

**Municipal Governance and Expanded NGOs Role in Selected
Countries in the Middle East***

MDF 3 Forum: *Voices for Change, Partners for Prosperity*

**Workshop on
“Institutional Reforms and Sustainable Development”**

Cairo 6 – 8 March 2000

Roula Majdalani
UN-ESCWA

* This paper is another version of a study prepared by UN-ESCWA “Urban Governance and Participatory Development”, New York, 1999.

CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. INTRODUCTION	2
II. URBAN GOVERNANCE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	3
III. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE EMERGING ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS	7
IV. URBAN GOVERNANCE “IN ACTION”: TWO CASE STUDIES	14
V. RETHINKING MODELS OF PARTNERSHIP FOR “GOOD URBAN GOVERNANCE”	24
VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	26
Bibliography	28

LIST OF TABLES

1. Living conditions in Aqaba.....	18
2. NGOs operating in Aqaba.....	19
3. NGOs active in Hay el-Sollum.....	23

LIST OF BOXES

1. Ismailia Sustainable Development	11
2. Nablus Integrated Urban Development.....	12

I. INTRODUCTION

Urban governance poses new challenges to research on and practice of urban planning. Urban governance as a paradigm builds on a dynamic process, shaped by constantly changing variables, and in which the art of planning, resides not in the production of sophisticated plans and designs, but rather in what can be implemented and by whom. Experience from the field in different regions of the world, indicate that planning models cannot be simply treated as technical exercises, based on rational, scientific choices for the “benefit of all” or the general public good - assuming that there is one common public good. There is increasing realization that planning is part and parcel of policy-making; thus, while planners are considered as technical experts, they are also social actors interacting with other stakeholders, in view of shaping the urban environment. As a result, negotiations, alliance building, and modalities of partnership among the different players, takes on a special importance in the planning process, and notably in articulating implementation strategies.

Notions of partnership among the State, the private sector, civil society organizations and donors, present even bigger challenges in terms of rethinking the roles, functions and jurisdictions of stakeholders, when translating policies into plans of action, and addressing the specificity of local situations. This particularly concerns translating development objectives and policy recommendations for strengthening the role of municipalities, into tangible measures and setting performance indicators. Considerable groundwork remains to be done in terms of technical, institutional and financial reforms necessary to enable local actors, including municipalities and community-based organizations to assume more responsibilities, in providing, managing or monitoring the delivery of urban services. What is less clear however, is how such responsibilities are coordinated among the different social actors, i.e. how modalities of partnership are articulated and institutionalized?

This paper addresses the above issues from a regional perspective, and in light of shifting planning paradigm, which has taken place over the past decade. The specificity of the ESCWA¹ region enriches the debate on whether or not decentralization to local authorities is materializing, in view of the strong tradition of a central state characterizing the countries of the region. Thus the paper starts with a conceptual overview of the urban governance paradigm, discussing the disciplinary traditions contributing to its articulation, and highlights some of the conceptual and empirical confusion in dealing with the notion of “urban” as a planning and administrative unit for managing and coordinating urban service delivery.

At a regional level, the paper reviews different factors shaping urban governance. The discussion is held at two levels: at the macro level, progress made towards decentralization, and at the micro level, local initiatives aiming to institutionalize participatory processes or urban development. These initiatives illustrate the modalities of tripartite partnership/negotiations between the state, civil society and international donors in the urban development process. The cases of Aqaba in Jordan and Choueifat – Hay el-Selloum in Lebanon are discussed in greater details, showing how negotiations evolve among different layers of government and organizations of civil society, with each actor attempting to claim the public space at the local level. The paper then identifies some issues, which policy-makers need to address in formulating plans to strengthen partnerships among local authorities, NGOs and private sector organizations. It concludes with proposals for technical and institutional policy options, conducive to a participatory form of urban governance.

¹ ESCWA region covers the 13 Arab countries in Western Asia, namely Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen.

II. URBAN GOVERNANCE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The debate on governance has dominated the social science discourse for over a decade. At the core of the debate is how to “bring back the State in” while insuring that it is a reformed, transparent and accountable state². The emerging literature on governance discusses among other things its conceptual worthiness or elusiveness for the skeptics, the varying and sometimes conflicting definitions or interpretations, its relevance in analyzing different contexts, and its implications on the role of state and non-state actors in public life. Governance has represented a favored subject of inquiry for donors, particularly the World Bank, concerned with ensuring the success of structural adjustment policies. Hence, good governance is often equated with an efficiently performing state and becomes the independent variable for measuring the outcome of structural adjustment programs, including privatization and other economic reform measures³.

Being addressed by a wide range of disciplines, a systematic review of the literature may be problematic. However, thematically, it is possible to discuss the concept of governance through three main fields of inquiry: 1. The failure of the state to be a direct provider of public goods and services, as such, making space for the private sector and NGOs to perform a number of public functions more efficiently. 2. Forces of globalization, notably the revolution in information technology and the restructuring of the global economy, and their impact on institutional, social and political dimensions of nation-states. 3. Greater political and social activism displayed by civil society organizations throughout the world, and their call for democratization and participation in public decision making and political life. However, a discussion of each of these themes is beyond the scope of the present paper and has been addressed elsewhere⁴.

Urban governance is well grounded into the debate outlined above, and its implications on the redefined role of the State, as well as calls for a democratic and participatory process of urban development. In that sense, there is an explicit recognition that cities are a by-product of infinite individual and group initiatives, choices and investments, and as such, government actions cannot be conceived and applied in terms of “controlling mechanisms”. The role of the state is increasingly articulated as “influencing” and “monitoring” development in the urban environment⁵. In this perspective, urban management is thought to redress many of the limitations prevailing in the urban planning field, in the 1960s and 1970s, in terms of the bias towards physical planning and design. In particular, urban management, has incorporated economic development and municipal affairs to the conventional practice of land-use planning, in an effort to link planning with the policy-making domain⁶.

Thus, urban management addresses the role of the State in urban development, from the perspective of the planning practitioner, concerned with modes of production, distribution

² See Strange and Evans et al. for the argument on the strategic role of the state, in line with the governance paradigm. This perspective departs from the neo-liberalism prevailing in the 1980s, which called for the dismantling of the welfare state. The expanded role of the private sector and civil society organizations in producing and delivering more public services should not supersede the state’s functions. They both stress that the state is very much needed as a regulator and in development terms, as an enabler. Its most important function is to ensure the rule of Law.

³ For a detailed discussion of the literature on governance, see Roula Majdalani, “The Urban Governance Paradigm: a Concept in the Making?” in S. Shami (ed.) Towards an Ethnography of Governance: Urban Spaces and Actors in the Middle East, Toronto University Press (forthcoming).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See Diana Mitlin, and David Satterthwaite, Cities and Sustainable Development, Background Document, Global Forum ‘94, Manchester 24th to 28th June 1994, IIED, London, 1994

⁶ Devas, N. and Rakodi, C. Managing Fast Growing Cities, New Approaches to Urban Planning and Management in the Developing World, Longman Group UK, Ltd. 1993. p. 41

and administration of public services including their quality, accessibility and affordability. Urban management has acquired popularity in the mid 1980s, as a response to growing problems associated with rapid urban growth, environmental degradation, and increasing incidence of urban poverty. Along with these changes, a shift towards the locality has emerged accordingly, boosted by planners' concern for feasibility or "the manageability" of delivering goods and services for urban population. Consequently, and in an attempt to address problems of deterioration in public service delivery and the quality of life in urban areas, international development agencies and bilateral donors, have reoriented their agendas towards supporting institutional development and capacity building. The Urban Management Program (UMP), initiated in 1986, jointly by the World Bank, Habitat and UNDP with support from external agencies, illustrates the rising concern for the manageability of the urban environment. Interestingly, the management and organization structure of this program is undertaken by the private sector.

The paradigm shift described above underscores the mounting discontent with national governments, criticized for not being efficient in meeting the pressing demand of rapidly growing urban population for adequate shelter, physical and social infrastructure. Local governments were perceived to provide alternative solutions for addressing urban problems, because they are presumed to be 'closer to the people' and therefore more accountable than national governments. This view represents a central theme of the World Bank urban and local government strategy: "Local government remains the everyday face of the public sector - the level of government where essential public services are delivered to individuals and businesses, and where policy meets the people ... improving development effectiveness, increasing participation of civil society, forging partnerships, and reducing corruption requires closer working relationship with the level of government nearest to the people" (WB, 1999, p. 1-3).

The comparative advantage of local government, in terms of being close to the people, and immune to corruption, is still hypothetical and needs to be established both on conceptual and empirical grounds. Similarly, there is a need for further reflection on whether or not, the city, or an urban locality, can indeed be "managed" in the same way a private sector institution is run. As Stren (1993, p. 135) puts it, introducing administrative and technocratic principles into urban management has "... 'technocratized' the city to the maximum, treating social problems as natural consequences of growth, while avoiding any questions on the causes of the problems".

