from the over densification of the area and protect their privacy through preserving green spaces for their personal use. Despite their passive interference in the neighborhood and its market, the homeowners reflect a certain power and influence over the open spaces that exist in the neighborhood (Table g).

Families with kinship: Historically, the neighborhood was organized in sub-areas along kinship and geographic origins, some landlords have a certain authority and power over their sub-areas (Charafeddine 1991). The oldest and largest families in the area play a key role in its governance (Khayat, 2008). Studies conducted in the area (Harb, 2003) have shown the links between families and political parties, with parties often selecting their candidates for local elections through influential family networks. These families are able to play a more powerful role within “their” areas in the neighborhood, due to their political and municipal networks (e.g., fixing road overflow problem, imposing a kind of social security in their sub-areas). These families typically

hold a large number of affordable housing units and rent them out to Syrian refugees who settle in (Table g).

Lebanese Tenants: This is a group of vulnerable dwellers who lack strong family bonds and/or social relations, and hence tenure security. They face deterioration of the living conditions in the neighborhood after the Syrian displacement and accept the outcome of densification and neighboring the new group of dwellers (Syrian refugees). Despite their vulnerability, Lebanese tenants have a certain influence in the neighborhood through being a part of the host community and neighboring people with illegal status, and different culture (Table g).

Syrian Tenants: They introduce to the neighborhood a large vulnerable group of dwellers. They do not have any political or social support, especially those with illegal status (do not receive any financial support). Hence, they have to succumb to the landlords' conditions in order to secure a tenure. As a large groups of dwellers, they have an influence on the neighborhood. They led to an overcrowding urban transformation. However, they enhance the housing market in the neighborhood, and increase the landlords' income coming from the rent (Table g).

Stakeholders of the neighborhood of Raml el Ali:

