Jeddah’s Slum Areas: The Attempt to Redevelop Al-Nuzla Al-Yamania

A RESEARCH PAPER

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

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JULY 2015
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Acknowledgement

It was nothing less than a pleasure to complete this research paper. I would like to offer my gratitude to my parents for their help and support. I will never forget their efforts, they put forth for my better future, and their calls, at least one in every week, to encourage me. Their words have boosted my energy and motivated me to complete my studies. I'd like to say special thanks to my wife, who helped me throughout the period of my education, in the U.S.A. It was a great relief that you perfectly manage each and every household activity, on your own, while I was finishing my master’s degree.

My completion of this paper could not have been possible without the support of my great advisor Prof. Nihal Perera, who helped me a lot in successfully completing it. I get motivation, every time I attend his classes and meetings. I have always learned from him, whether inside the classrooms or outside the academic environment. I really appreciate his kindness and patience with me, throughout the entire period of last two years.

My special thanks to the local people of Al-Nuzlah, who gave me the chance to learn from them, so that I can complete this paper. Humble thanks to Fahad Al-Zahrani, Marie Asiri, Abbas Al-Fadli and my informant Muhammad Al-Harbi. I will never forget to thank all my colleagues, with whom I spent enjoyable time, in the last two years.

Thanks to the Department of Urban Planning, at Ball State University, for being the surrogate family during my stay in Muncie and for the support of its faculty and staff.

I would like to offer my humble gratitude to ALLAH ALMIGHTY and then for the University of Al-Baha for giving me the opportunity to be in the U.S.A. and pursue my education.
**Abstract**

**RESEARCH PAPER:** Jeddah’s Slum Areas: The Attempt to Redevelop Al-Nuzla Al-Yamania

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**DEGREE:** Master of Urban Planning

**COLLEGE:** Architecture and Planning

**DATE:** July, 2015

**PAGES:** 77

The Jeddah’s municipality has established a large development project, with a total budget of SR 200 billion (53 billion US Dollar), to modernize “slums” areas. The paper investigates the impact of modernization in Saudi Arabia in general, and Jeddah in particular. As the study reveals, the high rate of modernization has been a prime cause for the emergence of “slums” in the city. While the role of traditional constructions was marginalized, the modern style of buildings was imported without its components. Consequently, local people created their own modernity, building their houses with a mixture of local and foreign elements of constructions. Today, these houses are called “slums.”

Delving into the issue, I studied how Al-Nuzlah Al-Yamniah neighborhood was established and how modernization transformed into today’s neighborhood. Particular attention was paid to the cultural dimension Al-Nuzlah’s people, particularly how they created their spaces and changed it to fit their needs, and how they react, deal with, and negotiate the municipality’s redevelopment proposal.

Finally, the paper recommends that the municipality pays significant attention to the local culture in Al-Nuzla Al-Yamania, especially how and why they create their spaces and adopt a
bottom-up approach to improve the livelihoods of people than displace them through another round of modernization.
Introduction

What the authorities call slums are the crucial components of most of the cities in the world. In some cities, the “slum” population exceeds the 50 percent mark. They were also very popular in Western countries in the 19th through early 20th centuries (Vale 2007). They are still consistently being considered in many areas of the USA and Europe. The so-called “slums” are critical for urban planning. Saudi Arabia is not different from them.

Slums are good buildings from the middle-class perspective. However, they are used by lots of people, without the execution of any system of good maintenance. Hence, unhealthy living conditions are called the slum. Today, this has become a term, used more broadly to identify poor people’s houses, including those that were built by them; which are called self-built housing. The houses that are called slums in Saudi Arabia are well-built but deteriorated due to formal policies and approaches to development. As calling someone’s house, a slum is pejorative. This bias can be a hindrance to the analysis of these houses and housing. I shall try to avoid this term as and when possible.

Jeddah, the second largest city in Saudi Arabia, has embarked on a massive slum redevelopment project. In regard to the area and population, it is the second largest city after Riyadh. The city’s economic and cultural significances are also second only to the holy city of Mecca. Sixteen percent of its area, i.e. 11,900 acres, occupied by 250,000 people, is classified as “slums.” Thus, the Jeddah’s municipality has established a large project, with a total budget of SR 200 billion (53 billion USD), for the “development” of these areas. The goal of the project Regulations for Developing Slum Areas (RDSA) is to identify slum areas and device a method to develop them. This RDSA project is the subject of this paper.
The key questions are: What are slums? How are these defined? What will these be developed into? What is the process? What is the evidence of the potential success of such projects? What are possible alternatives?

The Jeddah Municipality released its study and plan in 2008 (Regulations for Developing Slums Areas, 2008). Article III states that slum areas are “a hotbed of crime as well as corruption and a source of threat to security and stability” (2008, p2). According to RDSA (2008, p.2), slum areas in Jeddah occurred due to social and cultural reasons. The main goal of RDSA is to develop slum areas into modern areas through public-private partnerships. In these partnerships, the government will provide lands and private companies will provide the needed funds.

A major goal of this paper is to examine how this “slum problem” arose and how could the municipality effectively engage with the issue. My investigation focuses on Al-Nuzla Al-Yamania neighborhood, where the Jeddah municipality intends to relocate the inhabitants elsewhere and establish a new central business district for the city with tall towers.

The paper will first track the effects of modernization in Saudi Arabia, particularly in Jeddah; especially investigating the relationship between modernization and the informal settlements in the city. It will then highlight the conflict between the traditional culture and the newly arrived contemporary culture and how people build through this tension. The study will focus on Al-Nuzla Al-Yamania where I conducted fieldwork, highlighting how people live in this so-called slum and how they create and negotiate their spaces. Then, the paper evaluates the RDSA project, particularly with regard to the role, the local people played in this project. In doing so, I will bring out the cultural dimension of building, living, and the production of space
in Al-Nuzla Al-Yamania. Finally, the paper based on the investigation would recommend the proper approach to deal with Al-Nuzlah Al-Yamania.

How do you do this? My acquaintance with Al-Nuzlah began with my birth in the neighborhood where I lived as a kid. After I left, I still went back for a walk in the neighborhood every month and eat there and have many friends from my childhood. Even though I do not live there any longer, the neighborhood is part of my life. I do have a positive impression about it and when the Jeddah Municipality decided to tear down the neighborhood, I was upset. I completed my undergraduate creative project in Al-Nuzlah. For this project, I intended to both build on this personal knowledge and question my own subjectivity. Hence, I did two rounds of fieldwork including working for the Jeddah municipality. This was complemented by general surveys, participant observations, and detailed interviews with Muhammad Al-Harbi, Fahad Al-Zahrani, and Abbas Al-Fadli.

Why do you do this? Planning is place specific. Yet most planners bring ideas from outside. In Al-Nuzlah, the municipality wants to create a global image which has little bearing to the place. This is an attempt to find out people’s aspirations for the place and the potential for its development with people, without displacing them. This is evident in the negotiations between the municipality and the people’s organization, which was consulted by the author.

Documenting my findings, in this paper, I will argue that what the city calls slums emerged as part of its own modernization program of the 1960s. As Saudi Arabia became more affluent, especially with the discovery of oil, the government and entrepreneurs opted to follow Western models. The local residents were unable to afford to live in newly-introduced, more expensive, modern houses. While some old houses began deteriorating, many people began to establish new homes using mud and cement, a combination of old and newly arrived materials
and construction techniques. Today, these homes are considered slums in Jeddah. By proposing a CBD in Al-Nuzla, in the name of solving what it sees as the “slum problem,” the municipality, ironically, repeats the same strategy, without paying attention to previous lessons and the cultural dimensions of the project and its consequences.
**Literature Review**

**Informal Settlements**

Most of the scholars believe that the slums are, largely, the result of migration (Harries, 1998). Migrants move from rural areas to urban areas in search of jobs and better-living conditions. A large proportion of them build their own housing and establish settlements outside the legal framework of the states. Experts see this as a problem of legality, building regulations, and/or eyesores. Delving into the issue, they try to understand this phenomenon and explore how to deal with it properly. The object of this section is to develop a context (background) to the study of slums through a review of existing literature. I will pay attention to the experiences of select countries in Africa, Middle East, North America, and South America. I will examine these for the relevance to understanding informal settlements in Saudi Arabia. I will start my discourse by using ideas of Jane Jacobs (1961) because she talked about slums, although briefly, and approaches urban planning in a different way. This would provide me to develop a critical view.

In her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs (1961) addresses cities in general, but critiques planning. She questions some dominant ideas of her era. She highlights that the experts whose planning ideas dominated her era were not supportive of urbanity; they saw cities as crowded places with a lot of problems. For example, responding to the deterioration of cities, Ebenezer Howard (1965) developed the idea of Garden City which would provide a healthy environment, unlike cities. However, these garden cities are located outside of the city and have lower densities than cities. Similarly, according to her perception, the radiant city concept also propagates low-density, towers in the garden. Together, this radiant-garden city idea has made us believe that high density is bad.
Moreover, Jacobs (1961) argues that understanding cities as a simple problem or a disorganized complexity, two main approaches adopted in Western science, would not be adequate. She proposes that we view cities as organized complexities, similar to how the body works. This means the planners have to deal with many variables at the same time, yet they are connected—unlike in probability—into a single system like the body.

Jacob’s (1961) argument that the city is not a simple problem is supported by many other researchers such as Henri Lefebvre (1974) and David Harvey (1973). While Harvey (2000) sees the production of urban spaces as a temporal problem, Lefebvre (1974, 219) describes “space is known only in and through time.” Thus, in Benjamin Fraser’s (2009, 267) words “This notion that the production of space is predicted on a particular relation between time and space, is significant in that it suggests that as a movement, urban processes can only be insufficiently represented by static definitions. No doubt the kind of problem cities pose is a complex one.”

In regard to slums, in his book Planet of Slums, Mike Davis (2006, p.9) questions the idea that migration produces slums. He highlights that people in rural areas do not need to migrate to cities anymore because urban people also migrate to rural areas. The book also highlights that, with the increase of population across the world, “Villages become more like markets and towns and small cities become more like large cities”. He addresses the relationship between poor people and slums and how, in some cities, the majority of poor people live in slums outside slums. For example, Bangkok has five percent poverty rate, but 250,000 citizens live in about 1000 slums. Squatting is another idea that he discusses; Davis (2006) describes how people used to acquire lands in the Third World. Usually, people bribe the police, politicians, and gangsters to own a plot of land and have the access to the site. These people occupy lands such as floodplains, swamps, and hillsides where no one cares about. As Eileen Stillwaggon (1998,
p.39) says: “Squatters occupy no-rent land, land that has so little worth that no one bothers to have or enforce property right to it”.