One of the central themes of urban management, which has drawn adepts as well as critics, depending where they stand on the political spectrum, concerns the interface with the 'corporate approach' or 'new wave' management based on a private sector approach and 'the US managerial school'. (Werna, 1995, p.353). As a result, the logic of decentralization and management at the local level, using 'business like' tools in order to enable local authorities to guide urban development becomes paramount.

The transfer of managerial concepts from the private to the public sector may be useful, in terms of improving the efficiency and quality of public services. However, the public sector does not only follow the rules of the market, i.e. maximizing cost-efficiency. Political considerations often dominate and explain various form of public intervention, or thereof the lack of it. The administrative and business-like perspective may leave local authorities with more responsibility without power to implement. Thus, in light of calls for decentralization and empowerment of local authorities, administrative and political reforms should go hand in hand, otherwise, urban managers would have expanded duties, without the political means to achieve them. Indeed, "local governments is not only about service delivery, but about democracy". (Werna: 1995 p. 355).

In that sense urban governance can be considered as an attempt to refine the “urban management” concept, albeit with some conceptual confusions which remain unresolved. Political and social dimensions are built into the dynamics of urban change, and as such add to the administrative and technocratic perspective embedded in earlier approaches to urban planning in terms of master planning or urban management. In that sense, multiple actors intervening on the urban scene are essential parameters of the urban governance model.

Hence, urban governance primarily revolves around partnership, negotiation and conflict resolution among stakeholders as intrinsic functions of the urban planning process. More importantly, the function of planning is not only about allocation and distribution of public services in the most rational way, it is also and foremost about bargaining over access to resources, where the access to resources and space become contested grounds. Urban governance entails a role for municipalities and local authorities in line with the redefined role of the state at national level. Thus, local authorities are expected to monitor urban development, facilitate the distribution and allocation of resources. In sum, urban governance is about localizing the “enabling strategy”⁷. Hence, the role of community-based organizations emerges as facilitators and mediators in access to housing and urban upgrading services. They are perceived as agents of change for local democracy⁸.

Furthermore the rationale for participatory development emerges as different stakeholders (municipal governments, business community, residents, NGOs) have a vested interest in co-operating or building consensus, in order to attract investments from domestic or international sources, which in turn would boost their income base. Interestingly, cities compete to attract such investments not only by offering viable industrial and commercial locations, reliable infrastructure networks, or financial, institutional and legislative incentives. Competition increasingly revolves around externalities that the urban environment can offer - i.e. providing entertainment, a good quality of life, pleasant environment, safety consideration, distinctive architectural, cultural and historical heritage and education⁹.

With the increasing importance of cities as an economic, political and social actor, the challenge of urban governance does not only lie in understanding how different state and non-state actors establish modes of partnership. Equally important is the need to understand the implication of urban governance on the planning machinery and its ability to address the problem of overlapping boundaries: administrative, planning, socio-economic boundaries, which do not always tally. Here, there is a need to highlight “urban” as an important qualifier, determining how consensus building or modes of partnership are established and sustained. This dimension however is still not fully explored, and “urban” is often misconceived in the literature, in as much as it gets equated with “local”, as opposed to national and global¹⁰.

In sum, the above debate has attempted to show that urban governance adds a dynamic perspective in analyzing the capacity of local actors to negotiate and decide over the production,

⁷ A number of UN programs have attempted to address the local dimension of the enabling strategy, in terms of access of resources to local communities, impact of development on local actors and participation of community groups in the development process. Such attempts are illustrated in projects like local agenda 21, local governance, local capacity building, etc. See the glossary for definitions.

⁸ John Turner, “An Introductory Perspective” in Bertha Turner (ed.) Building Community: A Third World Case Book, Habitat International Coalition, 1988

⁹ This issue comes out clearly in the literature on globalization and the emerging nodes of “global cities”, which concerns particularly cities in industrial countries. See Saskia Sassen (1998), Peter Hall (1997), Harris (1997).

¹⁰- see Roula Majdalani, “The Urban Governance Paradigm: a Concept in the Making?” in S. Shami (ed.) Towards an Ethnography of Governance: Urban Spaces and Actors in the Middle East, Toronto University Press (forthcoming)

use and allocation of urban resources. Local governments in an urban governance perspective are expected to 'monitor' and 'facilitate', which in real terms entails serious expectations on the part of local governments to perform, and perform efficiently. Ensuring the well-being for urban residents and directing urban economic growth for the benefit of all citizens, in fact means that the urban transition needs to be viewed within the national-level comprehensive development framework (WB, 1999, p. 4). In terms of urban policy options, local governments are expected to "promote effective competition among land developers and service providers; - make local government budgets more transparent, thereby reducing risks of partnership with private sector financiers; - increase channels of information and collaboration among community groups, informal sector operators and local government agencies; - refining policy tools such as targeted subsidies, basic land-use planning, and urban transport management to address social and environmental externalities in the urban economy" (ibid. p.5). These are complex tasks, which assume that considerable technical, and political power, as well as financial autonomy is in place. This explains the limited success, which a number of ESCWA member countries had with recent programs of decentralizations and building-up the capacity of local authorities, as it will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Finally, a number of assumptions about the role, power and effectiveness of municipalities in public life remain to be tested in this respect. First, that local government is more effective than central government, closer to the people and more transparent. The second problematic aspect of the urban governance paradigm, is that the dismantling of overgrown bureaucracies, is a complex process, and highly politicized. As such, a weakened central government may also be paralleled by weak local governments, and not vice versa. This aspect could set *a priori* the terms and conditions of partnership between municipalities, civil society, central governments and donors. These dimensions will be discussed in light regional experiences, as a number of countries "experiment" with urban governance.

III. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE EMERGING ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE ESCWA REGION

Urban planning in the ESCWA region has for long been dominated by the execution of major infrastructure development projects, involving land servicing for urban expansion, extending or upgrading water supply, electricity and sewerage systems. These were in line with the rapid urbanization process, which characterized the early development phases of cities in Gulf countries. They also marked the era of major public work projects undertaken in Jordan, Iraq and Syria, in the 1970s and early 1980s, translating the state's commitment to a form of socialism and welfare coordinated by the central government. Although these investments were essential to meet the expanding demand for public amenities associated with rapid urbanization; urban services did not in most cases operate with much consideration for maintaining cost-efficiency. Most of these services were operating below their full capacity¹¹.

The past decade has brought a shift in approach to public service delivery. Services are increasingly provided in piecemeal, in an attempt to contain the growing urban crisis. Provisions are motivated by pressure to meet the needs of growing population, while abiding by cost constraints. The most characteristic feature of the past decade has been an attempted withdrawal of the public sector from direct provision of selected public services, notably housing. Since the late 1980s, the structural adjustment policies adopted in countries like Jordan and Egypt and recently followed by Lebanon and Syria to some extent have laid the grounds for privatizing a number of public agencies. Attempts at privatization in the housing sector in Jordan is a notable case, which has affected urban development policies and the role of local government, as it will be argued later, in the case study on Aqaba.

Such changes have brought to the fore the need for institutional reform, as it has become increasingly evident that plans cannot be effectively implemented, unless the institutional set-up is efficiently functioning. This means that local institutions can undertake follow-up and maintenance once development projects are completed. Given the strong system of political and administrative centralization in almost all countries of the region, institutional development primarily concerns moves towards decentralization of administrative, financial and decision-making functions to local governments. Hence, the increasing public interest with municipalities as agents of change towards local democracy should be debated in this perspective.

Progress towards institutional development, could be discussed at two levels. At the macro level, efforts made by national governments in the region to introduce some form of decentralization policies should be questioned as to what extent they were able to match devolution of administrative functions, with political power-sharing or financial autonomy. While at the micro level, local participatory development initiatives, often labeled as "best-practices" present interesting material to reflect on, and question whether these pilot cases can be institutionalized as modes of partnership between municipalities¹² and community groups in managing the urban environment.

(a) *Decentralization process*

All countries in the region have some form of devolution or deconcentration of administrative functions to regional/ sub-regional and local levels, notably the system of governorate (or "muhafaza") as the decentralized body of national governments. This can be interpreted as "decentralization from the top", i.e. delegating some responsibilities to local administrative units, in order to facilitate management functions for the central government. It

¹¹ ESCWA, Regional Overview of the Human Settlements Situation, Amman 1997

¹² Municipalities and local governments are used interchangeably. While there might be fine administrative and legal distinctions in this regard, however, an operational definition is adopted, based on the literature in the region, which uses these terms interchangeably, to mean the most "decentralised" unit of national government at the local level.

is therefore understandable why the region remains characterised by centralised states. A review of selected country experiences reveals that central government in the region have in recent years initiated programs or proposals for decentralization, often pressed by donors, NGOs and even private sector groups, seeking to simplify bureaucratic red-tapes.