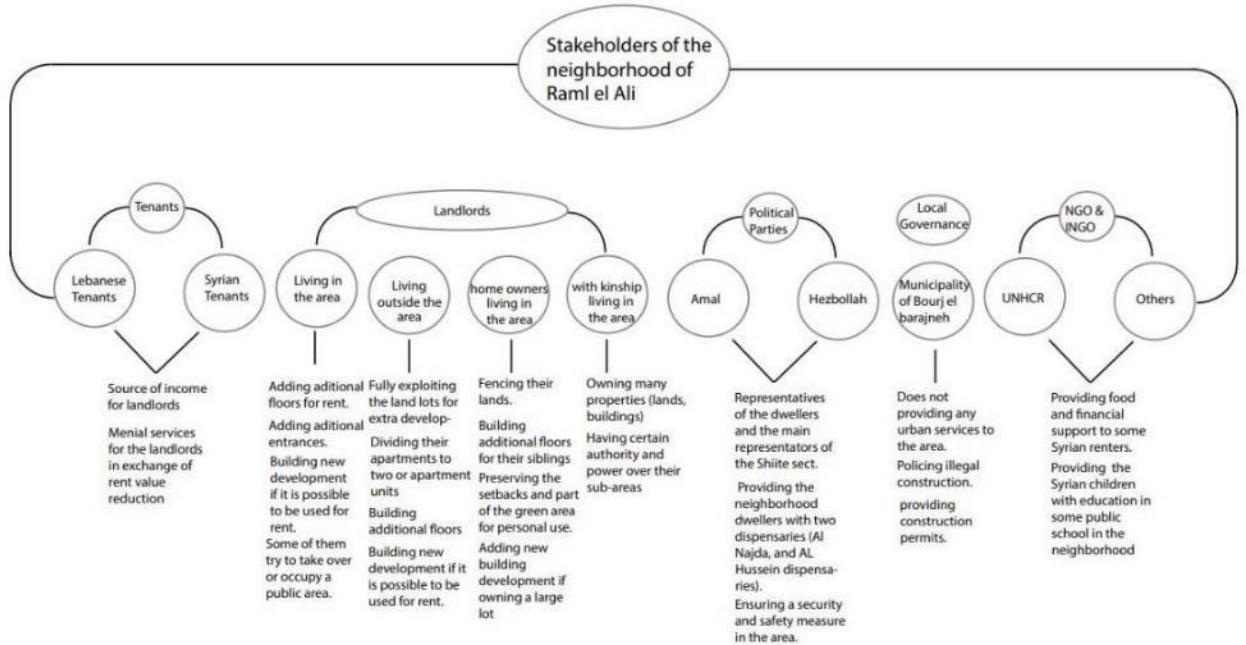


Figure 7. 1: Graph done by the author and showing the stakeholders in the area of Raml el Ali and their achievements.

Stakeholder characteristics, impact and influence:

Stakeholders	Characteristics		
	Official Jurisdiction	Actual Role on the ground.	Level of Influence and Power in the neighborhood's everyday life.
INGOs (UNHCR)	Manage and support the presence of refugees in Lebanon. Service Provision	Alleviate hardship in the experiences of refugees and host communities, Provide food, education, healthcare, and financial assistance to refugees. Water provision	Low
Other (Political / non-political) NGOs	Main authority entrusted with the management of the area and its organization.	Occasional policing of illegal constructions and facilitation of particular urban services.	High
Political Parties (Amal & Hezbollah)	Actual political representatives of the Lebanese population in the neighborhood both in local	Providing a safety and security measure in the neighborhood.	Very High

	(municipal) and national (parliamentary) elections.	Support dwellers directly through providing dispensaries and some services (Potable water) Mediate between dwellers and the municipality or other public providers.	
Owner residents and Landlords	Protect their ownership and rent out units for living.	Develop additional housing units through informal additions Rent units to refugees and Lebanese households and collect monthly rent. Control access to land and ad-hoc regulators. Involved in collective decision-making on issues related to the neighborhood public life.	Varies, typically high. (depend on their political networks and the weight of the family).
Landlords living outside the area	Protect their ownership and rent out units for living.	Develop additional housing units through informal additions Rent units to refugees and Lebanese households and collect monthly rent. Control access to land and ad-hoc regulators.	Varies, (depend on their political networks and the weight of the family).
Homeowners/not landlords.	Residency	Control access to land and ad-hoc regulators. Involved in collective decision-making on issues related to the neighborhood public life. Protect their privacy and detach themselves from the overcrowding urban transformation	Typically moderate
Families with Kinship	Residence	Have clear authority and power over their sub-areas and play a major role in its governance. Local coordination within areas of historical occupation (informal) Control access to land and ad-hoc regulators. Play a critical role in the management of their areas, including rent and the management of public urban services.	High
Lebanese Tenants	Residence	Vulnerable group does not have a tenure security and have to accept the	Low

		outcome of densification and neighboring the new group of dwellers (Syrian refugees). Play a modest role in the management of urban services.	(Must accepting the Syrian refugees and the deterioration of the living conditions)
Syrian Tenants	Temporary residence	Vulnerable group does not have a tenure security and have to accept the outcome of densification and neighboring the new group of dwellers (Syrian refugees). Suffering from poor living conditions, low security of tenure, and household densification	Very Low (Must succumb to the landlords' conditions in order to secure a tenure)

Table g: retrieved by the author and showing the stakeholder characteristics, impact and influence to the over densification of the area of Raml el Ali.

D. Area-Based Approach:

As shown in the stakeholder analysis, the area houses a diversity of stakeholder groups with different interests and power. These stakeholders have radically different capacities and priorities. As a result, conflicts emerge regularly among them, and severe inequalities separate the different groups of dwellers in the neighborhood, hence reinforcing tensions among them. This affects mostly the weakest groups in the area, refugees, migrant workers, and Lebanese renters. These groups do not have the power or support to defend their rights to ameliorate their livelihoods. Their only option is to succumb to the available living conditions that result from the overall outcome of the individual efforts of the diverse stakeholder groups.

