Cities are complex social environments representing a convergence of many physical and human processes which influence how young people form their identities and plan for their futures. The role of urban environments on social processes has received substantial attention. However, significantly less attention has been focused on how urban youth are impacted specifically as political actors. Youth are particularly exposed to feeling the impacts of historical and ongoing geopolitical issues in and surrounding their urban environments. Amman, Jordan is a compelling location to examine urban impacts on young political actors because of the clear geopolitical changes taking place in and around the city. Amman has nearly doubled in size following recent instability in neighboring Iraq and Syria, which has deeply affected neighborhoods, the makeup of the city’s population, and daily experiences of being Ammani.

This study furthers our understandings of how youth are experiencing and managing urban processes across the local, regional, and global scales. How young people are responding to increasing neoliberal pressures and challenges felt throughout their daily lives provides insights for academics, policy makers, and other stakeholders focusing on youth and their social movements. By applying a critical geopolitics theoretical framework to a young urban population and introducing the concept of situated citizenship, this study illuminates previously unexplored adaptations and applications of urban citizenship which may offer value applicability to other young urban populations.

My ethnographic approach to young people in the Middle East demonstrates how this understudied population is interconnected and urgently requires further examination. This dissertation contributes to filling this gap in knowledge about a critically important and growing population which is often misunderstood. Particularly, presenting stories of Ammanis across the socio-economic spectrum allows us to better understand the variety of ways urban youth are adapting to ongoing social changes. This analysis of youths’ daily small political acts can assist in our understanding of larger social movements, which can promote greater effectiveness in future decisions about youth geopolitics.