Thus in Egypt, defined as a system of 'democratic centralism' (Mayfield, 1996, p. 79), local politics affect to some degree how administrative affairs are managed or local resources mobilized at governorate, district, town and village levels. Furthermore, Law 145 (1989) introduces some fiscal measures allowing local authorities in consultation with local communities, to plan and implement infrastructure and social development projects, and disburse accumulated savings over several years, in order to fund community-based development projects such as recycling, waste management and urban upgrading projects. Nonetheless local councils have consultative power, governorates have executive power, while legislative functions and fiscal matters, such as raising local taxes and authorizing large-scale fund disbursement remains with the central government, the Ministry of Local Government (p.70).

In Lebanon the municipal elections held in 1998, after 35 years of interruption, brought the issue of municipal affairs and politics to the center of public debates. In fact the Lebanese case illustrates the complexities of articulating a decentralization policy which leads to effective decision-making power for local authorities. More importantly, it underscores the dilemma facing the central government. The debate is polarized between divesting political, financial and legislative power on the one hand, and on the other hand, deciding whether or not to compromise on the question of authority, integration and synergy and consequently regional and intra-urban equity. To-date a proposed Law for decentralization has generated controversy, on whether or not it gives municipalities more room to maneuver, administratively, technically and financially. Presently, municipalities in principle are authorized to generate and manage local resources. Yet, while they can set up to 10% of municipal taxes, however these are levied by the central government and deposited into the Independent Municipal Fund (IMF), in an account managed by the Ministry of Finance¹³. Furthermore, although municipalities are in principle responsible for planning and implementation of infrastructure work in their jurisdiction, in reality many development projects are executed or contracted out directly by the central agencies. These include health, education, public works and water resource sectors. The challenge at present is to empower municipalities to perform complex urban management functions, particularly in view of the high public expectations, following the municipal elections of 1998.

In the West Bank and Gaza, following the Oslo Accord in 1994, the Palestinian National Authority has been engaged in continuous negotiations, and sometimes confrontation, with municipalities, which have acquired self-rule, over urban planning functions, finance and local development policies¹⁴. Unlike the case of Lebanon during the war, municipalities in the West Bank and Gaza during Israeli occupation and in the absence of the PNA have played a focal role in managing urban resources and delivering basic services. Municipalities in the West Bank and Gaza increasingly find their functions curtailed, turning into executing agencies for decisions taken at a higher level of authority. Hence, administrative overlap between the local and the national is reinforced by the fact that the PNA have limited control over issues of border control and foreign policies. This draws them into issues, which are the domain of municipalities such as health and education, urban planning, water and electricity. Administrative and functional overlap also characterizes relations between municipalities and NGOs, as the latter have had a free hand in service provision during Israeli occupation. Now they have to re-negotiate their type of intervention

¹³ See Abdo Baaklini et al. "Emerging Themes in Local Governance in Post-Election Lebanon" March 1999 (unpublished paper) Center for Legislative Development, University of Alabama, supported by USAID.

¹⁴ Aude Signoles, "Patterns of Local Democracy and Decentralization in Palestine: The Competing and Complimentary Linkages between the Central Authority and Municipalities", October 1999 (unpublished paper) presented at CERMO, Beirut for the project on "Municipalites et pouvoirs locaux"

in public life, and maintain their space as a social actor and partners in development. As the case of Nablus (details below) indicates, the terms of partnership depends on the political leverage each municipality has at local and national scales.

In Yemen, the district (nahiyah) is the lowest level to which a direct representative of central government is appointed. The functions of the “mudir al-nahiyah” are to settle disputes, oversee tax collection, and co-ordinate the activities of ministerial field agents and local development councils. The formal description of local government in Yemen disguises the extensive variations in activities undertaken, performance, technical and political resources, among central and local government in the country. However, one clear pattern cutting through all of them, is that it is largely confined to law, order and collection, as well as the task of administering the governorate capital municipalities. Beyond this, the government has only the capacity to build major roads, maintain communication links between governorate capitals and the center, construct and possibly staff health and education facilities in the larger towns, and facilitate some agricultural and rural development programmes and projects, with the help of donors.

However, since the early 1990s, political pressure has been exerted by professional associations, labor syndicates, political parties, NGOs and tribal groups on the Yemeni government to reform and introduce decentralized democratic governance. UNDP has worked with the government on a decentralization program targeting a reform of the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The central point of the program lies in providing support to the Prime Ministers office in developing a program framework aiming at decentralization of the public sector. The program includes identifying partners for development and reform components, establishment of a more responsive organizational structure of the Prime Ministers office with clear functions and defined roles for the operating units and selection and improvement of skills of staff for newly defined missions. Decentralization of the public sector – such as the water and electricity sector– is currently undertaken in assistance of the GTZ. This program is initiated in different regions of the country aiming at management at the lowest level of organizational structure capable of handling the services, and with fullest participation of stakeholders appropriate to that level¹⁵.

Hence, decentralization depends not only on the initiative of central governments to transfer functions and responsibilities to local governments, which is usually known in public administration terminology as “de-concentration” of power. It also and mainly depends on the ability of local authorities to articulate their expectations and demands, regarding what decentralization actually entails. In fact the main challenge of redefining the roles of local actors under the urban governance paradigm, is finding complementarity, compromises and ideally effective partnership among local governments, private sector and civil society organizations.

(b) *Stakeholders and modes of partnership in urban development*

For most local governments in the region, the main challenge lies in finding innovative means to tap new resources, for the upgrading and maintenance of the urban infrastructure, at the local level. In practical terms however, such options often remain limited in middle and lower income countries of the region, particularly outside the capital or major cities. In a number of urban upgrading projects in the region, community groups have willingly participated in upgrading activities, notably in the West Bank, Jordan, Egypt¹⁶. This has usually involved voluntary work, clean up campaigns and raising public awareness.

¹⁵ UNDP, Decentralized Governance Monograph: A Global Sample of Experiences, 1999 (Monograph).

¹⁶ ESCWA, Community Participation In Urban Upgrading Projects in the ESCWA Region, New York, 1997

However, the mechanisms for follow-up and institutionalizing innovative urban development approaches are, in most cases, not yet well elaborated. There are still shortages in technical and financial resources required for sustaining pilot development projects. There are also gaps in information required to accurately assess needs and the resource base at municipal level. The sharing of responsibilities for follow-up among the different partners needs to be well elaborated in order to avoid confusion and overlap. Except for GCC countries, most plans of action remain highly dependent on external sources of funding, which are not reliable, particularly on an on-going basis.

In recent years, and in an attempt to capitalize on successful participatory initiatives, “best practices” has become an important tool for disseminating information on localized experiences, as a learning tool. However, it is important to be aware of the limitations of using “best practices”, in terms of standardizing information and finding common grounds for comparability. More importantly, while adding valuable field information, this methodology remains descriptive, and opens limited scope for analyzing the factors, which would be conducive for institutionalizing a participatory pilot project, as the following cases illustrate.

Box 1. Ismailia Sustainable Development (SIP)

* *Project setting and components*

Since 1976, Ismailia has witnessed a number of urban planning activities, in view of its historic and political significance and strategic location (near Port Said). With assistance from ODA, UNDP and Habitat, a number of development projects were undertaken; the last of which, the Sustainable Ismailia Project (SIP) initiated in 1990. SIP covered upgrading of settlements, land development, and provision of infrastructure, construction of houses and institutional capacity building. A distinctive feature of these projects is their commitment to a participatory approach, involving the community, NGOs and the Ismailia Governorate.

Main emphasis of the SIP is sustainable environmental planning, and includes cleaning up of lakes, upgrading of housing and infrastructure, sewage treatment and expanding green areas. SIP attempted to institutionalize a participatory planning process at the early stages of project planning. Thus, Working Groups (WG) were established, made up of stakeholders, resident representatives and Governorate officials. The WG identify and discuss priority urban and environmental issues; they then agree on strategies for implementation and identify appropriate partners. Hence, WG are a monitoring body to ensure that plans are coordinated between public, private and community sectors.

* *Main actors involved*

The public sector, the central government (a dominant actor shaping policy decisions and outcomes, particularly over financial and strategic planning matters); the University of Suez Canal, the Arab Contractor Company and the Suez Canal Authority, which are the largest employers in Ismailia. However, their role in SIP has been secondary. Ismailia governorate coordinates and implements SIP. Its involvement and efficiency has varied at different stages of project implementation.