The dominance of the two political parties Amal and Hezbollah limits the ability and the role of the UNHCR and other NGO's to intervene in the area and enhance the livelihood of the Syrian refugees and the host community. Furthermore, the municipality prohibits any additional building development and the landlords' main interest become how to challenge the municipality for extra developments in order to

increase the monthly incomes coming from rents and/or secure some open spaces. Hence, the conflict of interest and the individual effort of each stakeholder focused on achieving personal benefits disregards the circumstances and the outcome of the actions on the other groups of dwellers. In this sense, the individual effort of the multi stakeholder groups harmed the urban environment and the livability of the area.

Consequently, the main problem occurs in the disintegration and the lack of coordination among the diverse groups of stakeholders. Hence, there is a need to shift out from this process to create a more participatory process among the community by establishing a platform which brings together the diversity of actors with different capacities to discuss the collective response, in addition to complementing the existing governance systems (municipality). This could help to reduce the creation or reinforcement of tensions and inequalities and contribute to improving social cohesion. In addition, this platform can enhance clarity and understanding of how best to coherently provide multi sectoral assistance (livelihood, housing, social safety, and health) through focusing on the existing resources.

E. Recommended Framework of Intervention:

In order to address the deterioration of the neighborhood, I propose to adopt an area-based approach that responds to the challenges of the areas through a multi-scalar, short and long term intervention. In this final section, I begin by defining the area-based approach, and follow with a few suggestions for how to introduce it in Raml el Ali.

The area-based approach fulfills people's needs for a comprehensive intervention integrated and defined within a specific location. Building on a planning approach that traditionally supported interventions in informal settlements, a specific geographic area

with high levels of need is delineated by physical, social, or administrative boundaries (or a combination of factors). Such areas vary in scale and can extend over a single neighborhood, wards and districts, or a whole town or city (USWG, 2019). This approach places people's priorities at the center of the response and builds on the existing governance structure in order to provide multi-sectoral support. Furthermore, it works with multiple stakeholders, considering the whole population living within this specific geographic area with high levels of needs regardless their legal status, or risk category or associated groups (USWG, 2019). The multi-sectoral support can include interventions in sectors such as health, education, housing, livelihoods, social safety nets, water and sanitation. Not all needs will be met, but all individuals in the target area will receive a level of support appropriate to their relative needs (such as access to improved public spaces).

The area-based approach addresses immediate needs while focusing on longer-term outcomes and impacts (including the transfer of roles and responsibilities to local actors), allowing sufficient time to build relationships and bring together multiple stakeholders (USWG, 2019). It adopts flexible and adaptive approaches for programs design, management, funding and coordination. In addition, it works with and builds on existing systems of local governance and service delivery (USWG, 2019). Essentially, it is a bottom-up approach where communities are central to define a response that reflects their needs for recovery. The area-based approach helps to suspend the existing planning regulations that worsened the livelihood the neighborhood of Raml el Ali in order to propose a new planning regulation.

Defining the elements through which the area based approach is outside the scope of this thesis. It would however be important to consider that an incremental process

will have to be set in place that prioritizes spatial improvements as long as power imbalances subside. I propose that several fronts would have to be considered:

(i) Establish a Zone of Special Social Interest: The process of building development in the area of Raml el Ali was problematic. Since early comers had bought shares in large un-subdivided lots, it was impossible to assess the actual size or location of their properties on the lots (Khayat, 2008). With time, the neighborhood buildings and land property records reflect a growth in the incremental building developments. Property boundaries remains ill defined, property claims are conflicting, and those who claim ownership, live and/or rent in the neighborhood, cannot demonstrate the legal validity of their claims. This problematic led to the idea of occupying and exploiting the open public spaces for individual use. The result indicates that there is no protection for the open and public spaces in this area. Given that the neighborhood has contested property rights and a large number of vulnerable social groups residing in its quarters, it may be best to introduce an exceptional regulatory tool to organize its development. Hence, I propose to establish the Zone of Special Social Interest that starts first by suspending issues of ownerships and dealing primarily with the area as a zone that responds to the needs for affordable shelter.