For Jacobs (1961), money is not the solution to informal settlements. Many people think that if we have money then we can clear slums areas and build modern dwellings. Jacobs (1961) disagrees. She provides examples from the United States where the local states cleared slum areas and built new low- and middle-income housing complexes the projects became increasingly worse.

In Housing by People, John Turner (2000) argues that slums and shanties are not a problem to be solved through public housing and the latter is not more superior to the former. Despite the “shabbiness” of the structures, i.e., from a middle-class perspective, self-building is their own solution to the problem of not being able to find affordable in the market.

According to Turner (2000), there are two methods of development of housing: heteronomy and autonomy. He does not support heteronomy which means local governments providing housing for poor people. He cites the example of Pruitt-Igoe as an important example of how governments have failed. Pruitt-Igoe was a huge housing project in St. Louis, Missouri, built in 1954. It was demolished in the 1970s, indicating a change in American housing policy that moved away from public housing projects which the HUD claimed as concentrating poverty.

Many other studies have also shown that government-built housing projects are not effective in helping poorer people. Alan Gilbert (1997) argues that these housing projects are usually located in the periphery of urban areas. For Rodell and Skinner (1983), government’s involvement in housing projects ends with expensive products that people cannot afford. Peter Ward (1982) also observes that the governments usually do not have the ability to provide housing units for all who need.
Many projects carried out through public-private partnerships also belong to this category. In “Competing Futures: Legibility, Resistance, and the Redevelopment of Dharavi (India),” Nihal Perera (2012) demonstrates that Dharavi people doubt the appropriateness of the proposal accepted by the state to the community. Basically, the proposal is to clear the slum area and build residential towers along with modern facilities like hospitals at the cost of 3 billion dollars. The main object of the self-funded–cross-subsidized-- project carried out through a public-private partnership was to improve the status of the residents from low-income to middle-income. Developers who build housing for the current inhabitants of Dharavi will, at the same time, gain a profit by building additional housing and other buildings for sale. In the background, this is a project that reclaims part of Dharavi for investment, by pushing the poor people out of their homes. It was highly desired by the business community as land values have increased since the establishment of a business district, Bandra Kurla, right next to it. This is a clear example of heteronomy, according to Turner’s (2000) classification.

Autonomy is to respect people’s freedom to build. The formal housing market in the Third World supplies approximately twenty percent of the demand so people build the rest of the housing by themselves. As a result of the failure of many housing projects provided by governments, Turner (2000) became convinced with the idea of self-help in housing so people can decide how to live and build their own homes. This way, people will have the power to build and improve their houses and places the way they like and can afford.

The shabbiness of informal buildings is caused by particular lacks on the part of self-builders. Hence, it is necessary for governments to provide support, especially access to resources such as building materials, electricity, water, and transportation, mainly public goods. Turner (2000) says: “The participants should be free to use the resources, not only most
resources such as building materials and equipment but also must be free to employ them in ways compatible with their own requirements without inhibiting the freedom of others” (Turner 2000, p. 37).

Exposing us to a different point of view, in the context of Boston, Lawrence Vale (2002) analyzes the transformation of three different housing projects built in the 1950s. He begins his Reclaiming Public Housing by clarifying why early residents found public housing an alternative to self-established settlements. Instead of cold water flats and dark paths, public housing provides central heating and open spaces. He concludes that the successful public housing project requires safety, proper design, tenant organizations, and effective management. He stresses that public housing projects should be the product of not only the residents of the place, but also the architects, planners, lawyers, economist, real estate developers, and others.

Vale’s (2002) first example is West Broadway which was constructed on a slum-clearance site. In 1940, the unemployment rate in the “slum” was high: 40 percent of the labor force was on work relief, 50 percent of the households paid less than $14.58 per month as rent, and the infant mortality was high. As a result, the local state decided to clear the place and build a public housing project that contains 972 units in L-shaped buildings. The new design of the roads and building were not related to the previous organization of the settlement at all. Moreover, most of the “slum residents” were ineligible to receive housing within the new project. By 1960, 85 percent of the original population left the place.

When new residents occupied the project, many problems appeared, the lack of the facilities being the most important. The authorities decided to transform the place from both physical and social perspectives. From the social perspective, they decided to accept some Black-people’s applications to diversify this White neighborhood which spurred Black-White
violence in that era. Because of the racism, the physical condition had declined and the people had started to attack their buildings, making them worse. In 1970, the authorities began to redevelop the place, but this time the residents played a role in making decisions. The density of the new design was low and open spaces were increased; rooms were also made bigger. The residents began to fight racism and conducted many meetings with the hope of enhancing the community. In 1981, the redeveloped apartments were ready for occupation but racism was still prevalent and many racial crimes were committed there in the 1990s.

The issue of racism and public housing is not just limited to the U.S. but also happened in Canada and Europe. Andrew Duffy (1991) argues that in Toronto, officials did not provide enough information for Black applicants; they simply provided apartments in high-rise buildings. Housing units in low-rise buildings are mainly occupied by White. Some explain this concentration of Blacks and Whites in specific locations as personal preferences (Murdie, 1994). The contention is that Black people tend to choose buildings that have the Black population and the same with White people. Even in England, public housing projects are occupied by minorities such as Bangladeshis and Caribbeans (Smith, 1989).

Vale’s (2002) second example, Franklin Field was built on a vacant land, instead of a slum-clearance site. After WW2, the veterans who returned to Boston were looking for homes; so the authorities decided to build a complex of 504 apartments in Franklin Field. The planners decided to leave the eastern part of the land vacant for future use. The project was completed in 1954. Unfortunately, it had faulty construction, causing roof leaks, damp walls and flooded basements. By 1961, 75 percent of the original population had left the place. Despite construction issues, the authorities decided to build additional housings on the east side lot.
By 1970, the residents began to face economic difficulties and struggled to pay their monthly rent. The residents blamed the authorities for poor maintenance. The authorities thought of redeveloping the housing complex. They first established a tenant organization. The idea of redevelopment, at this time, was not only about transforming the buildings, but also about developing the community.

Similar to Turner’s (2000) idea of autonomy, the authorities began to design the new project within tenants’ views. Although the redevelopment process finished in 1987, the tenants said that the project was not as they planned with authorities. After the redevelopment, crack trade began and the crime levels rose high. One of the tenants who came in 1987 said that the place was nice, but the problem was drug dealers. Also, many tenants said that they wanted safety after the redevelopment, but it did not turn out that way.

The lack of maintenance is a huge issue in public housing projects. Vale (2002) is not the only one who addresses this issue. Larry Keating (2000) provides information about Techwood and Clark communities in Atlanta, Georgia which have effective locations with access to services and transportation. However, residents complain about the lack of maintenance and inadequate plumbing.

Vale’s (2002) third example, the Commonwealth project was located on a high elevation. In 1952, the project was ready to receive the residents and the authorities established twenty tenants’ organizations. During the 1960s, many tenants found problems with the administration and the maintenance of the project. By 1970s, the project had problems such as physical deterioration and racial transition. The decline of the physical condition exacerbated the crimes and made it worst. The authorities, along with tenants, decided to redevelop the complex but, this time, employed a private developer.
The apartment complex that was completed in 1981, according to a new design, had many open spaces and play areas for children. Also, the redevelopment processes enhanced social relationships between the residents. Furthermore, the management of the project was also handed over to the private sector: GMC took the responsibility. After several years, the project gained a good reputation and received many awards as an example of a good community. In Vale’s (2002) assessment, the Commonwealth Tenants Association with its leaders played a central role in the redevelopment, besides the role played by the high-quality private management company.

According to Jack Greene (1999), a successful housing project needs to have a strong relationship between residents and the police department. Nickolas Bloom (2008) sees the most important element in making housing projects work as effective management. He draws his lessons and recommendations from the New York City Housing Authority who still operates with 400,000 tenants.

Vale (2002) concludes his book by identifying seven elements of success in public housing: smooth implementation, recognized design quality, improved tenant-organization capacity, enhanced maintenance and management performance, improved security, progress on socioeconomic development, and resident satisfaction. Hence, it is not simply the buildings that bring success to public housing, but their social organization, people’s ability to participate in decision-making, and security.

In regard to self-built settlements, in The Other Path, Hernando De Soto (1989) provides a different solution. The book focuses on Peru Where most of the economy belongs to the informal sector. This means most economic activity is conducted outside of the formal economy which involves the circuits of capital, banks, insurance companies, and the government,
including the legal and tax system. He discusses informality in Peru in regard to housing, trade, and transportation. De Soto (year) believes that providing formal ownership of land would enable the self-builders to operate in the formal market as the others who do so. Development here means to bring to the formal economy the land on which informal housing are located.

In regard to housing, De Soto (1989) thinks that informal housing is caused by migrants. They chose public land that the government owns because governments usually do not react on time, unlike private owners. According to him, informal housing represents these people’s struggle to acquire a piece of property in the urban. Instead of searching ways to carry out an urban renewal, we can use their own roads and infrastructure to redevelop the areas. To redevelop these areas we have to utilize and upgrade the current environment. Along with these programs in the urban, we have to control the growth of population too. In sum, De Soto (1989) says that people have chosen to work outside the laws because these do not support their needs. So we have to balance between the formal and informal to provide what these people are searching for. Key to redevelopment is to provide tenure security to the squatters and bring them to the mainstream.

In “Discussion of Random and Informal Settlements in Damascus,” Khadour Yasser (2009) examines the concept of the informal settlement and its manifestations in Damascus. He asks different questions. Damascus, which has a long history, has experienced various economic, social, cultural, and political transformations. Two major problems that these have caused are housing shortage and informal settlements. In the 1990s, the city entered a transformation age where construction was directed by the formal planning theories. At the same time, the city also saw the rise informal settlements at large scale. Many laws were made to discourage informal settlement but to no avail. Yasser (2009) demonstrates that whenever a formal settlement is built
in Damascus, its twin informal settlements also emerge at the same time. Khadour’s main suggestion is to legalize informal settlements by upgrading them and make affordable housings for low-income people.

Many experts disagree with De Soto (1989). Transferring the slums from informal sectors to formal sectors (through tenure security) might end unwanted consequences. Geoffrey Payne (1989) says that this idea will push the tenants outside the slums because the rents would go up and tenants may not be able to afford. The idea seems too useful for owners, but it might be a nightmare for tenants. Moreover, Peter Ward (1976) urges that if we shift these people to formal sectors then they have to pay a tax which is hard to apply due to the lack of finance that these people are already facing. Mike Davis (2006) has stated that De Soto’s idea was popular, because it just needs a pen to make it.