Civil society actors: NGOs and community-based organizations have traditionally been weak in Ismailia and mainly involved in welfare. However, the planning process has generated some important qualitative and quantitative changes in the NGOs scene in the city. CBOs and NGOs proliferated boosted by the WG and neighborhood associations, as well as availability of funds from donors for training activities and equipment. A number of NGOs engaged in environmental awareness campaign, targeting school children, low-income neighborhoods, women groups, as well as businesses, industrial plants and tourist establishments. The Egyptian Environmental NGOs steering Committee, with headquarters in Cairo, provided backstopping support, including training in environmental awareness campaigns, to local NGOs and CBOs in Ismailia.

The business community: Investors in the Ismailia industrial zone and the tourism sector mainly dominate the private sector. It is only recently, which the private sector has taken interest in environmental issues, with increasing deterioration of environmental conditions in the city and limited capacity of the government to take action. For the first time, the business sector decided to act collectively, by setting up the Ismailia Services and Industrial Committee. The committee acts as a pressure group, negotiating and lobbying with other social actors in Ismailia, with the aim of halting further environmental damages which impair their businesses

* *Modes of Partnership and Participation*

The Working Groups and neighborhood associations generated public debate locally over planning and policy matters. This “culture” of negotiation among the different partners and flow of information has produced positive impact on the various planning projects. The projects were capable of generating considerable local resources for funding land servicing and communal activities; which indicate the acceptance, satisfaction and hence willingness to participate of the beneficiaries. Visible physical improvements were noted in the housing stock and open public spaces. More significantly, the project registered a low level of default on payments, an increase in public awareness as indicated by a more rational use of water, and a sense of residents’ commitment to the project.

However, these associations, which provided seeds for partnership at the project level could not be absorbed into the institutional structure, i.e. replicate this participatory mode within the Governorate. The participation observed in the earlier demonstration projects, was an incentive to expand the scope of the project, attract more funding, and as such, more monitoring agencies and donors to report to. The multiplicity of stakeholders in the planning activities and funding process was the restricted operational flexibility and complicated accounting and bureaucratic procedures, which resulted. Furthermore, the scale of funding and, consequently, the implications for resource management were beyond the institutional and technical capacity of the Governorate to manage. As a result, the management of the project remained outside the formal institutional structures, consequently, making participatory process dependent on external resources rather than a process generated internally.

Source: ESCWA, 1997, Community Participation in Urban Development in the ESCWA Region: 16-22.

Box 2. Nablus integrated urban development

* *Background*

Nablus has witnessed a number of upgrading projects since the initiation of autonomy in 1994. These included maintenance and extension of hospitals and educational institutions, drainage projects, and upgrading and maintenance of the water network. Due to the large number of donors and implementing institutions, projects differ in their application of standards, agendas of donors, and procedures of cost sharing between the beneficiaries and implementing institutions. Since 1994 Nablus municipality has been trying to streamline donors' contributions by setting priority projects for them, re-negotiating terms of contracts, monitoring procedures and administration of resources disbursed. In particular, the municipality is channeling the role of NGOs in the area of advocacy rather than as service providers.

* *Project setting and components*

The integrated upgrading pilot project initiated by Save the Children Federation (SCF) initiated in 1995 has been transformed as a result of political and institutional changes. The implementation of physical upgrading (which consisted in providing sub-surface drainage facilities, garbage containers and as well as transforming garbage dumps into multi-purpose playing fields in refugee camps) was discontinued in 1996, following restructuring in the Municipality. Previous agreements with SCF had to be re-negotiated, particularly over questions of fund administration the environmental component of the project was maintained, and a Joint Committees, from SCF, the Municipality, local NGOs and business community was set-up to plan and implement environmental activities in the city.

* *Mode of partnership and participation*

Environmental campaigns were effective in the initial stages, with marked physical improvements in the schools' sanitation. The committee also succeeded in securing financial support and equipment from the Municipality. However, the spirit of voluntarism, displayed in the initial stages, decreased over time and funding prospects became uncertain. There is a point of saturation with committees, as people need jobs, and can dedicate limited time unremunerated activities, given the overall economic hardship increasingly felt in the Occupied Territories.

* *Project's impact*

Joint Planning Committees, from community groups and the Municipalities have been a popular feature of post-Oslo urban development in the West Bank and Gaza. These committees are usually more active in rural areas, in the absence of solid municipal structures. In contrast, Nablus Municipality, which commands financial, technical and political backing, can play more effectively the roles of regulator and central broker/coordinator of upgrading and development activities initiated by donors and NGOs

The challenge facing Nablus municipality and other social actors is redefining their roles in an environment where services are provided by multiple institutional sources. This is representative of the debate taking place between the Palestinian Authority and different levels of government on the one hand, and NGOs and other organizations of civil society on the other hand. Questions of partnership, overlap of functions and conflict of interest are being addressed through different forums, workshops, planned legislation and donor funding methods

Source: ESCWA, 1997, *Community Participation in Urban Development in the ESCWA Region* pp. 22-28.

Evaluation reports produced by donors tend to label the above two cases as “success stories” in participatory urban development or “good” urban governance. The message is clear: Community participation in development projects is feasible and viable. However, the paradox is that such initiatives rarely evolve into institutionalized participatory processes, which should lead to improved performance of local authorities in their urban management functions. As indicated above, the projects are planned, executed and monitored outside the local institutional structure, i.e. the municipality of Nablus and the Ismailia governorate. Municipality staff are underpaid and inadequately trained in comparison with project personnel, and resource allocations for projects remain beyond the capacity of local governments to manage. Furthermore, the interest and commitment that a new project

generates take precedence over the routine and possibly dull, yet necessary work of local governments, such as ongoing maintenance work, license provisions or follow-up on planning breaches.

The two cases reviewed above have been initiated with external funding. As such the emphasis tends to be on implementation of specific activities within a project life cycle, with little attention to transferring project management and follow-up to local authorities. This accounts for the institutional gap that project completion leaves behind. In attempting to remedy this situation, new projects are usually designed to follow up, which repeat the same cycle. More importantly development work becomes highly dependent on the availability of foreign funding from donors or investors whereas planning and public services delivery for it to be effective, needs a secure and relatively high degree of continuity.

Considering the interplay of actors at local, national and international levels, there is a need to be well aware of the limitations of local action, or a grass-roots approach to development taking place in isolation from national and international support for local initiatives. This concerns the ability of the State to co-ordinate among the different social actors intervening on the local scene and in particular empower local authorities to play a catalyst role in channeling investments and development projects at the local level. The findings of these two cases about modes of partnership between NGOs and local authorities present a number of similarities with the field observation conducted in Aqaba and Shuweifat.

IV. URBAN GOVERNANCE “IN ACTION”: TWO CASE STUDIES

(a) *Partners in Aqaba urban upgrading in Jordan*

Aqaba is an expanding city, with facilities for shipping, tourism, industry and trade. The peace process and consequently, the prospects of expanding the tourism sector have turned the Aqaba region into a national focus of interest and therefore have made it more likely to receive institutional, economic and technical support from central Government and donor agencies. However, Aqaba governorate is considered as the poorest in the Kingdom (see Table 1). The city of Aqaba covers an area of 80km² with 26km of coastline. The population is estimated at approximately 65,000 inhabitants with 45% of them living in informal settlements, covering an area of 460 dunums. . Its original inhabitants were Bedouin tribes, yet over the years Aqaba has witnessed an influx of migrants from surrounding governorates and other regions, as well as Palestinian refugees and returnees after the Gulf war. The rapid urbanization process registered in the city has aggravated the problem of informal settlements, in terms of illegal housing, substandard public service delivery and an overall poor quality of life.

In 1990, Aqaba was designated as a Governorate. As a result, a number of Government departments, such as the Electricity and Water Authorities, banks and other institutions, have opened regional offices in Aqaba, leading to an additional demand for infrastructure, health and social services as well as affordable housing.

(i) *Public authorities and NGOs*

Different public actors can be identified in Aqaba and its surroundings. The three most important ones are the Aqaba Region Authority (ARA), the Municipality and the Aqaba Governorate. Additionally the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC) also intervene directly, providing land servicing and upgrading projects, which are dominant economic activities in the city. Even if their structures and responsibilities are officially clearly defined, there are functional ambiguities and administrative overlap between the different agencies.

The ARA, established in 1984, is by far the most important and best-financed public institution in Aqaba and has no equivalent in Jordan. ARA is a financially independent institution, gaining its revenues mainly from land-sale, but is directly linked to the Prime Ministers Office. The budget in 1998 amounted more than JD 14 million, compared to JD 5 million in 1996. It is responsible for social and economic development in the region, and the formulation of strategic, structure and some detailed plans, in addition to coordination functions with other public and private agencies. This includes design and execution of industrial, tourist, agricultural and infrastructure development projects in the region, control and modification of the unbalanced growth of Aqaba town and supervision of the execution of works carried out by public and private agencies. Primary objective of ARA is to act as the planning, research and regulatory body to coordinate the other government agencies in Aqaba. Its power was much extended, as ARA is now responsible for all infrastructure work in Aqaba City.