What is a Zone of Special Social Interest? Introduced in Brazil during the 1990s, the zone of special social interest is an instrument of urban and housing policy. Its main goal is to prioritize the right to housing above the right to property, and the spread of the social rights to property rights with a participatory model of governance (Donavan, 2007). It is an institutional solution that works as a mediator between the community and government agencies, encourage the participation of the community in regularization processes, and resolve conflicts. Within such zones, property rights are

unbundled, and claimants can now reside and/or own, without having a right to sell or bequeath. This arrangement allows more flexibility in the mode of ownership. It is possible to reformulate urban policy and appropriate building codes adapted to the neighborhoods (Donavan, 2007). It is a kind of a state illustration that shares the effort of creating institutions and enforcing rules to govern land tenure with a wide range of social actors in order to maintain neighborhood appropriate zoning rules across the area. The zone of special social interest can be applied through establishing a community management group guided by the municipality to manage the area. This neighborhood committee or Community Management Group should include different categories of residents to ensure the protection of the rights of all the dwellers in the area. In addition, this collective should include municipal representatives for the technical aspect, and a non-governmental organization chosen by the residents (Donavan, 2007).

There are several important benefits for adopting the zone of special social interest: These zones can secure the legal integration of the informal settlements and reduce conflict by creating a shared interest to improve urban livability. This institutional solution gives the residents the right to formulate urban policy and appropriate building codes for their neighborhoods through their representors. This increases land and housing for low-income residents, improves public services, and facilitates legal regularization. Furthermore, the exchange of information between residents, civil society organizations, and government representatives improve the quality of negotiation and mediation skills.

The unbundled property rights help to address the issue of conflicting claims of ownership and ownership in shares in the area of Raml el Ali. Based on this arrangement, it is possible to develop an informal land registry where claims are

clarified and regulated, reducing the ability of a handful of powerful claimants to occupy and exploit open public spaces. This will reduce conflicts among the dwellers over controlling areas and provides the renters (the vulnerable groups) with the right to claim for a shared space. Thus, this helps to create a long-term mechanism to protect the right of housing for the poor people in the area through redefining rights and authorities.

It is important to understand that the approach of a zone of special social interest is not to “formalize” the informal. Instead, the aim is to organize the area in a way to fulfill the all the dwellers’ needs based on an acceptable standard.

(ii). Create neighborhood-level committee for public space management:

The current public spaces in the area are either fenced or occupied by strongmen. These spaces have limited uses, and they are appropriated by private owners for the personal use. Renters (Lebanese or Syrian tenants) are not able to benefit from any public or privately held spaces. Instead, they are just used as passages. Nevertheless, the occupation of these open spaces is strongly related to the social and political networks of the dwellers. The studies conducted (Harb, 2003) have shown the links between families and political parties overlap. These families form a large housing and property stock in the area. This can demonstrate that these political parties are playing a key role in hindering the public from the use of these open spaces to be used for elective purposes. Studies also shows that these parties often select their candidates through the influential family networks (Harb, 2003).

The participation of the renters and refugees in the committee helps to determine standards and manage public spaces to be also accessible by the vulnerable groups of dwellers in the area. Thus, this helps to reduce the difference in the livelihood at the

urban scale between the different groups of dwellers in this area. However, this could be applied only in cooperation with the political parties as a main source of power in the area.