In developing an informal settlement upgrading protocol for Epworth, Zimbabwe, the authorities opted to ensure that Epworth has asphalt roads, sewers, pipe-borne water, electricity, and many other important settlements. The process includes the regularization of tenure. Due to this process, unauthorized development took place at the large scale and the settlement had to suffer a lot. The close by Epworth began to receive the spillover of the increasing urbanization in the capital of Zimbabwe, Harare.

Responding to the new context, the inhabitants of Epworth began to sell their plots to new migrants. Poorly resourced and the capacity-deficient Epworth local board continued to depend heavily on the central government for technical and financial assistance. With government grants, the slum situation improved a little: Water lines were extended and road networks were improved. Various social groups in EPworth grew with the support of each other and almost 12 savings schemes were established.
At this stage, a dialog was conducted between local communities and authorities with the view of making a plan for the betterment of this settlement which was seen as a slum.

Zimbabwean NGO and various local communities took part in the profiling and enumeration phase. Land tenure issues and service delivery to the neighborhood were addressed. Authorities agreed to upgrade selected areas of Epworth.

GIS skills were provided to community members enabling them to create an accurate map at the household level using the information gathered during enumeration. GIS was also used to link spatial and social data. Then a concept plan was presented to the community to assess how roads would link various lands to each other. Various aspects from building to the road were mapped and planned with the consultation of the community. The final draft was presented to the planning task team.

Based on this literature, I can surmise that the slum is a question without any specific answer, it has many answers. Every book has a different view and at the same time; they all might be right, but it is hard to find a place where someone has solved the so-called slum problem. The literature addresses unique situations and it is not logical to choose any one idea to solve slums around the world. This is also an idea that Jacobs (1992) shares. She argues how the experts in her era lacked knowledge about how the cities work. Every slum needs to be understood individually. This understanding should cover its location, residents, culture, economy, and other aspects contributed to its making. After we become familiar with the place, we could use the proper policy to address the issue, although this too may be partial.

In terms of Turner’s (1977) perspective, and the Epworth experience, self-help housing seems the better option to address the slum issue. Self-building gives people the power to choose what and how they build. However, it might be hard for these people to make big decisions by
themselves. As Jeremy Seabrook (1996, p. 197) describes in his book, The Cities of The South: “It would be foolish to pass from one distortion – that the slums are places of crime, disease and despair – to the opposite: that they can be safely left to look after themselves”. Also, a study by Alfredo Stein (1991) A Critical Review of The Main Approaches to Self-Help Housing Programs demonstrates that the self-help policy should not be just about people controlling their decisions, but should also cover the labor force and the capitalist system.

While the idea of De Soto seems to make a good choice, it too has many weaknesses. After formalizing slums areas, the residents have to pay taxes. The idea favors the owners and tax collectors but is disadvantageous to tenants.

However, this idea might be the right solution for Saudi Arabia for many reasons. The slum dwellers in Saudi Arabia want to be in the formal sector, but the government considers them as illegal residents. De Soto (1989) offers to these people the door to enter the formal sector. Furthermore, there is no tax system in Saudi Arabia so, after formalizing slums, no additional fee would occur. However, the increase in land value may be a hurdle.

Vale (2002) has a different view. His book focuses on what would and should happen after we build. His book mainly deals with social and technical aspects of living and management of apartment buildings. Even though governments might work hard to develop housing projects, the latter could fail if there are violations such as racism or drug dealing. He also points out the importance of maintaining the projects and how the management should rely on professional companies to maintain homes of the people. Finally, he delivered the idea that not all public housing projects are failed, there are some of them succeed.
Development Discourse

Development and redevelopment –coupled with modernization-- are commonly used to define what the authorities and the formal community wishes to do to slums. Yet development has multiple definitions. In the past, the term was used for the humans, animals, and plants, and now it has been redefined in a relation to societies and states. During the 100-year period from 1759 to 1859, the word “development” entered into the discussion of world economic forum. Since then, different scholars and experts have provided many ideas and concepts of development. Some say it is the political strength of a country; others say that development is the social freedom actions; some others claim that it is the efficient use of natural resources. There are others who feel that development is nothing but fake; other views include that the development is the technical performance.

Among many post-colonial national leaders, the Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere (McDonald, 2002) adopted the view that development is the political movement of people to reach their objectives and goals. Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1991) proposed that ethno-development is what one need to look into to seek for one’s own culture, instead of using borrowed view of other cultures. Walt Rostow (1960) formalized development in terms of more common economics. He proposed that every country will develop passing through five economic stages:

1. Traditional Society
2. Precondition for Take Off
3. Take off
4. Drive to Maturity
5. Era of mass consumption
Following the dependency school, Andre Gunder Frank (1967) proposed a structural way to understand not only the difference between developed and underdeveloped countries, but also a particular relationship between the two. The major proposition of the theory regarding development is that economic power flows from core countries to those in the periphery. Instead of imagining “underdevelopment” as an attribute of a traditional society, or a deficiency of the society itself, Frank demonstrates that underdevelopment is a process that non-Western societies underwent as part of their coming to contact with core capitalist societies. Underdevelopment results not from the absence of anything but from the existence of something; the so-called developed countries developed at the expense of the underdeveloped countries.

The more recent, neoliberal type of development tends to abandon ordinary people in unprecedented proportions. In “Ordinary Lives in Extraordinary Cyberabad,” Diganta Das (2013) examines the development of a cyber-city called Cyberabad by the government in India. The state decided to transform 17 villages in the outskirts of Hyderabad into a modern city, Cyberabad that will be a home for modern technology-based industries. As this area was developed, other parts of the city were struggling with the lack of basic infrastructure. In this splintered city, while the project’s new beneficiaries got a modern life (or facilities), the former residents of the area lost their ordinary lives; the poor people were pushed out of their homes. The displaced residents chose a nearby area to live. As the software companies began to move to Cyberabad, this adjacent area became important for real estate developers. Residents tried to contact the government in order to reclaim their lands, but they failed. In result, some former residents of Cyberabad established food stalls along with the main road to make money. In addition to making a livelihood, they did this to deliver a message for the governments that “we belong to this place”.
Taking away from economics, Amartya Sen (1999) tags development to freedom. According to this view, development must be assessed and measured by how much liberalism a country has and how much people can make choices that permit them to aid themselves and others. For him, development is the ability of people to live as long as they can the way they want. Sen (1999) considers the freedom of individuals as one of the basic pillars of the development process. He particularly emphasizes on the freedom of women in the debate “Efficiency vs. Equity” and “Market vs. State”, Sen (1999) takes the middle path. He believes that the overall success of the market is dependent on social and political settings.

It seems that development, both in regard to theoretical and political approaches, is yet to be defined. Some see development as a tool for political conflicts as Andrea Cornwall (2010) indicates when he describes that “development was mainly used as an excuse for enticing “developing countries” to side with one camp or the other” (Cornell, 2010, 20). Others see it as human freedoms (Sen, 1999). And for Walt Rostow (1960), every country would be developed passing through certain stages. To end this discourse, Cornwall (2010) emphasizes the importance of defining “development”. He claims that by having a precise definition for development the discourse might end. I have mixed feelings about it. On the one hand, I agree that the success in reaching a definition for the word is important. On the other hand, I am still uncertain whether development, after defining the word, will help the poor people and reduce the gap between the rich and poor. My own view is that the word is the variable which means it will change depending on the place. Though I admit that developed countries are more advanced than those who classified as developing countries, I still maintain that the development word is different from place to place. For example, In Bangladesh they might see development as the ability to own a house where in Saudi Arabia they might see it as how many mosques they have
next to their houses. In sum, it might difficult to have one definition but it might be useful to measure the development according to our views and cultures.
The Construction of (Built) Modernity in Saudi Arabia

Modernization is another commonly used term, regarding to the changes in the built environment, particularly slum redevelopment, the term “informal settlement” itself is a new term that emerged in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s, along with the emergence of modernization. Informal is used to identify non-modernized areas. Informal settlements in Jeddah are also located within Saudi Arabia’s development discourse. Therefore, it is important to know how development/modernization began and how it contributed to the growth identification of informal settlements in Jeddah.

In the West, development is marked by the industrial revolution and the changes that occurred after that, particularly in the late-18th century. During this period, Western societies shifted from manual production methods to manufacturing. Unlike the Western countries, the Saudi Arabian economy grew after the discovery of oil resources, in 1933. The discovery of oil transformed the country of agricultural and fishing villages into one that has rapidly urbanized (Bassens, 2010). Jeddah’s population grew from 400,000, in 1971, to 5.1 million, in 2011. (Municipality of Jeddah)

The American company, Standard Oil of California (SOCAL) held the right to manage oil resources. This company was later called Aramco. The company attracted the professional workers for oil exploration to the desert country. SOCAL built three settlements as outposts of American workers. Solon Kimball describes how these settlements looked like:

“No … Westerner would have difficulty in identifying the senior staff camp as a settlement built by Americans in our south western tradition of town planning. It is an area of single-story dwellings for employees and their families, each house is surrounded by a small grassed yard usually enclosed by a hedge.” (Kimball, 1956 p. 472).

These settlements were located next to the oil operations but separated from local communities. The estimated American population, in 1959, was 4,000 persons.
In order to house American and Saudi workers, SOCAL built more and more settlements in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. It used new construction material such as cement and concrete. The Saudi elite in the area began to follow American residential designs and built “modern” houses using cement and concrete. For example, Ahmed Al-Kaki built a modern house in 1950 in Al-Khobar City where he imported builders from outside of Saudi Arabia to assemble the houses built for Americans (Al-Mubarak 1999).

Although the elite adopted this new culture, but local people were confused. Ordinary people showed some resistance at the beginning (Elsheshtawy, 2011). They first differentiated between the two kinds of houses, calling them new (Western) houses and the local (Arabic) houses (Al-Naim, 1998). Western houses were neither built in any significant quantities nor welcomed (Kimball, 1956). In addition to naming the intruding built form, local people were very careful in dealing with the new culture that came with it. People continued to build houses in mud and wood.

SOCAL was not happy dealing with these new traditional houses built by the ordinary people. Hence, the government asked SOCAL to resolve the issue. In response, the company created the first planned cities in Saudi Arabia, in Dammam and Khobar (Al-Hathloul, 1981). The company also built, by 1944, three new neighborhoods in three existing cities: Dhahran, Ras Tanoura, and Bqiq. Furthermore, SOCAL had required all residents of Saudi Arabia to attain a building permit to build any house. In order to obtain a permit, the builder is supposed to provide
a design for the house. In that era, it was difficult to find a local architect, who can do this task. In this sense, rules were imported before the infrastructure was developed. Hence, people, who could afford, relied on Western architects who worked with SOCAL.