Since the early 1990s, the Municipality of Aqaba has lost part of its functions to ARA or other departments, such as HUDC, as a result of administrative restructuring. The municipality is mainly involved in planning and maintenance of public spaces, providing car parks, street paving, street lightning and cleaning, garbage collection, maintenance of public areas and facilities, monitoring health and sanitation institutions.

The total budget of Aqaba municipality does not exceed 1,5 million JD annually, of which up to 90% is generated from municipal revenue, such as custom taxes, tax on fuel and gas and vehicle licenses. The limited budget revenue narrows the possibilities of the municipality to plan and implement large-scale development projects.

Aqaba Governorate is the third public player and has direct power over the municipality. Due to the responsibilities of ARA in Aqaba town in which more than 90% of the Governorate residents are living, the planning zone under the Governorate jurisdiction is extremely limited and concentrates in Aqaba town mainly on issues related to public security. However, the Governorate benefited from decentralization measures, acquiring added technical and administrative responsibilities and increased financial resources to design and finance some projects directly.

However, ARA remains the dominant player in the region. It has legislative and ruling authority (Article 10 of ARA-Law) over both the municipality and the governorate. This causes a good deal of confusion and competition, even though some degree of cooperation and sharing of responsibilities exist. The governor has, from a legal point, all government institutions and agencies in Aqaba under his mandate, but under ARA law, the governor is just a member of the ARA board, chaired by the president of the ARA. Despite of the broad development mandate of the ARA, it does not have direct control over the other government agencies operating in Aqaba. Those agencies report on their activities, plans and projects to the head office in Amman. There is a dire need to improve coordination among the different agencies in Aqaba by setting up coordination committees – which would include local citizen initiatives along with public authorities. These committees would follow-up on joint public activities and insure an adequate flow of information in Aqaba.

In most cases however, institutional bottlenecks do not result from administrative overlap but more so from lack of real decentralization. All public institutions, as the private sector and NGOs, remain closely monitored by central government in Amman. A big number of essential instruments of the ARA, like budgetary matters, changes in land lease and sale, require approval from the Council of Ministers. As a result of the decentralization measures, coordinating committees between the concerned institutions were institutionalized. However, ARA, the Municipality and Governorate of Aqaba are de facto restricted to a monitoring and implementing role, rather than fully assuming planner's functions.

The NGO-scene in Aqaba remains weak, in drawing adherents and consequently in its human, capital and institutional resource bases. Most NGOs have budgets, which do not exceed few thousand JD annually and are dependent on a limited number of volunteers. The integration of NGOs and CBOs in public development programs – despite the official mandate of ARA to coordinate with them – remains considerably low. There are few cases of collaboration between NGOs and local public authorities, however such attempts remain *ad hoc* and, as in the cases of Ismailia and Nablus presented in the previous section, participatory initiatives come to a standstill with the completion of the projects life cycle.

NGO activities in Aqaba concentrate on social service provision, such as running Kindergartens, nurseries and orphanages, providing care for people with special needs as well as vocational training and financial assistance. NGOs involvement in health care fills a visible gap in public health services (see Table 2). The technical and material shortages in public health facilities have incited an active involvement of NGO in this field, usually national or international NGOs with substantial financial resources. Medecins du Monde, a French NGO, opened with cooperation of the Red Crescent, a Mother and Health Care Project. So far its operation base is subsidized up to 60%, and the Medecins du Monde are presently looking for options to establish income-generating projects to achieve financial independence.

The Bir as-Saba' Association, an NGO based in Amman, is also in the process of establishing a clinic in el-Alamiyeh with community participation, financed by its own resources. A part of the clinic building shall be used for income-generating activities to ensure the sustainability of the project.

(ii) *Partnership in urban upgrading activities*

Upgrading work in Aqaba started in 1987, in Salahaddin, Shallalah, Khazan and the Old Town. Approximately 55% of the inhabitants are Palestinians. The World Bank and the

Housing Bank provided a loan of JD 6.5 million, to initiate the upgrading activities in 1987, and to be recovered through land sale and mortgage repayments. The objective of the program was to integrate the informal settlements into the rest of the urban environment – economically, physically and socially.

Upgrading included provision of clean water, electricity connection, sewer, circulation networks and storm water drainage and basic community services, such as schools, clinics, and community centers, with support to income generation activities. The upgrading process involved granting secure tenure to inhabitants who would pay in return for the land and part of the infrastructure investments. The implementation of the project was highly centralized, the HUDC being the main actor and responsible for project design, financing, implementation through local contractors, cost-recovery issues, monitoring and coordination between the other government bodies. The ARA issued building permits and approved building regulations in cooperation with the Municipality of Aqaba. No participatory approach for the community was adopted and no channel of coordination and communication between the concerned parties established.

In the second stage of the project (1992-1994) – the upgrading of the Old Town – an attempt was made to actively involve the beneficiaries in the process. This program was undertaken with assistance from Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation and in cooperation with the University of Jordan. It aimed at encouraging NGOs, CBOs and grass roots organizations to initiate upgrading and income generating projects in their neighborhoods. Thus, a joint public/ private committee was established with the participation of representatives from ARA, the governorate, the municipality, HUDC and 27 local NGOs and grass roots organizations.

The committee provided a forum for discussing needs of the community and articulating the residents interest and demands. A number of training workshops were conducted for the committee members in order to strengthen networking among the concerned parties, negotiation skills, project formulation and monitoring and gender development. An established Working Group, involving residents, public authorities, local groups and NGOs identified environmentally hazardous sites such as dumping sites, and started environmental awareness and clean-up campaigns. The presence of representatives from ARA and other public authorities within the Working Groups facilitated access to public funds and resources that allowed establishing playgrounds in the settlement, fencing of some vacant open land, and the construction of water connections.

(iii) Comments and observations

A number of field surveys¹⁷ have assessed the social and economic conditions in North and South Shellalah and in particular the impact of the upgrading measures. The direct access of most households to running water and electricity and over 50% connected to sewage system are attributed to the upgrading process. This is matched with residents' satisfaction with improved infrastructure services, as expressed in the interviews. Nonetheless, despite residents satisfaction with the measures, many officials in Aqaba expressed disappointment with the upgrading measures, particularly concerning water pipes and sewage not efficiently operating. It is still unclear if and how upgrading of South Shellalah will be continued.

Furthermore, upgrading had no impact in terms of improved economic conditions. At the city level, 35% of the households still earned less than 100 JD per month, which is remarkably lower than the official poverty line in the Kingdom. For 88% of the total residents in the informal settlements, income in 1998 is either equal or inferior to that of 1996.

¹⁷ ESCWA evaluated a number of community participation and upgrading projects in Aqaba in both 1996 and 1999. Furthermore, Medecins du Monde (a French NGO specializing in medical assistance) conducted an extensive field survey on health conditions and provision of health services by public, private and NGOs sectors in 1998 and 1999.

Overlap of administrative responsibilities presented a serious drawback to the success of the project. Mainly the necessary approval of both, the ARA and the Municipality of Aqaba, for the plans proposed by HUDC and the relocation of residents poses serious delays, not only on bureaucratic grounds, but also in view of the technicalities involved in setting land prices for the residents. Additionally, land valuation has to be agreed by both ARA and the Municipality.

In the first half of 1999, major institutional changes were decided by the Council of Ministers. The president of the ARA was named Governor to avoid confusion between the authorities and to improve coordination between public bodies active in Aqaba. Since the municipal elections of July 1999 were cancelled and Aqaba municipality connected to the ARA, the President of ARA is de facto Mayor of Aqaba, thus appointed not elected.

It is not yet clear how administrative responsibilities will be coordinated among the different layers of government (ARA, the Governorate or HUDC); or whether NGOs and the private sector would be able to have an expanded role, in line with institutional reform and the Structural Adjustment Program adopted since the early 1990s. Decisions regarding the future of upgrading activities will be dependent on the outcome of the administrative restructuring.

A study, conducted by the Service Group, Inc, USA, recommends the replacement of the ARA by a broader authority with wide powers and full autonomy. The authority would be responsible for decisions on economic planning, investment promotion, industrial estate management and marketing, privatization and private provision of public infrastructure, environment regulation and monitoring and licensing, permits and approvals. Whether this level of decentralization and functional streamlining for different public institutions, would empower the municipality to perform a more developmental role and be a decision-maker depends the political will to match administrative with polity decentralization.