(iii). Create neighborhood committees to regulate the rent for refugees and

migrants: Refugees in this area suffer from households overcrowding and poor living conditions. They occupy a single apartment as multiple families in order to divide and share the rent among them. This committee targets the household level and plays a mediate role between landlords and Syrian refugees. On the one hand, this committee can regulate the number of households' members of the Syrian renters to prevent the household overcrowding and provide these members with rent assistance if needed. In addition, it protects these refugees from eviction since these families are more exposed to eviction anytime, with no warning. This committee can also secure rent agreements between the landlords and the refugees or migrant workers who have irregular residency status disregarding the legal status of residence. On the other side, the committee ensure to the landlord the monthly payment coming from the rents and protect their properties. In addition, it helps to improve the household conditions inside these apartment units. This committee can intensify the role of UNHCR and other NGO's to enhance the livelihood of the Syrian refugees and the host community. Furthermore, a template contracts can help to improve tenure security. The renters in the area are easily exposed to eviction, especially the refugees and the old generation Lebanese renters (the most vulnerable groups of dwellers in the area). This is due to the fact that there is no restraint or any contract that control this rental process. Thus, there is a need for a written rent agreement that protects the tenant rights and clarify the terms

of an arrangement between landlords and tenants. Thus, the template contract can reduce the risks of conflict between landlords and tenants, and stabilize the rent. This helps the renters to ensure their tenure security and protect them from sudden threat of eviction. This enhances the livelihood of these groups of dwellers in the area.

(iv). Protected and Improved service provision (from the policy proposal

sustainable): The informal densification and the poor infrastructure services in the area are creating an unintended public health risk for inhabitants. Most the dwellers retain their free water from illegal water wells. Thus, the infrastructure services should be improved, especially the water provision. Water should be tested and sanitized to prevent disease resulting from a wide range of activities and multiple exposure routes. The provision of potable water supply and wastewater removal are necessary but not sufficient conditions for improving public health. Water supply and wastewater management should be well integrated with environmental, health, and nutritional programs to create a more robust and effective approach to healthcare and disease prevention.

Public water and wastewater service providers, health institutions, the municipality of Bourj el Barajneh, and external agencies need to work together to place a higher priority on providing incremental water and sanitation improvements to the unserved residents of the area. This can be accomplished through participatory planning with the community, public education, and an openness to innovative technical approaches. These strategies should be compatible with the aspiration of the communities involved, their ability to maintain and upgrade the system.

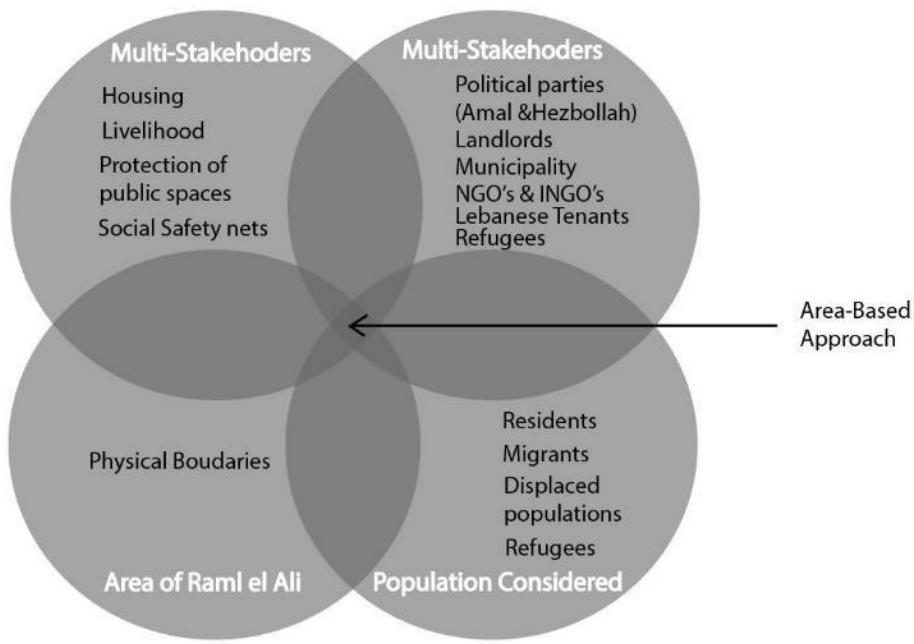


Figure 7. 2: Taken from Parker and Maynard (2015) and modified by the authors to show the characteristics of area-based approach in the area of Raml el Ali.