In Riyadh, the establishment of Al-Malaz District, which used a grid pattern for the first time, stood as the first sign of modernization. The changes were not limited to the physical environment but spread across many other areas of life. Saudi Arabia’s companies and American companies started the constructions of new houses and various government departments were moved to Riyadh from different cities. New developments included the construction of a new airport and new villas (Al-Naim, 2008). The ordinary people called the new part of the city as New Riyadh and the traditional part as the Old Riyadh.
As discussed above, the elite accepted this new culture. The locals also followed the new trend, set by the upper classes, but not earlier than the several stages of resistance.

Ordinary people accepted this new culture for many reasons. First, the government provided unconditional loans for those who wanted to build their houses. In order to obtain a loan, the building had to follow Aramco Building Codes, which required the use of cement and concrete. Although building with local resources was popular and accessible at that time, but the ability to get an unconditional loan was a strong incentive for the people to replace their traditional houses with modern ones. Second, the new built culture was associated with the elite as well as the educated people, who were working with SOCAL. Hence, ordinary people thought
that by living in new houses they might project the image of the elite. The third reason was that every time a new Western-style house was constructed in a city, the local people called it “New” as we saw in Riyadh. They developed a sense to live in the “New” house and leave the “Old” house.
**Jeddah Development**

Jeddah, a key trading center between India and Europe, was not different from aforementioned Saudi cities. In 1947, it was a port protected by a wall. The city was built out of the wood, coral, and mud. It was made up of three major areas: Baghdadiyah in the north, Al-Nuzla Al-Yamania in the southeast, and Hindawiyah on the south. As Jeddah was modernized with the advent of oil, the first people to respond were the merchants. They left their coral houses and moved into new Western-type houses introduced by SOCAL in eastern Saudi Arabia. Like its prototypes, this led to the classification of houses as “new” and “old”; local people called the areas with traditional houses “Old Jeddah” and the areas with new houses, “New Jeddah”. As new also stood for good at that time, people began to accept the new culture and tried to place themselves in the “new” category.

Lila Abu-Lughod (1990, 43) observes that “Where there is resistance, there is power”. This statement can be related to the conflict between the “New” and “Old” in the early stages of modernization in Saudi Arabia. This was integral to the battle between local people and the elite: Local people saw the Western house areas and its residents as bizarre at first. For example, in “Old Riyadh” local people informed one man who did not attend a prayer with his neighbors to come to the mosque and if he missed prayers again, then he would find himself in the new Al-Malaz District, which was “New Riyadh,” as a punishment (Alghazzmi, 2004).

During the second stage, many local people constructed traditional houses next to western-style houses built by SOCAL. It took place in Dammam and Al-Khobar; when local people built their traditional houses next to the senior American settlements. It occurred in Riyadh where people settled next to Al-Malaz District. The “New Riyadh” was, thus, surrounded
by tents and shanties. These people as described in the Western literature had no modern education. They were desperate for work and sent remittances to their families (Menoret, 2011).

The situation was the same in Jeddah. Few years after King Abdul-Aziz built his palaces using cement and concrete, the local people began to build their traditional houses next to them. At this stage, there was not much exchange of ideas between the cultures of those who built in these different forms. However, many locals were trying to understand modern buildings in new areas.

During the third stage, local people started adding cement on facades of their mud and wood houses. The purpose was to turn their traditional houses into modern ones. While the people seem impressed by modern houses, they were following the image more than the content. In addition to the high cost and unaffordability of these modern houses, the people could not build with modern materials; because there is no skilled labor locally. Within these conditions, people simply used cement on facades of their traditional houses.

The fourth stage saw the marginalization of local culture and the total dependence on modern building materials and techniques. This phase was supported by Aramco, which contributed and helped promote the newly-arrived culture. It would not have been possible without the local acceptance. Loans from the government made it easy to build a modern house. Modernization peaked in 1979. The next section will examine this process in detail, in Al-Nuzla Al-Yamaniya.
Al-Nuzla Al-Yamaniya Neighborhood

Before Modernization

The first mention of Al-Nuzla Al-Yamaniya was in 1909, in Mohamed Labib’s (1909. 217) notes on Jeddah: “its [Jeddah’s] buildings developed slowly and appeared in its south a small settlement called Al-Nuzla where huts were inhabited by Bedouins”. At that time, the local residents were building their houses from the materials available in the local environment. The most popular building material was mud. Usually, if someone wanted to build a house, he invited a group of people to build it. They cooperated (using self-help) with each other and divided the tasks based on their skills.

While ordinary people, or the middle-income people, built their houses with mud, the merchant class built their houses with stones. The stone buildings were a sign that distinguished merchants from ordinary people. The stones were brought from the coast. These were brought to the neighborhood by the private contractors, who extracted the stone, cut into shape, and refined them.

In the neighborhood, there was a famous builder of houses by the name Ahmed Al-Fadli, who specialized in building with mud. Mufrej Al-Roisi and Ahmed Ashor were famous for building houses with stones (Al-Fadli, 2010). They were building unique houses for their customers. Usually, they built small houses that can accommodate at least one family. They minimized the window size to reduce sunlight and used a locally-made material called al-norah, to paint the walls in white color, which absorbs sunlight and keeps the house cool. They also used al-norah to decorate walls, windows, and doors. This material plays the role of cement, in today modern houses, but it is very difficult to find craftsmen, who can use this material, know its components, or how to make it. There are many rumors about the components of this
material, where many people say they made it by burning a particular type of stone and mixing it with mud and water.

They also built a semi-private space, like a verandah located, in front of the main door of the house called al-dakkah. This space is usually little above ground. It is usually where the owner of the house sits with his neighbors in the evening, having conversations about issues. Usually, these issues are about their daily life. After the prayers, people get together and talk about the news of others, especially what the neighbors did in that day and who were missing at the mosque. They might also talk about the current incidents' news items such as crimes and large events in places outside the neighborhood. Young people will use it after their parents finish using it. The passersby also use it as a station for relaxing a bit. It is a space of social intersection as well as for helping others.

However, the dakkah of the elite could only be used by the rich and the merchants. Many such famous dakkahs were there such as the Dakkah of Yaslim Al-Dokhaini, Dakkah of Ilyan Al-Nojaidy, and the dakkah of Muhammad Al-Fadli. Unfortunately, none of them exists today.

Figure 3: One of the dakas in the old Jeddah’s area (source: Jameel 2002)
Before the contemporary balconies, they had roshans, which were big balconies that were covered with garnished woods that obscured the vision of those who were outside the house, but provided fresh air. The wood for roshans came from the city of Taif located in the valley. The elite designed their roshans in large sizes with wood imported from India (Al-Amri, 2006).

Traditional rules play a significant role in designing roshans, where privacy is the first objective. The owners can see people outside, but they cannot see owners. Also, Jeddah has annual dust storms, so roshans would act as a buffer that prevents the dust from entering the house. Roshans had also been the places to cool drinking water, which was placed by the inhabitants, in the earthenware containers. Many historians and artist felt sad of the demise of these traditional-style balconies. In his book Shathrat AlDhahab, Ahmed Al-Ghazali (1987) wrote that “it is worth to mention that the modern architecture in Makkah and Jeddah had dropped roshans and kicked it to extinction.”

Figure 4: Roshans in Al-Balad District, Jeddah
Choosing of Al-Nuzlah for the King Palace

In 1928, King Abdul-Aziz – the founder of Saudi Arabia – wanted to build his palace outside the urban area of Jeddah. Thus, he selected Al-Nuzlah. A goal was to make the city larger than its size, at that time. Completed in 1932, the palace consisted of several one and two-storied buildings, with fences around them. Most crucially, this was Jeddah’s first encounter with the cement and concrete as building materials before it was widely used by SOCAL. The purpose of this palace was to welcome guests of the king and his friends and to have a place to stay in Jeddah. The king used the palace as his residence for a long time.

This palace witnessed the first agreement between the Saudi government and SOCAL for the discovery of oil, in 1933. Moreover, it has witnessed many agreements between the Saudi government and England, Kuwait, Pakistan, and Egypt. With the global significance of the palace, Al-Nuzlah has also gained a global reputation.

Figure 5: King’s guest room from inside the Palace
After building the palace, the elite quickly adopted the newly emerged building materials. One of the richest families in Jeddah, the Al-Zinals decided to build their house in Al-Nuzlah with cement and concrete. They hired the foreign labor from Egypt and Syria to build the house designed by a Western engineer, in 1934; just one year after the completion of the king’s palace (Al-Sharq Al-Awast Newspaper, 2008).

In contrast, the local people were uninterested in adopting this modern culture, at this time. In fact, the traditional builders warned the local people from walking beside any unknown modern home, because “it might fall on you as it is fragile and weak” (Abo Zaid, 2012).

After the completion of Al-Zainal’s modern house, Nasief family also started to rebuild its house by new materials. Again, the builders were brought from outside the area and the local builders were ignored. Richest families, including BaJuober Family and Mushkies Family, demolished their traditional houses and built modern houses.

Eventually, the local people began to follow the elite and the king, but by adapting new materials into their old construction and ways of thinking. As they could not afford to build with cement, local builders adapted cement, instead of al-norah to paint walls. In this, cement was applied to the exteriors of the buildings built with local traditional materials and technology.

It represented more than the adapted cement. This was the first crucial step in adopting a new culture of building. Their houses became modern from outside and traditional from inside. Many of them replaced roshans with modern windows because they do not want to distort the image of the modern house with some sort of traditional elements that were no longer desirable (Akbar, 2000). This way, the whole façades of “traditional” houses became modern.

According to Abo Zaid who wrote Builders in Old Jeddah the conflict between traditional and “modern” builders was like a war; it extended for more than two decades. It ended with the
defeat for traditional builders, their ideas, their assistants, and the whole profession and craft. Today, the number of traditional builders in Jeddah has dropped to two and their influence is limited to repairing and upgrading old buildings (Abo Zaid, 2012). In regard to people, they are convinced that cement and concrete are strong and useful.

In the 1970s, Jeddah witnessed a high rate of urbanization, largely caused by the new oil industry. The population of Jeddah shot from 30,000, in 1947 to 568,046, in 1974, and 1,032,855, in 1986, reporting an annual growth rate of 5.11(Source: Population Censuses, Ministry of Finance, 1992). Its environment saw the rise of many mega-scale projects.