TABLE 1: LIVING CONDITIONS IN AQABA

Characteristics of Housing	AQABA GOVERNORATE	JORDAN
<u>Numbers of Rooms in House</u>		
1	21,4%	8,9%
2	30%	19,9%
3	21,7%	32,5%
4 and above	26,8%	38,6%
<u>Average number of persons per room</u>		
6 and above	6,8%	1,8%
5 to 6	3,7%	1,9%
4 to 5	5,8%	4,5%
3 to 4	12,9%	11,7%
2 to 3	22,1%	27,3%
1 to 2	41,8%	41,0%
< 1	6,8%	11,4%
<u>Method of Garbage Disposal</u>		
Collected	9,9%	68,1%
Public Container	68,7%	25,9%
Burned	20,1%	4,1%
Dumped	0,7%	0,1%
Other	0,7%	1,7%
<u>Type of sewage system</u>		
Public network	53,6%	55,1%
Cesspool	44,5%	33,7%
None	1,4%	10,9%
Other	0,4%	0,3%
<u>Source of lightning in house unit</u>		
Public		
Other	83,3%	96,5%
	16,7%	3,5%
<u>Source of drinking water</u>		
Public network	85,7%	94,7%
Public tap	0,7%	0,1%
Tanker	4,4%	3,1%
Well	0,3%	0,5%
Other	8,8%	1,6%

Source: Statistical Yearbook 1996.

TABLE 2: NGOs OPERATING IN AQABA

NAME OF NGO	FOUNDED	MAIN ACTIVITIES
Al-Aqaba al-kheiriyyeh al-islamiyyeh	1965	Kindergarten, school, vocational training, financial support Expenditure 1998: 115,000 JD
As-sawwaqin al-kheiriyyeh al-islamiyyeh	1969	Support to driver's families, orphans and widows
Ath-thaghar li-ri`ayet al-mu`aqin	1981	External center for the mentally handicapped Expenditure 1998: 13,000 JD
Nisa` al-Aqaba al-kheiriyyeh	1982	Kindergarten, external support
Ash-shimal al-kheiriyyeh	1983	Financial support
Abna`al-Aqaba li ri`ayet wa ta`hil al-aitam	1990	Support to orphans, scholarships
Abna` al-Aqaba al-kheiriyyeh lil-turath ash-shaabi wa al-mihani	1990	Vocational training, financial support to families Expenditure 1998: 50,000 JD
Asdiqa beit al-Maqdis al-kheiriyyeh	1991	Sewing workshop, financial help
Ilat lil-tanmiyyeh al-ijtima`iyyeh	1996	Financial support, promotion of women
Bir as-Saba` al-kheiriyyeh	1978	Financial support, health services
Khalil ar-Rahman al-kheiriyyeh	1963	Social centers, education, financial support
As-Salt al-kheiriyyeh	1986	Financial support, cultural club
Jama`iyeh Mo`ab al-kheiriyyeh	1969	Financial support
Ar-Rabita al-wataniyyeh li-tarbiyyeh wa ta`allim at-tafal	1986	Education
Al-merkaz al-islami al-kheiriyyeh	1965	Health care, financial support, education...
Nadi sahbata al-a`mal wa al-mihan	1976	Promotion of women
Abna` Ma`an al-kheiriyyeh	1981	Financial support, vocational training

Source: GUVS directory.
Major NGOs with expenditure in 1998.

(b) Municipality – Community Relations in Hay El-Selloum in Lebanon¹⁸

Choueifat is one of the largest and richest municipalities in Lebanon, situated south of Beirut. The population in the city of Choueifat and surrounding area is estimated at 56000 in addition to an estimated 100-150000 residents living in informal settlements. A number of geographical, socio-political and economic factors have transformed Choueifat from a village in the 1950s, to a major city in the pre-war period¹⁹. Today Choueifat is the most important industrial area in Lebanon extending into the metropolitan area of Beirut. High population density, poor infrastructure and environment problems characterize Choueifat. Choueifat municipality faces important challenges to improve infrastructure conditions with its limited financial resources and involve different actors in the decision-making process.

Originally a recreation area for the inhabitants of Beirut and dominated by agriculture, the creation, development and extension of Choueifat is closely linked to the construction of the international airport which attracted workers mainly from southern Lebanon and the Bekaa hoping to find jobs and income. The construction of public schools

¹⁸ The following discussion focuses on the relation binding Choueifat Municipality with Hay as-Sollum, a squatter settlement in southern Beirut, which is located within its Municipal boundaries but is demographically, physically, socially, economically and culturally distinct from it.

¹⁹ Developing Alternatives, Hay es-Salloum (Beirut), 1999, 2.

and other institutions, and the development of the Choueifat industrial area were followed by an increased influx of migrants to the southern suburbs of Beirut. The displacement of thousands of Palestinians in the Arab-Israeli wars, as well as Lebanese citizens mainly from the South, has rendered the southern suburbs of Beirut and notably Choueifat, one of the most densely populated areas of Lebanon, with an estimated annual population growth of 4%.

During the Lebanese civil war, construction activities moved unabated with little consideration for compliance to building codes and regulations. Choueifat was affected by this unplanned urban sprawl, resulting in inadequate infrastructure connection to buildings in addition to increasing loss of agricultural land. Today the existing infrastructure and services provided by public institutions is insufficient and does not meet the needs of its population. The majority of the residents are migrants from all over the country, and do not vote in Choueifat Municipality but in their place of origin. As they are not represented in the municipality, there have been little incentives (or political pressure) on the municipality to extend public facilities to informal settlements like Hay al-Sollum, or integrate them into the municipality's planning schemes.²⁰

(i) Participation and local governance in Choueifat's informal settlements: Hay el-Selloum

Conditions of urban services in Hay el-Selloum are substantially those available in Choueifat. The existing water network is inadequate and most people have to rely on water tanks and wells or buy water from private providers. The sewerage system is equally of substandard quality causing serious environmental problems and flooding during the rainy season. The Choueifat industrial area is an environment hazard, polluting air and water.

In the absence of central government policy to strategically address the problem of informal settlements in all its complexities, Hezbollah has been an active player in Hay el-Selloum facilitating access to infrastructure and social services for the residents.²¹ Amal and the Popular Committee are also active but not so much in service provisions, and as such do not enjoy the same support from the residents as Hezbollah does. Hezbollah represents in the southern suburbs the main power broker and often substitute in the role of local authority. This is partially due to the social and relief services Hezbollah is providing to the suburbs' impoverished inhabitants, filling the gap between insufficient governmental and public services and the needs of southern Beirut's residents.

In spite of the impetus generated by municipal the elections in 1998, Choueifat Municipality remains weak on technical, financial and administrative grounds, and urban development issues, as in other municipalities in Lebanon are politicized. Thus, even if Choueifat has comparatively a good financial standing, its resource base remain limited for the municipality to play an active developmental role, particularly in addressing the needs of Hay el-Selloum. Municipalities' expenditures are mainly used for administrative costs, and to a lesser extent for public cleaning measures leaving limited resources for public investment or infrastructure projects. The strong control on municipal funds, which is exercised by the central government, causes time-consuming processes for the Municipality to fund medium- or large-scale projects. However, the Municipality has a budget to finance projects that do not exceed LL 3, 000,000 (i.e. US\$ 1500 at current prices). This budget is often not used effectively, due to the shortage of qualified staff to identify and develop proposals for small-scale projects, and the lack of residents' involvement.²² Alternatively, the Council for the

²⁰ Developing Alternatives, 2, and: The Souks of Choueifat, Berlin, 1999, 5.

²¹ Developing Alternatives, 2.

²² Developing Alternatives, 32.

Development and Reconstruction (CDR) as a public agency, founded in 1977, execute or contract out all major development projects as well as planning and research functions²³

(ii) *Role of NGOs in urban service delivery*

A number of international and local NGOs, CBOs or local initiatives and committees have been active in Choueifat and Hay al-Sellum during the Lebanese Civil War. With the end of the war, their number decreased. Presently, NGOs remain active in informal settlements, notably in Hay el-Sellum, often emerging through family or neighborhood associations, and commanding irregular resources. Their operations are mainly locally based²⁴. Like the local initiatives, CBOs and NGOs (political and religious) are working on different agendas and often with a different political or religious background and constituencies, and coordination among them is almost nonexistent. There is a dire need for networking and capacity building between the organizations in order to optimize the use of the rare financial resources and to avoid an overlap of projects and services provided. This includes information sharing, evaluations and follow-up of development projects to address the needs of the most needy residents and neighborhoods. Cooperation and coordination among the different groups is a precondition for articulating the residents' interests and demands efficiently.