The possibility of introducing a zone of special social interest and adopting an area based approach in Raml el Ali is very far from the current reality. By advocating the right to adequate shelter and underlining the implications of the refugee crisis on Lebanon's cities and their poorest dwellers, the thesis hopes to propose concrete pathways for a more inclusive city. Coordination efforts and mutual aid agreements for emergency service provision and rent management can provide a solid ground for local actors to know: first, how to turn international aid into an opportunity rather than financial and political dependency or reason for domestic marginalization. Second, to learn the advantages of domestic coordination, internal agreement, and develop the capacities to manage foreign aid. Overall, reinforcing the role of local authorities and actors has proven to be more efficient and manageable in the short-term; however, over time, it also faces political limitations thus challenging the ability to reach a broader consensus on the management of domestic issues.

F. Conclusion:

This thesis has discussed three main topics: (i) the mechanisms of the incremental building developments, in the selected block in Raml el Ali, and its implications on the urban densification and the quality of the public/shared spaces, (ii) urban livability at the household/apartment scale of various groups of residents in the neighborhood, (iii) the economic repercussions of housing on the living conditions of the different groups of dwellers.

In chapter IV, I discussed the decline in the quality of outdoor public spaces and the service infrastructure in the area in the selected area in Raml el Ali. I was able to conclude that the remaining public spaces in this area don't function like open spaces anymore, and they are appropriated by private owners for the personal use.

I was also able to deduce that there are three qualities of spaces that are affected by the high urban densification through losing the minimal level of privacy. These qualities vary respectively in zone one, two, and three, from most affected areas by this increased densification (zone one) to the least affected one (zone three).

The dispersal of the groups of dwellers along these zones indicates the hierarchy and the difference in the livelihood among the diverse groups of dwellers in this area. Zones one and two are allocated to renters (Lebanese and Syrian tenants) especially the refugees because they are lowest quality privacy area. Conversely, zone three that has been able to protect its privacy includes a much higher concentration of Lebanese households especially landlords who live with their families.

In chapter V, I showed that both national status (Lebanon/Non-Lebanese) and modes of tenancy (Owner/Tenant) have significant correlations with the households' livability conditions. They are factors for generating vulnerability. Nationality is a

factor for easy eviction, and household overcrowding, and mode of tenancy is a factor for living in urban densification. This makes the living conditions of the renters inferior to the living of the landlords, and the living conditions of the Syrian renters inferior to the living of the Lebanese renters.

I was also able to deduce that the difference in livelihood among the diverse groups of dwellers is also marked through the service provision, security, and housing quality. These services, in this area of Raml el Ali, are only acquired through self-help processes either through the finances to solve the problems privately or through the reliance on the social and political networks. This in turn makes the landlords the powerful group of dwellers and turn the renters especially the foreign ones (Syrian refugees) to be extremely vulnerable.

In Chapter VI, I explored the costs and benefits of housing in order to identify the economic repercussions of housing on the living conditions of the three groups of dwellers.

The Syrian renters suffer from the heavy rent burden since the percentage of the rent is approximately 50% of their total comparative expenditure value. This ratio decreases when several families dwell in the same apartment unit since a higher number of working members share the rent. The Lebanese renters suffers also from high rental burden since the percentage of the rent is approximately 40% of their comparative expenditure value.

I was also able to conclude that there is difference in the monthly expenditure between the different group of renters. the Lebanese renters spend more money on food and health and have a higher income from the Syrian ones, despite the fact that they do not benefit from any financial support of subsidies. In addition, there is difference in the

monthly expenditure between the landlords and tenants, especially in terms of foods expenses. Landlords expend more money on food, and this is related to the difference in the livelihood between landlords and tenants.

I was also able to deduce that the rental profit for the landlords does not cover the minimal value of the comparative expenditure. This shows that the profit coming from the rent is not sufficient to cover all the expenses for the basic needs for livelihood for the landlords. Hence, the rental profit forms a secondary source of income for the landlords to rely on in order to improve their livelihood.

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