Local authorities prepared many plans for the development of Jeddah. As oil revenues were the cornerstone for expanding the city, the local authorities relied on building in the Western style. As highlighted above, no one locally understood how to build in this mode or any aspect of it. This led to the import of the necessary materials, technology and skills. Cement was imported from England, the wooden rafters were brought from Africa, and the flush toilets were imported from India and Lebanon. Import of these materials and building components led to an increase in the construction costs.

In 1975, the country developed a strong, Second Five-Year Development Plan, the goal of which was to take “major” steps toward the modernization (Fadan, 1983). One of its strategies was to encourage the internal migration from the rural to urban areas. As part of it, the plan proposed huge-projects across the kingdom, particularly in Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam.

Jeddah attracted more than 350,000 laborers from abroad and most of them accompanied their families. They were largely related to Egypt, Yemen, India, Bangladesh, and Nigeria. Furthermore, it attracted more than 500,000 Saudis, who moved from rural areas. Jeddah, thus, got equipped with people and the government’s response was to build two public housing
projects. The first, with 3420 apartments and villas, was built in 1975 and the second, built in 1979, had 32 residential towers of 15 stories each (Fadan, 1983).

Also, in 1976, the country introduced a program that provided citizens with affordable loans and free land. These lands and loans were intended for Saudi citizens. As many Saudis built new houses, foreign laborers moved into some of abandoned houses to make them livable; especially for those who had no legal homes. Al-Nuzla was one such neighborhood.

A significant number of Saudi migrants also dwelt in houses vacated by the original residents of Al-Nuzla. They also made changes to these structures, adjusting these houses to their needs. These migrants paid a small rent to gain the right to the neighborhood. Usually they were employees who just got married, got a job in Jeddah, and/or belonged to the poor families that wanted to migrate to Jeddah. This way, it became a neighborhood of both citizens and foreign workers, still living in the distinct quarters.

In 2000, many newspapers, academics, and politicians criticized the existence of informal settlements in Jeddah, citing these as negative entities. They showed the importance of removing these settlements from cities in terms of economy and security. Professor Mohammed AL Sharif (2001), from Um Alqura University, was one of the critics. In 2004, he wrote how informal settlements started in Makkah and revealed its demographic components. He focused on illegal labors and their behavior, particularly how they are isolated, not integrated into communities, and thus spread inappropriate habits and practices in Makkah community.

The in-depth discussion of this issue, in newspapers, exerted enough pressure for the government to react. Al-Madinah is one of the most famous newspapers in Saudi Arabia. In 2008, it published a report on Jeddah’s informal settlements, calling it “The cancer that hit our cities and if we don’t treat it, it will spread and we can’t do much in the future”. The report
showed that most of the residents in these areas are poor and they are not educated. It claimed that 76.4 percent of crimes in the city happened in informal settlements. Furthermore, the study found that 93.3 percent of alcohol consumption occurred in these areas. It then concluded that these areas are time bombs, waiting to explode.

AlYaum newspaper also involved in showing the danger of informal settlements. In 2007, it talked about these areas as “urban retardation” and “lands for deviation”. One of its reports referred to a study that said, if someone goes to these areas, he would imagine that he is in an African country.

**The Government Reaction**

Due to media pressure, the government established a new program to remove informal settlements in Jeddah, including Al-Nuzlah but opted to use the newly cleared land for development. The proposal was to provide a housing unit for each family in Al-Nuzlah in apartment buildings that would be built outside the urban area of Jeddah. While the city talks about the inhabitants of Al-Nuzlah, this project has all the characteristics of gentrification: The removal of the inhabitants, relocating them outside the urban area, acquiring their land, and using it for the private development.

However, the government intends to build the replacement buildings, before the removal of any resident from the neighborhood. In 2003, local residents of Al-Nuzlah strongly opposed to the proposal and refused to move out from their homes. In order to end the conflict, the king issued a royal order, ordering the residents to move. however, the order got failed. This is a huge event as not many dares to question the king.
Coming back at it, in 2008, the municipality of Jeddah established a huge program that aimed to redevelop informal settlements, including Al-Nuzlah. This time the government was more organized. It divided informal settlements into four parts: (1) the areas viable for private development, (2) the areas not viable to private development, (3) the areas that people themselves can improve, and (4) the areas that are in dire need of immediate public intervention. Al-Nuzlah was included in the first category due to its location. This means again that local
residents need to be relocated, but this time the land would go to the developers. Once again, this confirms the municipality’s gentrification intentions.

The municipality played both the key roles in the process: It first established the development program and the designed ordinances and regulations. Second, it played the role of the developer because it established a private company that would own the land in the form of a public-private partnership, which would undertake the development project. The municipality also provided, in its proposal, three options for the local residents: (1) to become the contributors of the project in which role the residents would not receive any compensation, (2) to receive compensation according to the municipality’s estimate, or (3) to sell their land to others in which case the new owners are considered as contributors (Jeddah Municipality, 2008).

As the majority of local residents in Al-Nuzlah are poor, they could not accept the first option. It needed them to contribute and, therefore, they could not become a part of it. With regard to the second option, they were not satisfied with property values determined by the public committee; these values did not allow them to afford a house in the overpriced market. Hence, the mayor of Jeddah tried to offer more options, one of which was to give each family a housing unit in the new project.

The last option was the best, but local residents had another opinion. During fieldwork in 2011, many of them indicated to me that all new housing units that the city would provide would be the apartments in towers. Now they are living in houses with backyards, open spaces and have their own parking lots. By accepting the aforementioned option, they would get apartments in the sky and lost the direct contact with earth. So they refused this option, as well.

In addition to local residents, the people who moved out of Al-Nuzlah (absentee landlords) and those who have rented their houses also refused the proposal. Jamal Burhan, one
of those who rejected the proposal, believes that the project would fail again; because the local residents have no place to go. Burhan said the municipality has only one option, not four, which is tear down existing buildings without any plan for the residents. According to him, the only way to develop Al-Nuzlah is to provide some monetary help for owners, so that they can renovate their buildings. This resonates Turner’s support system idea, in which people build and the state support.

**Local resident’s reaction**

For the second time, the local residents rejected the proposal: They refused to comment on the new proposal and to move out of Al-Nuzla. Their reaction was different to that of 2003, where they had defied a king’s order and the leaders of the neighborhood felt strong because people supported their vision and action. The people knew that the municipality is serious about the project this time. They also believed that they might not get another royal order to evacuate the neighborhood. They have won that battle and become stronger.

Before the project, one of the leaders, Muhammad Alharbi told me that “we are ignored and no one talks with us; local people do not see us as important.” He said that everyone has a job and their homes are safe. The new project has turned the situation around: “We began to receive many people at our houses and in return we have to do our job.” Clearly, the residents have transformed their struggle from individual resistance to social movement against the municipality.

They began a website called “Al-Nuzlah Community” <nozla.com> where they display hundreds of photos about the history of the neighborhood and advertise events and meeting dates on the regular basis. The website also has a special section for the latest news on the project. It is
very rare to see community websites for neighborhoods in Saudi Arabia; Al-Nuzlah’s community organization was the first to do so. It is still the only one of its own nature.

The organization has no building or formal place, but a cyberspace. The community stays in contact through the website. If the members want to get together, community members send a group message to all other members and figure out a place to meet. They usually gather in someone’s home. If the gathering is large, they use a vacant land.

![Figure 8: A vacant land turned into a community gathering place](image)

The members of the website reached 15,000 individuals, in just two years and the goal was to strengthen the relationships among local residents and to unify their voices. Television stations are very formal in Saudi Arabia and they focus more on national level events and not local. Hence, the community could not reach them. Instead, the community invites famous YouTube channels to Jeddah and urged these channels to bring community members’ voice to the public. The community succeeded.
Also, local people encouraged each other to visit all residents, and al-dakkahs in front of houses are used for meetings. These places of social gathering, where people share and discuss everyday life-stories, turn into political places; where they organize themselves to have conversations about the project and map out strategies to respond to it. Furthermore, they were cooperating with anyone who wanted to study the neighborhood. When I was doing my final project for the bachelor’s degree in Al-Nuzlah in 2011, it was very easy to reach the local people. They warmly welcomed my visits and provided all types of assistance, but it was difficult to get information from the Jeddah Municipality. Most of the information at the municipality was a secret.

Jeddah Municipality was in an embarrassing position when they invited local residents to the municipality and showed their formal papers to start the process of expropriating land. Just 30 people showed their papers out of almost 50,000 people in Al-Nuzlah. This sent a clear message from local people to the municipality that the former did not welcome this proposal. In August 2008, the municipality gave an ultimatum of one year to evacuate homes in the neighborhood.
A Field Study

My father chose Al-Nuzlah, because it was close to his job. We had a small apartment and my father paid a small rent. Our neighbors were from Nigeria, Sudan, Bangladesh, Yemen and some small Saudi families. While all non-Saudi neighbors were laborers, who worked locally in the neighborhood, the Saudis worked for the government and so is my father. As he received a loan from the government, in 1991, we left that place when I was six years old. These days, it is difficult to see Saudis and non-Saudis live in the same neighborhood, except for in the informal settlements in Jeddah, which are culturally diverse. Hence, Al-Nuzlah is unique. In this section, I will begin by alluding to my experience in the neighborhood and build on my interviews.

The life in Al-Nuzlah is far different from the new area of the city. It is a locality in the sense of the word. There are no famous restaurants or similar institutions in it that attract outsiders. All restaurants are operated by the local people. Also, there are very few occupations that are not found in any other area of Jeddah, except Al-Nuzlah. The one I remember, the most, is recycling cans and metal scrap by the Nigerian women in the neighborhood.

These Nigerian women began their business early in the morning. They took a taxi to new areas of Jeddah, where such waste is available. Going from trash can to the trash can, they searched for metal scrap, usually Pepsi and Coca-Cola cans, and collected them in baby strollers. Then they go knock on doors and ask the residents whether they have old clothes they want to donate to the masaken, which means the poor and those in need. They used an abandoned house next to mine as the warehouse to store these cans and clothes. In a larger sense, the neighborhood has its own economy.
In contrast to my positive image of Al Nuzlah, the newspapers continued to deliver the message that this neighborhood was derelict and dangerous. Many newspapers claimed that all buildings in the neighborhood were in the poor condition and that it was a place of illegal labor and a home for the criminal activities. Many people today think it is dangerous to visit, especially to walk inside Al-Nuzlah. Complementing this transformation of Al-Nuzlah into the other of new settlements, those newspapers favored the proposed project.