In addition, NGOs and local committees are highly dependent on foreign donors. Japan has recently granted Lebanon \$31,300 to provide sports educational and medical equipment to the Amel Association for a community project in Hay al-Sollum. The Japanese government will implement this project under the Grassroots Grant Assistance Program, which seeks to support development projects of NGOs and other non-profit-organizations.²⁵

A number of action research projects have been initiated in Hay al-Sollum²⁶. In May 1999, the Development Planning Unit at the University of London, organized a study group, in cooperation with ESCWA, the LIFE project of UNDP and local urban researchers, field work in order "to apply and test tools, techniques and concepts to the actual situation in Hay al-Sollum". The aim was to develop realistic and feasible proposals that build upon existing and ongoing projects and address the client's needs - the Municipality of Choueifat - and problems within the informal settlement"²⁷. A major objective of the research envisaged bringing different actors together, through negotiations and joint working sessions.

²³ Harb el-Kak, M., Politiques Urbaines dans la banlieue-sud de Beyrouth, Beirut, 1996, 20.

²⁴ Fawaz, M., Harb el-Kak, M., Peillen-Debs., I., Le quartier de Hayy el-Sellom en banlieue sud de Beyrouth, Beirut, 1999, 14.

²⁵ Daily Star, 4-9-99

²⁶ These include initiatives by national and foreign universities such as the Lebanese University, the American University of Beirut, University College and University of Berlin. The objective is to make research available for the community as a toll for taking action and guiding policies.

²⁷ Developing Alternatives, 1.

(iii) *A pilot study for the upgrading of Hay el-Selloum*

A high population density characterizes Hay elSollum with its estimated 150000 residents, outnumbering the rest of the municipality of Choueifat. Unplanned construction, lack of basic public health standards, pollution and inadequately provided social services negatively impact the quality of life in the neighborhood. The drainage system is leaking and insufficient, the river used as garbage dump and sewage main. The residents are predominantly poor and middle income families with mixed sectarian origins. One of the main reasons for the high density is the limited scope for horizontal expansion of urban development, due to private ownership of land as well as the topographic and geographic limitations imposed by the airport, industrial area and existing overcrowded residential areas.

The proposal aims to improve living conditions through the implementation of urgent infrastructure works, such as drainage, sewerage upgrading and providing some solutions to chaotic and over-crowded traffic. Optimizing the use of buildings and open space, establishment of recreational areas, extension of education and health services to provide the inhabitants with basic services. Sewage and wastewater overflows in houses and streets caused by leaking and blocked pipes are one of the main concerns of the residents. The proposal also suggests installing combined rainwater, household waste water and sewage system for the settlement, planned, financed and implemented by both the municipality and the residents. This would create a partnership between the residents and the local authority with a benefit for all concerned parties²⁸.

At the institutional level the working group identified the urgent need of establishing a channel of communication between the municipality and the inhabitants of Hay al-Sollum in order to meet the problems and demands of the settlement. Due to the origin of its inhabitants from different regions of Lebanon, most residents are not represented in the municipality (only 300 out of 120000 are voting in Choueifat). An institutionalized channel or committee between the Municipality and the residents will inevitably help to more appropriate planning, cost saving measures and empowerment of the citizens. Hay al-Sollum needs to be recognized by the municipality as a quarter within Choueifat Municipality and given an urban status to define the role and responsibility of the municipality to this quarter since it is still seen as an illegal and temporarily settlement. Greater public participation of residents in decision-making, cooperation between the community and the municipality might give the residents better access to resources and urban development assistance.

A self-help approach is adopted with the Technical Support Group as a new NGO giving technical advice to the municipality, CBOs and households. Since residents of Choueifat tried to solve their problems on their own – the construction of a drainage pipe - there is a need to give them technical and financial advise, as there are arising problems, such as bad connections, leakage and bad maintenance. Advise is required for infrastructure upgrading, environmental improvement – cleaning, waste collection -, construction works, social and environmental assessment, fund raising, evaluation and monitoring of development projects.

The projects can be implemented in three ways: by the Municipality, by the Municipality and the community, or by the community. These might be financed on a cost-sharing basis. Both, the municipality and the inhabitants will cover costs of upgrading measures; international and local donors might be attracted to contribute to the projects as well. Sustainability can be achieved if the projects have an income-generating factor, like vending newly established shops and recreational facilities on the promenade such as cafes, and commercial areas, parking lots on public spaces. It is of utmost importance to involve the

²⁸ Developing Alternatives, 3.

residents at an early stage of the project to rise their awareness and willingness to participate actively and to maintain the achieved successes.

Since the residents of Hay al-Sollum use public services of the neighboring Burj al-Barajneh settlement, both areas could be linked stronger in terms of physical and social infrastructure. However, a new arrangement and restructuring of the Municipalities might ease the problems in southern Beirut, but not solve them. Upgrading of Hay al-Sollum, based on a community participation approach can only be realized, if the Lebanese government and the Municipality of Choueifat are giving the settlement a clear perspective for the future. This means recognition of the quarter and the right of the residents to stay in their respective environment. Some important steps have been done. In recent years, some infrastructure projects were realized and the settlement became connected to running water and electricity, but there is still the need for an adequate sewage system. The planning of the new highway, linking Beirut with southern Lebanon, will not cut but by-pass Hay al-Sollum. This indicates a new approach of the Lebanese government towards the settlement. However, the problems of the southern suburbs of Beirut in general, and Choueifat with Hay al-Sollum in particular, are not only a problem of a lack of financial resources, but also have an administrative and technical dimension. Low salaries for municipal staff do not make it competitive on the labor market for high-educated people. Institutional upgrading of the municipality, training of its staff, streamlining administrative structures and capacity building is a precondition for developing plans and optimizing the use of limited resources. There is a need for a general municipality reform empowering its structures in administrative, financial and decision-making terms. This means as well that the residents must be represented in the municipality by at least an institutionalized channel to articulate their interests.

TABLE 3. NGOS ACTIVE IN HAY AL-SOLLUM

NAME OF NGO	MAIN ACTIVITIES
Hizbullah*	Large range of social and infrastructure services provided to the community; runs different other projects by sub-organizations
Corps Islamique de Santé	Subsidized medical services, laboratory
Le Bureau du Sayyed Fadl' Allah	Medical consultations, subsidized medicaments, financial help for operations, financial support for inscription at public schools, scholarships for university, financial support for families
L'Institut Al Imam al-Hadi	Work with physical handicapped and mentally retarded (20 persons)
Al-Mabarrat	Education (schools), health, living and educational support for orphans
AMAL*	Financial help for orphans for school inscription, small-scale infrastructure projects
Aamel	Technical institute for women vocational training
L'association Al Imad	Vocational training, financial help for families
Jihad al-Bina`a	Urban services, construction works, water supply
Al Shaheed; Al Jareeh	Financial support for families

* There is a debate on whether to include Hizbollah and Amal as NGOs, since they are not registered as political parties, and are considered as social movements. However, they are accounted for in this section, because they are considerably influential on the local scene and support or sponsor practically most community based organizations.

Source: Harb el-Kak, M, Fawaz, M., Peillen-Debs, I., Compte rendu de l'étude de cas: Le quartier de Hayy el-Sellom en banlieue sud de Beyrouth, 1999.

V. RETHINKING MODELS OF PARTNERSHIP IN “GOOD URBAN GOVERNANCE”

The two cases reviewed in the previous section emerge from two different contexts, in terms of the importance of municipalities, NGOs, the central government, and the ability of each of these actors to address the concerns of local communities, namely the provision of social and infrastructure services. Notwithstanding such differences, it is still clear in both cases that municipalities need a new impetus to operate their urban management functions more effectively. The multiplicity of actors intervening on the local scene renders municipalities or local authorities the weakest link among the network of actors, and thus most prone to be side stepped, marginalized and discarded as inefficient, by higher level authorities or power-brokers as in the case of Lebanon. The paradox remains however, that municipalities are still expected to play a strategic role as coordinators, partners in development and catalysts of change.

While notion of partnership among local actors is stressed as sine qua non for all development activities, it remains loosely defined in policy and operational terms. There is a need to address the contractual status of partners and the terms of reference governing partnership. The legal framework governing NGOs operations in the different countries of the region has so far proved to be a reigning factor. Existing legislation elaborate all the “does and don’ts” for NGOs, the leverage that the state has in monitoring their activities, their governing boards, their accounts and bookkeeping procedures, the profiles of their members and NGOs relations with external organizations/ donors. While some of these aspects can be justified within the monitoring and strategic planning functions of the state, in real terms however, the legal system has often been misused. It has become a tool of control rather than an institutional mechanism for ensuring transparency and accountability of all social actors involved in the public domain.