Last summer, I revisited the neighborhood to document the current condition. The main focus of the visit was to verify the newspaper stories. Evidently, as Perera (2012) argues in regard to Dharavi, these reports represent the fear of the middle classes turned into something bad about Al-Nuzlah. Here, Perera (2012) argues that the middle classes are afraid to walk into Dharavi and cannot fathom details such as densities. They assume that it is overcrowded. People live on one on top of the other, full of disease, and a place where you can get killed. As the neighborhood is illegible to the middle classes, they project danger, filth, and disease onto it. The sentiments about Al-Nuzlah are also similar.

Yet the neighborhood is legible to the residents. One of the leaders, Muhammad Al-Harbi and three other people from the neighborhood invited me for a field visit. We saw many buildings that were new and in good conditions. The building in (figure 9) was constructed in 2010 in a modern style and it has 12 apartments. The owner, Abdullah Al-Zahrani said that he will not vacate the building because he invested all his money in it. He spent the money, he collected over the time period of 20 years, to build this nice building. Because he does not have land tenure, the government would simply compensate the cost of construction. He refused to take that amount because it did not account for his time and his land. He said this project has caused huge damage to his business because many current tenants decided not to renew their
contracts; they are afraid that the municipality would tear down the building anytime. As he is struggling to find tenants, he tried offering some incentives such as, if the municipality demolishes his building, he would pay the tenants to move their furniture. According to him, his monthly rents are 40 percent below than the market rate.

Figure 9: One of the new buildings that we saw, it was new and constructed in 2010

There are two iconic buildings in the neighborhood: King Abdul-Aziz’s Palace (Figure 10) and the television tower (Figure 11). The municipality will not tear down the palace, but will keep it, but turn it into a regional museum. It will also add some open spaces around the building. The municipality will not tear down landmark television tower either. It will also continue to be a landmark.
The streets were clean and wide (Figure 12). They have the trees and sidewalks. Overall streets are in the good condition. Hence, it was impossible for me to understand the need for neighborhood renewal. The only issue was that more people own cars, but they do not have enough parking lots. However, they manage to park their cars without any crisis.
I asked Muhammad about the source of newspapers stories. According to him, a part of the story is correct; the part that needs to be developed is the center of the neighborhood. It is the oldest part. The newspapers concentrated on the character of the center and generalized it to the whole Al-Nuzlah. They showed it to the public: “This is the image of Al-Nuzlah”. In this way, the government can support the new project.

The center is the home for the illegal workers. The people here have their own rules. There are no police cars and even any such car has never visited this area. The layout of the area makes it so hard for the police. There are a lot of narrow alleys that help the illegal workers to escape from the police. These illegal labors were the subjects of newspaper and TV reports many times.
According to my own findings, some people do engage in illegal activities such as drug dealing, stealing, and prostitution; but the majority of them strongly contribute to the local economy, in a highly positive way. These illegal workers work for low salaries and keep the prices of the services low for the local people in Jeddah. Many of them operate grocery stores, restaurants and dominate the private sector. Also, it is the home of illegal builders, who build most homes in Jeddah, at affordable prices lesser than the formal market. When the government deported many of them in 2014, many companies and stores closed, and the price of services went up dramatically as there were no domestic laborers and the formal legal labor is expensive.

The cost of installation of a door for a room in the formal market is about $90 while an illegal worker does it for $20. Laborers in the formal market require an appointment, which might go beyond three days, while the informal market usually has better access. All what you need to do is to identify their places formally known as locations of illegal laborers. They gather together from several professions, sit in one place and wait for the costumers. Customers stop at these locations and negotiate with the relevant “professional” for an affordable price. When they reach a deal, the customer takes the laborer (usually in car) to the “job site. After the laborer fixes the problem, the customers drive him back to the same location.

These informal markets are usually located at the intersections. While it is convenient for the customers, of the formal society, this causes congestions, particularly because the majority of citizens of Jeddah uses this more than the formal market. One of the famous places for this activity is Kobri Alomal – meaning the bridge of laborers- in Al-jame’a district (Figure 13 &14), where many illegal laborers from Al-Nuzlah spend their time hunting for customers.
The leader was not excited to give me a tour of the center. Nonetheless, he gave me permission to make some pictures.
Most buildings in the center are in the poor condition. My observations confirm newspaper reports. Buildings are the mixture of cement and mud construction. This well illustrates the periodization of the transformation of buildings from traditional to modern that I mapped out above.

It was inhabited by Saudis, who left the place because of government subsidies for building concrete houses. Now, it is inhabited by illegal workers, who transformed vacant houses into their own dwellings. They made some changes to buildings as per their needs. Many vacant lands were turned into warehouses for recycling materials, where Nigerian women store metal cans.

Garbage collection is also different. There are piles of garbage because the municipal garbage collection trucks do not enter the area due to the fear of thieves. Hence, the people in the neighborhood collect garbage as groups and dump trash outside their area on routes of garbage trucks.

As documented in figure 15, at the beginning of the “dangerous area”, we saw two small buildings. The building on the left which was renovated recently has some stores on the first floor. These stores are operated by illegal laborers who live in Al-Nuzlah; usually they get paid lesser than the market rate. Working as illegal workers may be more difficult than working as legal laborers because they will get lesser salary and without any health insurance coverage.

The building on the right is much older, constructed with mud, in the traditional way. The small window, according to Muhammad, is for delivering food produced in the building. He said it is a home cum restaurant. Customers will call the ladies who are responsible for preparing food and order by phone. They then, within a certain period of time, come to get the order from the window and pay. The food they offer is usually traditional African food that no one will see
outside of Al-Nuzlah. Prices are affordable for all people and the customers are usually from Africa, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. Affordable prices make it global food for different people in a local place like Al-Nuzlah.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 15: One of garbage piles that we observed**

In the absence of the city regulation, the local people have established their own regulations. The areas of above establishments cannot be classified as either residential or commercial use. There is garbage around the building and looks dirty. Clearly, garbage trucks have not visited this area for many reasons. First, there are many narrow streets that make it difficult for a truck to access the place. The streets are not paved and many cars are parked on both sides. Second, drivers of garbage trucks are usually new and unfamiliar with Al-Nuzlah. These areas are without a clear entrance and exit which means entering here demands the spending of a lot of time to find the exit. This scares the drivers.

Most stores, that we saw in the area, were without the signs. People do not need these as they are familiar. They are expensive to maintain. The neighborhood is legible for the locals.
They know these stores and their functions, so signs are not necessarily for them. In contrast, it is rare to see a store without a sign in the Saudi part of the neighborhood.

As we went further into the neighborhood, most streets were not paved. It was clear that streets, with narrow widths, were left unpaved. Paved streets were located mostly on the north side of the neighborhood, where there are many famous institutions and large buildings such as the King’s Palace and the Islamic Bank.

The existence of paved streets in some parts of the neighborhood shows the importance of local voice. My informant said that if local people ask many times, the municipality would pave the streets. This explains the reason for unpaved streets in the non-Saudi part of Al-Nuzlah. They cannot ask the municipality to pave their streets as they are illegal laborers.

A person living in below home (Figure 16) said that his father works in one of the stores. The father has a small bakery that operates just at peak hours from 6 to 10 in the morning and from 4 to 8 in the evening. The father spends the rest of the time cleaning cars in a surrounding mall. Usually, these people do two or three jobs to survive.

Figure 16: Shops without signs

Responding to my question about the project and what they are going to do, he said that they do not have any information about it. Although the municipality sent many notices to
newspapers about the project, “foreigners” have no idea about it. In my opinion, the lack of information is due to two reasons. First, most of them do not read in Arabic. They can speak in Arabic and deal with local people, but reading is a hard task for them. Second, they rarely buy newspapers to see what is happening around them and it might be expensive for them to buy it on a daily basis; a newspaper in Saudi Arabia costs around 40 cents. Resultantly, the announcement of the project in newspapers did not reach all residents in Al-Nuzlah.

Although this area is considered a habitat of foreigners and illegal laborers, many Saudis are doing their business over there. The informant said that the owner of this home is a Saudi man, who lives outside the neighborhood. However, the owner did not collect rent from them for seven years. Possibly, the owner moved out with the help of a government loan. Although he collected rent almost seven years ago, something might happened; he may have died or abandoned the collection of rent.

Alleys are the biggest issue for the police (Figure 17). As illegal workers do not have the permission to stay and work locally, during police raids, they use these alleys to escape and hide. The alleys I saw were very narrow and I have not seen any human activity there. Many houses are only accessible by these alleys. Muhammad said that, in the past, there were no doors to these alleys, but illegal laborers built these doors so they can use them in some situations.

One house is different from others (Figure 18). It is operated and maintained by a Bangladeshi man. A laborer living in the house told me that the Bangladeshi manager rents out rooms for laborers at the cost is S.R. 250 ($30) per person, per month. He also said that the Saudi owner of the house, lives outside the area, is a busy person. He has never visited the area and the manager transformed the building from a traditional house to a home with many rooms. He used some local builders from the neighborhood to make the changes. He then rented rooms to make
the profit. He added that the number of laborers per room may reach 12. Six would sleep at night and work in the morning; the other six would sleep in the morning and work at night. The house is without a bathroom because the manager turned it into a kitchen. The residents use the bathroom of the adjoining mosque every day.

Figure 17: Narrow alleys
It seems that Jeddah’s city did not consider these people in its plans. They do not exist, because they are illegal. They are not allowed to benefit from many services that exist in the formal market. As a consequent, they established their own rules. Inside these buildings that appear to be houses from outside, there are the hospitals, baby daycares, restaurants, cafes, temples, and churches. All these activities are constructed in the interiors with hardly an external expression. This is a classic example of people familiarizing existing structures for their needs (Perera 2015). However, as they do not have much authority, the interior is not expressed from the outside.

Some Saudi local residents, I met, were disappointed about the existence of illegal workers. For them, these people have a different culture and they are not happy to live beside them. They are compelled to be in Al-Nuzlah and deal with them as neighbors because of their low economic status. This indicates that they will leave the neighborhood if they can afford. Moreover, local residents want the government to find a way, to invest in these “poor buildings” so the illegal workers cannot use them. In other words, they wish to live in Al-Nuzlah, but displace the “illegal workers.”

Figure 18: The “Bangladeshi House”
Also, from what I observed in Al-Nuzlah and other informal settlements in Jeddah, these areas, in general, have two parts. The Saudi area which is usually organized, fairly planned, to some extent, and the people have the ability to live a “good” life. The non-Saudi part is largely occupied by the illegal laborers. This part is in poor condition and people, who live over there, are struggling to live. Not only are the municipal regulation and ordinances absent, but the area is also neglected for decades.

The oldest parts of Al-Nuzlah usually have a majority of illegal workers. These areas were built without regulations –perhaps before regulations-- and belong to those who left the place with government help, decades ago. Laborers from all around the world, who came to Jeddah for work, saw affordable housing in it. The high density and the condition of buildings became worse with time. As they live over there temporarily, they have not tried to make improvements unless for profit. These laborers have low wages which make it so difficult to repair their homes or even their rooms. So no one expects them to improve the place as they also send money for their families in their home countries.

The usual explanation for this difference is the existence of illegal laborers. According to my investigations, the issue in Al-Nuzlah is marginalizing these people from the system. They are an important part in Jeddah, in general, and Al-Nuzlah, in particular. Providing for their needs can bring about a win-win solution for the local residents and municipality. If the Saudis in Al-Nuzlah have no voice, these people do not even exist; although they form one-third of its population.

The biggest challenges, that Al-Nuzlah faces, are in the illegal laborers’ part. The proposal, which does not acknowledge them, does not offer any other choice. If the current plan is implemented, these people the majority of whom work in Al-Nuzlah will lose their jobs,
earnings, and their places of living. As the project is not a solution, they will find their own solution; perhaps another place to live near Al-Nuzlah.

Illegal laborers are not the only one who will do that: The Saudi people too will do so. I met many local Saudi people who said that if they are forced to leave Al-Nuzlah, they would go to Al-Sabeel, Al-Roais, and other nearby neighborhoods that have been classified as informal settlements. Although the municipality would offer them apartments in the periphery of the city, they refuse to accept it. What is offered is just a dwelling, where they do not see a way to develop a livelihood.

They see the situation as a battle between them and the elite businessmen who want to invest in Al-Nuzlah and transform it from a traditional neighborhood to a luxurious city center. They live in fear of eviction. Yet, they are not ready to move out of the neighborhood.
People of Al-Nuzlah

As Perera (2015) has well demonstrated that capital and the state are not the only producers of space; ordinary people also create more spaces at a local level, to fulfill their own needs. This section focuses on how individuals live in Al-Nuzlah and the spaces they create for and in the process. In so doing, I will observe how they change the abstract environment into spaces they need for daily activities and cultural practices and the role of modernization in this process.

Municipalities have regulations and building codes and what they produce through these tools are the abstract spaces that people are expected to occupy. However, the residents – the subjects- apply their ideas and culture to make them usable (Perera 2015). This process of familiarization has not been studied in Saudi cities. The goal of this section is to understand how local residents transform the abstract space into spaces that have (use) value for them.

Fahad Al-Zahrani is a long-term tenant who lives in a four-storied building, with his wife and three of his children. He works for the government and the main reason he chooses Al-Nuzlah is affordable rent. Although the daily commute to his job requires an hour, he is satisfied living in Al-Nuzlah because of the low rent. Moreover, the mosque is within five-minute walk which makes the apartment more attractive. For Fahad, a good reason to live here is also the owner. The owner lives outside Al-Nuzlah and he did not sign any contracts with the tenants. “The word of mouth is stronger than official papers,” Fahad said. Usually in places, like Al-Nuzlah, there are no official contracts between the tenants and owners. If something occurred, the problem would be solved between local people without the intervention of the police.

In many areas in Al-Nuzlah, the local people will solve their problems by talking to each other first and then. If they failed to reach a deal, they would go to local leaders who are
accepted by the majority. These leaders are assigned informally to provide solutions to emergent incidents. Usually, they are elderly people. In case the leaders fail to reach a solution, the case would go to the omdah, the person formally assigned to solve problems in the neighborhood.

Omdah is the link between the government and local people, where he must work on a daily basis to make sure that neighborhood is working fine. Some neighborhoods have one omdah; most have more than one. Al-Nuzlah has five omdahs. The omdahs in Al-Nuzlah have others who work under them. These helpers are usually their relatives because they want trustworthy people around them, who will not pass information to others. The responsibilities of omdah are sensitive and not limited to resolving local fights, but include many other things including divorce situations and family issues.

Omdahs used to be voluntary, but today they work in formal offices and receive monthly salaries from the government. In addition to keeping the neighborhood free of disputes, their role extends into providing information for some institutions like charitable organizations. These organizations would contact local omdahs to provide the help through them because omdahs are the only ones who work closely with the local people and know their conditions.

Fahad was unemployed once. When fahad contacted an omdah, he provided him a job in a local company that works nearby. He said even if someone wants a loan from a bank, omdahs might be your sponsor – because banks require sponsors to get a loan in SA- to help you with that because they know who can pay and who cannot. With these rules vested in the hands of leaders and omdahs, the role of police gets reduced in Al-Nuzlah.

Fahad faced a hard time to provide a living for his family. Although the rent is cheap and the food is affordable, but the weddings are very expensive, in the context of his salary. Usually, it is shameful for women not to come to a marriage event in a new dress. Buying, dresses for his
wife and clothes for his children, is Fahad’s biggest issue. If he could not afford to buy a new
dress for his wife, she might not attend the event. Furthermore, if the event is for one of your
close relatives such as brother, sister, or aunt, then the cost increase dramatically.

In Al-Nuzlah, buying new expensive clothes and dresses is a sign of appreciation for the
marriage event organizers. So many people are worried about these costs. Fahad told me that, in
the past, marriage events were cheap and convenient. There were group efforts because all Al-
Nuzlah residents contributed to the organization. Some people would bring food and others
would bring drinks. Today – he said -we need to reserve an overpriced marriage hall to do our
events while in the past any vacant land would serve the purpose.

The high cost of marriage events has led Fahad to find a way to find more money. His
house consists of four rooms: two bedrooms, a living room, and a guest room, locally called al-
majlis. Al-majlis is a traditional room for welcoming guests; this is found in all houses in Al-
Nuzla. For Fahad, he rarely has guests and this room is not active. According to him, he
welcomes all his friends in the living room and there is no purpose for al-majlis room. He asked
his wife if they can transform this room into a business place and she brought the idea of making
it a local salon. They realized that marriage events are the only thing that people of Al-Nuzlah
are ready to spend a lot of money on and it could be a profitable idea to have a local salon. So, he
went to the municipality’s branch office to get a permit to start his business, but he found the
municipal requirements a barrier.

The first requirement is that the apartment must be in the first floor. Fahad’s apartment is
on the second floor. Second, the front street must be a main street, but Fahad’s apartment is
located in front of a small local street. He said there are many other requirements from the
municipality, which made the application process difficult. For example, the professional (his
wife) must hold a degree in fashion or a closely related discipline. He asked: “where are those universities in Jeddah that offer these majors?” When he realized that it is impossible to fulfill all their requirements, he opted to do it illegally.

He searched for a list of businesses that he can operate inside his apartment and the only option he found was a tailor shop. The only three requirements for a tailor shop were to have two sewing machines, a diploma in sewing education, and a sign in front of the door. His wife has no sewing education but because tailor business is not on demand, he thought the municipality would be flexible. His idea was to use this permission for a tailor shop to operate a salon.

After he received this permission, he headed to AlJamea’a Auction, an informal market where a lot of people go, to buy the used items (Figure 19). People believe that “you can find anything you imagine”: from televisions, food, furniture, to clothes. The auction is not located within Al-Nuzla, but close. The auction has a large square in the middle, where all the used goods lay on the ground. Local people search, find what they need, and negotiate a price with the sellers. Scissors, clippers, dryers machines, hot rollers were easy to find in the auction. The problem was to find chairs, mirrors, and some storage drawers.

Figure 19: Al-Jama’a Auction
He talked with one leader who has the job to monitor activities in the auction and asked if he could help him. The leader said he would contact him as soon as he found what he wanted. Fahad asked the leader to contact him in a week and was happy to find the items. He bought them and gave the leader a 10 percent tip. Furthermore, to make al-majlis room more comfortable, he contacted some illegal laborers with good skills in painting. They painted the room for just $35. He said:

I know my clientele; they don’t want to pay much if I open my salon. They will go outside Al-Nuzlah and compare my prices with other salons’ prices. If my prices are higher, that would destroy my reputation. The only way to keep my prices affordable is to make my decoration simple and buy the used stuff.

After Fahad hung his salon’s sign on the building, he started to market his salon in the mosque and other social places. His wife also went to many other women in Al-Nuzlah and distributed the flyers of her salon. Customers realized that the sign said tailor store, but as they went in; they saw a salon. It was difficult for Fahad in the beginning, but with the passage of time, local people knew the place and what it offered very well. The sign was just to wangle the municipal inspectors as they focused on what appears on the outside and do not care about what is inside. Fahad said the salon was a good decision for him. The revenue of his salon is five times greater than his salary. As many customers asked him to do so, he expanded his business to include a tailor shop.

Although Al-Nuzlah is on the list of the development proposal, Fahad does not care and preceded his vision to expand his business. When I talked with him last time, in 2014, he was searching for dressmakers. Also, the absence of al-majlis did not affect his life; he still welcomes his guests in the living room despite the fact that many of his relatives expressed their sense of
dissatisfaction. For him, al-majlis is an essential element and he is in favor of it. Yet if the traditional values prevent him from improving his living, he would leave it, as long as it did not conflict with Islam, he said.

In fact, this idea of changing the abstract space is not limited just to Al-Nuzlah. Perera (2015) provides many examples from Asian cities, where local people made changes to abstract spaces. For example, Ranjith, 55, has a shop where he sells and meets friends to talk about their daily life (Perera and Liyanage 2015). The shop is not limited to the business and social activities but also used for learning purposes where he uses it to teach the business to his daughter. Even the size of the shop changes according to his needs. Sometimes he expands his front space onto the street by adding some chairs, so his friends can sit and talk with him.

With many other examples, Perera (2015) highlights the spatial conflict between the authorities and ordinary people. In fact, it is soft fights that happen in the form of negotiations. Usually it ends with abstract spaces in papers and ordinary spaces in reality, which apparently is a victory of the local people who in one way or other find domestic solutions to transform abstract spaces into spaces that can accommodate daily processes and cultural practices.

Marie Asiri and Abbas Alfadli, residents of Al-Nuzlah, talked about the role of women in the neighborhood in the past and today. For them, in the past, women used to get engaged in the activities outside their houses, unlike today. Asiri remembered Samrona Grandma 20 years ago, especially how she used to go in the morning to her shop in “Bab Makkah” which is a traditional place for commercial activities outside Al-Nuzlah. She owned the shop and ran it by herself.