The changing relations between NGOs and the State and consequently the need to revise the existing legislation reveals hardly any concern as to how can municipalities expand and reform their role as partners of NGOs. Much ground work remains to be done in terms of developing criteria for NGOs accreditation at the local level, monitoring and backstopping social services provided by NGOs, developing joint advisory boards involving citizen groups, municipality personnel and NGOs. In fact there is so much scope for expanding and exploring the areas of partnership between municipalities and NGOs as municipalities are called on to assume greater planning and decision-making power and financial autonomy.

Furthermore, partnership between municipalities and NGOs needs to be discussed in terms of the resources required for negotiations and conflict resolution as an on-going process of development. Indeed negotiations should reflect the diversity of views and alternative approaches to addressing planning issues. One of the major challenges in this respect is ensuring that partners interact on a par, rather than end up as junior partners whereby the more powerful social actors monopolize the negotiation process, and as such, set the terms of partnership and tilt its outcome to their advantage. Unequal relations in partnership concern not only the state dealing with NGOs; it is also reflected in situations where NGOs have different economic and political weight, or between local and central government, as the Nablus case clearly illustrates. This would preempt an effective participatory process, and above all such a façade of negotiation (often void of content) legitimizes what could be an undemocratic process at the core.

Parity in negotiations underscores another important challenge facing partners, specifically when talking about an expanded role of NGOs and notably those operating at the local level. Neither NGOs nor the State has experienced the winds of change uniformly across

the sector. In fact the expanded role of NGOs has highlighted their diversity and even polarization among them. A handful of NGOs, with access to resources and political power have managed to scale-up their activities, expand their budgets, employ professional staff, while the overwhelming majority of NGOs still suffer from limited resources and undertake small-scale service provision or welfare functions. Similarly, as the cases of Aqaba and Ismailia have shown, local governments are often marginalized and have some of their functions taken over by higher level authorities, (by central governments or specialized public agencies).

Finally, the implications of voluntarism and resources mobilization through self-funding or self-help approaches should be carefully weighed against a lost opportunity for generating income; particularly in situations involving economic hardship. This is one paradox observed in all cases discussed in this paper. This dimension is often overlooked when cases are nominated or earmarked as “best practices” in the region. The fact that pilot, experimental projects generate popular support and resource mobilization at a point in time, and in a limited scale, does not necessarily mean that voluntarism can be maintained over a long period of time, or for that matter expanded in terms of extra time spent in non-remunerated jobs.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has attempted to contextualize the emerging notion of municipal governance and its implications in terms of institutionalizing the participation of state and non-state actors in municipal affairs. A number of case studies were discussed to illustrate the complexities involved in engaging different local actors to perform within the complex structure of urban management and urban governance. This makes the function of negotiation and mediation paramount for planners and policy makers, and necessary for turning municipalities into a forum for participatory development.

Partnership – which has become in development language a “misnomer” for many forms of interaction between various partners - is not only about alliance building, but also, and often so, builds on negotiation and conflict resolution. As such it is important to address the framework (or forum) in which partnership takes place; more importantly, there is need to understand who is benefiting or not benefiting from a “partnership” set-up and why? This in particular affects both municipalities and NGOs operating at a local level, considering that concepts such as participatory development or empowerment can sometimes be elusive, and therefore open for different interpretations (or misinterpretations) when translated to local level.

The need to tally among the different interpretations or perceptions of partnerships evolves through trust building among different partners. This could be accomplished by lessening external over-regulation (by donors, central government agencies) and increasing self-regulation (jointly between NGOs and local authorities). Scope for self-regulation should be explored; in light of codes of conducts (and ethics) which NGOs themselves need to actively work on. Thus governments and NGOs need to agree on a common framework for working together and establish the underlying principles governing their collaboration and partnership. Contractual arrangement needs to be agreed to by all partners so that their respective roles are clear and expectations are realistic.

Municipalities and local authorities should be equipped to provide accreditation to NGOs based on agreed-upon and transparent standards and regulate NGO operations within their jurisdictions. Regulations should be simplified to ensure better co-ordination and trust between NGOs and public authorities. In this relation, complementarities rather than competition among the different actors needs to be stressed. This particularly concerns donors, who should work with joint teams rather than with one actor in isolation. This is part of an on-going process of institution and capacity building.

In terms of urban management functions, there is a clear need to articulate the concept and definition of urban management and urban governance, at national and local levels. Functions of municipalities and their partners, and their developmental and planning role, maintenance and protection of the urban environment, needs to be elaborated in light of policy and operational options. Here the need to explain how municipalities can monitor NGOs and private sector, through reliable indicators, particularly when public services are contracted out. Hence the main challenge lies in providing municipalities with resources and leverage to ensure and maintain transparency in terms of accounts, contracts and decisions as well as status of work and project implementation.

Finally, effective decentralization is paramount for local governance, in its technical, institutional and legislative dimensions. In that sense municipalities should be able to negotiate with potential investors, discuss terms of contracts, raise funds and manage their finances as independent economic actors, a profile which most municipalities in the region have a long way to level with. One important tool in this respect lies in building the information bases of municipalities, and their ability to process and analyze data and more importantly relate information to policy-decisions. Such recommendations can only be effective when pursued as two-way processes, i.e. linking successful local initiatives within the context of an “enabling environment” at the macro level.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Carapico, Sheila, "Yemen Between Civility and Civil War", 287-317, in: Civil Society in the Middle East, Vol II, Norton, A. Richard (Editor), Leiden, 1996.
- Carapico, Sheila, "Pluralism, Polarization, and Popular Politics in Yemen", 241-267, in: Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, Vol. 2, Korany, Bahgat (Editor), Boulder (Colorado), 1998.
- Devas, N. and Rakodi, C. Managing Fast Growing Cities, New Approaches to Urban Planning and Management in the Developing World, Longman Group UK, Ltd. 1993.
- Developing Alternatives: Hay es-Sollum, Beirut. MSc building and urban design in development, 1999.
- Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, ESCWA, Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region, 1998-1999, United Nations, New York, 1999. E/ESCWA/ED/1999/5
- Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, ESCWA, Community Participation In Urban Upgrading Projects in the ESCWA Region, New York, 1997. E/ESCWA/HS/1997/4
- Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Local Government, local Organizations, Participation and Rural Development in the Yemen Arab Republic, Staff Working Paper No. 1. 1987. E/ESCWA/AGR/87/4
- Evans, P., Rueschemeyer, D and Skocpol, T. Bringing the State Back In, Cambridge University Press, 1996
- Fawaz, Mona, Harb el-Kak, Mona, Peillen-Debs., Isabelle, Compte rendu de l'étude de cas, Le quartier de Hayy el-Sellom en banlieue sud de Beyrouth, Université Libanese, 1999.
- Godard, Francis, Des Partnariats dans nos villes pour l'innovation urbaine, UNESCO, for Habitat II, 3-14 Juin, 1996.
- Harb el-Kak, Mona, Politique Urbaines dans la banlieue-sud de Beyrouth, Beyrouth 1996.
- Harris, Nigel, Cities and Structural Adjustment in the Global Economy UCL Press, London 1997
- Majdalani, Roula, "The Urban Governance Paradigm: a Concept in the Making? in S. Shami (ed.) Towards an Ethnography of Governance: Urban Spaces and Actors in the Middle East, Toronto University Press (forthcoming).
- Mayfield, James B. Local Government in Egypt, Structure, Process and the Challenges of Reform, American University Press in Cairo, 1996.
- McGill, Ronald, "Urban Management in Developing Countries" Cities, vol. 15 No. 6, pp. 463-471, 1998.
- MED-BRANCH, Municipal Audits and Urban Environmental Planning and Management, Report of the Policy Dialogue held in Tetouan, Morocco, 7 -9 October, 1997. International Academy of the Environment (1997)

- Mitlin, Diana and Satterthwaite, David (1994), Cities and Sustainable Development, Background Document, Global Forum '94, Manchester 24th to 28th June 1994, IIED, London, 1994
- Signoles, Aude, "Patterns of Local Democracy and Decentralization in Palestine: The Competing and Complimentary Linkages between the Central Authority and Municipalities", October 1999 (unpublished paper) presented at CERMOC, Beirut for the project on "Municipalites et pouvoirs locaux"
- Strange, Suzan, The Retreat of the State, the Diffusion of Power in the World Economy, Cambridge University Press, 1996
- Stren, Richard, "Urban management in development assistance", Cities, May 1993, pp. 125-138.
- UNDP, Decentralized Governance Monograph: A Global Sampling of Experiences (Draft).
- Werna, Edmundo, "The Management of Urban Development, or the Development of Urban Management? Problems and Premises of an Elusive Concept", Cities, Vol. 12, no. 5, pp. 353-359, 1995.
- World Bank, Global Urban and Local Government Strategy, (draft) Washington D.C, 1999