She sold coal. As Bab Makkah is away from Al-Nuzlah, she used to ride a burro from her house. “She had a strong personality, she used to have a stick, so she could protect herself from
any possible teasing”, Marie said. She was a prominent figure in Bab Makkah; many people just visited the place to talk with her while she was sitting in front of her shop.

Abbas said that Samrona Grandma was not the only woman who worked in shops with men; Ghannia, Om Faraj, and Om Ajban also did the same. He saw them every morning while they prepared themselves to go to Bab Makkah. In the evening, they returned to Al-Nuzlah and each one of them brought her food and daily profits. Samrona was the only one who had a shop; the others had stalls. For Abbas, these women had satisfied lives, despite their poverty. He said:

“They were happy; I saw their happiness in their faces. They acted as they won a lot of money. They followed the statement of our prophet in being satisfied with what Allah has given you and you would be happy.”

Figure 20: Bab Makkah is a traditional market where hundreds of people gather on a daily basis. Samrona has a shop here.

Halawia Grandma was also one of the women, who were very famous. She was disabled and could not move due to a disease in her legs. Also, she could not hear clearly. Her house consisted of just one room with a big backyard where she usually spent her time. In order to survive, she had chickens in her house, as a barter cum business. Every day, she took eggs and
gave it to any passing boy and asked him to exchange the eggs for sugar, tea, or any daily item from the nearby grocery store.

Marie said the owner of the grocery store is flexible with her because she is in need so that he gave her more than what she wanted. Furthermore, her neighbor Abdullah Abbasi provided all the help she needed. He sent her food, drinks, and clothes on a daily basis. Also, many people tried to offer her to move from her house and be in one of the neighbor’s houses. She refused to do that; the most important part for her is her backyard because, according to her, she hates indoors.

These stories are about women over 60 years, who they still hold their traditional values. However, the rules for women have changed. Women now have the responsibility in houses, without an engagement in commercial activities, as in Samrona Grandma’s case. Marie said women now are the factories for making men. For him, women now are pushing the power of their husbands, trying to make a convenient environment in the house. Women focus on psychology. they are considered as the intersections between the husband and children.
Conclusions

The rapid modernization that happened in Saudi cities has contributed to the emergence of informal settlements in Jeddah. Until 1960s, Saudi cities were traditional communities, growing at a normal rate. After the discovery of oil, the country began to urbanize and modernize. At the first stage of modernization, people, who could afford to do so, ignored the traditional way of building and construction and relied on modern methods. This required the import of materials, technology, and skilled labor. Meanwhile, the traditional builders became redundant and were neglected. Their numbers shrank, fiercely. In order to survive, some of them discovered ways to incorporate modern elements into their building methods. As Perera (2015) argues, accepting aspects of another culture requires mediation, interpretation and internalization. In this, the recipients of foreign ideas familiarize them, i.e., refashion the new in a way these can be incorporated to the existing.

However, with the introduction of ordinances and regulations in the cities that required the adherence to the modern standards, the mixed building methods did not survive. The buildings turned into houses that had traditional content, but within the modern shapes; constructed out of modern building materials and construction methods. In Jeddah, these houses are now called as “slums” by authorities and considered informal settlements in an academic sense.

When the new modern style of building became the dominant, the components of the larger discourse (package) of modernism were missing. Modernism was hardly internalized into the building practices of Jeddah. It did not have the components of modern buildings and had to import almost all of them from other countries. For this reason, the cost of building a house became unaffordable to ordinary people and the dream of owning a house became difficult to realize. This is true till date.
The process of Modernization of space in Saudi Arabia, i.e., following the Western model introduced by SOCAL, was quick. While the elite began following the model immediately, the government’s both enforced new rules that required citizens to build in Modern style and also subsidized a particular group that could not afford. This institutionalization resulted in a reflexive internal movement to adopt aspects of Modern lifestyles, despite the fact that traditional life was strong. The latter weakened very quickly. As Perera (2015) demonstrates, local people adjust to new hegemonic culture, adopting some borrowed thoughts and dropping some existing (traditional) thoughts, thus creating their indigenous modernity as third culture that is neither Western-Modern nor local-traditional.

Informal settlements gradually became undesirable places called “slums” in the eyes of authorities and the elite who abandoned their homes and moved to “New” Jeddah. The slums have become places, which are needed to be removed. Newspapers which played a key role in urban development in Saudi Arabia were in favor of removing these “slums.” They pictured these areas as the crime generators and places for vice. In a response, Jeddah municipality launched a huge project to redevelop these areas with the intention of using this project as a means to boost the city’s economy. However, people rejected the proposal every time it was renewed.

The final section of the thesis shows the gap between the abstract regulations that lived spaces created through individuals’ decisions in Al Nuzla. Despite the regulations, most of the local people have created their own spaces, such as businesses inside their houses. Fahad changed the al-majlis, a traditional room common in Saudi houses, into a salon.

The ordinary people who transform abstract spaces into lived spaces do not differentiate between modern and traditional values. Changing abstract space as part of developing a
livelihood is not unique to Al Nuzla. Deden Rukmana and Djarot Purbadi (2013), who studied street vendors in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, saw how the state opened the door for these vendors to enter the formal market. This kind of business is an opportunity for people with low levels of education or labor with no skills to build a livelihood. Instead of fighting these vendors, the state required them to pay a small fee to make their businesses legal. Such legalization gives them the sense of stability and same for the government regarding the street vending in Yogyakarta. Furthermore, De Soto (2000) shows how legal titles spur innovation among local people who may add economic meanings to their houses, as Fahad did.

The only way that Jeddah’s municipality wants to redevelop informal settlements is by relocating the inhabitants from their current settlements to the higher ones. However, the low-income people, who live in the informal settlements, are not “programed” to live in the modern places with towers and luxury malls. It is true that some buildings need to be improved in Al-Nuzlah, but claiming Al-Nuzlah and other informal settlements need to be removed demonstrate the municipality’s inability to understand these places.

These places are havens for their residents, who cannot afford to live in the “New” Jeddah for many reasons. There are hundreds of families who do not have enough money to live in an overpriced market, while Al-Nuzlah is affordable. The same is true in the case of laborers, thousands of them, who maintain lower prices of services for middle- and low-income populations, live in Al-Nuzlah. Their removal will worsen the living conditions for them as well as for the middle class.

The challenge in dealing with Al-Nuzlah is to find ways to keep the people, or to erase this settlement; this is dealing with it as a simple problem as Jacobs (1961) explains (See literature review). Understanding people and how to upgrade their living standards in a way that
improves the city and the living conditions of middle classes requires substantial effort and time. The new proposal represents a top-down view based on mainstream ideas built upon authorities’ opinions and views of upper classes. Yet in reality, the development takes a bottom-up form because it is the people who create spaces, enabling their practices to fulfill their needs.

Jeddah municipality thinks that this project would improve people’s lives where in reality it destroys people’s networks, social life, put them in new areas that are unfamiliar, and make their life harder. The towers and malls that replace Al-Nuzlah would only serve the rich.

Besides Al-Nuzlah, there are 52 neighborhoods that are classified as “slums,” and they are approached with the same framework that focuses on quantitative data to judge the places without paying attention to how people live and why they want change abstract spaces into something usable every time they encountered these. The top-down approach led to a rapid modernization rate in 1970s causing the rise of informal settlement. In fact, slums were created through the modernization project. Today we are dealing with informal settlements with the same approach which means we are repeating the same mistake for the future. This time, the Jeddah’s municipality has the opportunity to try a bottom-up approach.

Dealing with Al-Nuzlah as a unique place is the first step toward applying a bottom-up approach. By this step, local people would be encouraged to express their opinions without the fear of eviction. Also, studying the current condition of life from Al-Nuzlah people’s point of view is critical. An outsider would judge Al-Nuzlah according to her/his background, but spending some time in Al-Nuzlah might change this person’s opinion. As outsiders, we must learn about local people’s daily habits, their existing economic activities, their uniqueness, and their culture before making any proposal. After we establish a rich background about the people and place, we might go with this knowledge in our minds to prepare a redevelopment plan.
My Journey

Since I began learning urban planning in 2007, I spent a lot of time working in front of computers and learning how to design a proposal. I analyzed maps using GIS, edited images and creating diagrams using Photoshop, analyzed data on Excel sheets, and made 2D maps on AutoCAD and 3D models on SketchUp. I was thinking that by mastering these tools I might be able to be a professional planner and change cities and neighborhoods for people.

I studied the same Al-Nuzlah Al-Yamania neighborhood for the capstone project of my undergraduate degree. I learned about Jeddah Municipality’s redevelopment project for it; so I wanted to offer my own proposal. My object was to find a way that satisfied local people and developers. So I designed luxury affordable housing units (See figure 21) that will fulfill the need of people that would also enable the developers to make profit. The design has a “big lake” in the middle of Al-Nuzlah, but I do not know why I put it in this way; what I know is that I was focusing more on how to make a beautiful picture and make the place more “modern”.

Figure 21: My proposal in 2011
When I arrived at Ball State University to study urban planning, I met my advisor Professor Nihal Perera for first time. I asked him if he could recommend a book for me to read before the beginning of classes. He gave me Jane Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. This book changed my view about urban planning. Her idea about cities in general is worth thinking about; the most important idea for me is that cities are not a simple problem. Then, I took a class called “Looking at Cities” with Vera Adam. All what we did was just walking; we walked in many cities such as Columbus, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis. I realized that I learned a lot. We read and we saw what we read in reality. At this stage, I started to realize the importance of dealing with cities away from our office and computers.

Then I took a class called *Social Justice* with Professor Nihal Perera where we studied Whitely neighborhood in Muncie. At the beginning, I thought it would be easy because I used to redesign neighborhoods in just two weeks. However, this time the task was different. It was not about design or creating a proposal, we were required to meet with at least three people and talk with them on a weekly basis. The goal was to understand them and see the neighborhood through their eyes. In the final presentations, each student came with new ideas and shared with the class. I learned that four months were not enough to understand Whitely Neighborhood. I learned the complexity of our cities that Jacobs discussed just in a small place like Whitely.

In this stage, I recognize the importance of people, to be part of them, and to learn from them. Focusing on design and luxury proposals is not bad but you need to put them in appropriate locations, away from Al-Nuzlah. So, I decided to write this paper from the view of Al-Nuzlah’s people, and put the main effort not in creating proposals and getting a lobby to redevelop and fund Al-Nuzlah but to engage people, understand their stories and how they create their livelihoods, and learn how they struggle to negotiate and create spaces for their daily living.
References


