

City Management in Jordan: Challenges Awaiting Solutions

The 2011 – 2013 season of Diwan al-Mimar

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Introduction

Diwan al-Mimar was established in 2000 by the Center for the Study of the Built Environment (CSBE). It is a discussion forum consisting of about 25 members and their guests from the fields of architecture and urban planning who periodically meet to attend lectures and discuss issues of relevance to their fields. Since its establishment, the Diwan has invited dozens of speakers from Jordan and abroad.

CSBE also published a book on Diwan al-Mimar that includes articles that document a number of the Diwan lectures (Mohammad al-Asad and Majd Musa (eds.), *Exploring the Built Environment: Essays on the Presentations of Diwan al-Mimar and Affiliated Public Lectures* (Amman: Center for the Study of the Built the Built Environment and Darat al-Funun – The Khalid Shoman Foundation, 2007)). The lectures have addressed a variety of topics including professional practice, history of architecture and planning, architectural education, water and energy efficiency, water conserving landscapes, and the effects of emerging information technologies on the evolution of cities.¹

In 2011, the organizers of Diwan al-Mimar changed its structure so that the sessions of each season would focus on one specific topic that is related to architecture or planning rather than addressing several topics. They also agreed that this topic should be connected to an issue that is of importance in Jordan, and that the Diwan should interact with the public and with decision makers in order to spread awareness about the topic and to present possible solutions. The subject selected for the 2011 – 2013 season was city management in Jordan.

¹ More detailed information on Diwan al-Mimar is available on the CSBE website (<http://csbe.org/activities/diwan-al-mimar/>).

Overview

The decline in the performance of municipal institutions in Jordan is taking place in a quick and worrying manner. This decline unfortunately is not a recent development, and goes back to the 1970s, but its pace has accelerated greatly during the past decade. The decline appears in many areas, including land-use planning, transportation, waste management, the expansion of the city, and the provision of public green spaces. It is not necessarily the result of a lack of technical skills at municipal institutions, but is primarily due to a mismanagement of available human and financial resources. This is evident in the inflated numbers of municipal staff members, the lack of transparency and public participation in the decision-making process, the ascendancy of personal interests over the public interest, and the spread of corruption. All this of course is not limited to municipal institutions, but is also apparent in various public sector institutions.

In order to discuss these matters in more detail, CSBE organized a series of sessions and a survey about city management as part of Diwan al-Mimar. This lengthy season of the Diwan included four sessions to each of which a former official who had held a position associated with city management in Jordan and who – in our opinion – left a positive impact on that position was invited to give a presentation and to interact with the members of the Diwan. The reason for inviting former officials is because they do not usually feel obliged to repeat the official line regarding their work. Moreover, their distance from public office allows them to diagnose their responsibilities and to reflect upon their years in office in a more objective manner than those currently occupying their positions.

CSBE invited Omar Maani, the former Mayor of the Greater Amman Municipality; Walid Masri, the former Mayor of the Greater Irbid Municipality; Mohammad Balqar, the former Commissioner at the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA); and Omar Razzaz, the former Director of the Social Security Corporation (who did not hold a position in municipal administration, but has a doctorate degree in urban planning). Their lectures – which are summarized in this report – and the interactions with each of them have provided for a rich and valuable experience.²

Session with Omar Maani, the former Mayor of the Greater Amman Municipality

The first Diwan session was with Omar Maani. In it, he talked about transferring the experiences of working in the private sector to the public sector, specifically to the Greater Amman Municipality, and about institutionalizing the municipality's work. He also spoke about the challenges of managing such a huge institution, which employs more than 23,000 staff members, and which suffers from numerous inefficiencies and from the predominance of the concept of “dependency” among a large number of its employees.

Among the services that a municipality can provide, Maani indicated that public transportation is an essential service in city life. He added that it has to be included in the city's master plan since land use

² It should be mentioned that since meeting with Diwan al-Mimar, two of the speakers have assumed new positions in the public sector. Walid Masri has become Minister of Municipal Affairs, and Omar Razzaz has become the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the King Abdullah II Fund for Development.

and transportation are strongly connected. One of his priorities when he was the mayor of Amman was accordingly to bring public transportation under the authority of the municipality.

Maani also addressed the issue of amalgamating municipalities located around Amman as part of the Greater Amman Municipality, and the benefits of centralization in city management. He believes these are needed in order to standardize the level of services and planning provided in the areas connected to Amman.

Session with Walid Masri, the former Mayor of the Greater Irbid Municipality

Walid Al Masri discussed the necessity of giving municipalities wider authorities so that they can function as institutions of local government rather than institutions of local administration, as is the case today. He added that in order to accomplish this, municipalities should have a say in providing services such as education, health, and transportation – as was the case in Jordan until the 1970s, rather than having their authority limited to matters such as issuing permits and determining land use and zoning arrangements. He added that this expansion of municipal authority will strengthen the municipality's connection with city residents and will encourage residents to elect mayors and city council members they feel would be capable of providing better services, instead of electing people from their families and social circles who would facilitate obtaining construction and occupancy permits for them.

Al Masri added that we should strengthen the connection between the municipality and city residents, and that municipal staff should focus on serving citizens rather than attempting to exercise control over them. This of course means, among other things, that the mayor and city council members should be elected. He added that neighborhood associations should be established and encouraged since they are institutions that represent the residents on the local level and help establish strong connections between city residents and municipal institutions.

Session with Mohammad Balqar, the former Commissioner for Land, Infrastructure, and Services at the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA)

Mohammad Balqar addressed the positive technocratic roles that a person in charge of city management can carry out, and how this person can effectively enhance the city's infrastructure and public services through setting strategies and policies that are well studied and carefully implemented. He pointed out that the port city of Aqaba was privileged by having a number of such officials who have served it over the years.

Balqar spoke about the specificities of Aqaba and mentioned that there were two institutions that were associated with the city's development: the Aqaba Regional Authority (1984 – 2000) and the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (2001 – present). The Aqaba Regional Authority existed along with the Aqaba Municipality, but the municipality's role was relatively marginalized, until it was eliminated after the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority was established. Balqar also addressed legislation that can enhance investment in Aqaba such as private / public-sector partnerships. He mentioned that he feels that both authorities have played positive roles in the city's development through providing the required

resources and qualifications, and through enhancing investment. However, he criticized their marginalization of the city's residents in its management.

Session with Omar Razzaz, the former Director of the Social Security Corporation

Omar Razzaz talked about several topics including the centralization and decentralization of city management. He mentioned that there is a difference between decentralization and the de-concentration of centralization, which involves giving decision-making authority to officials who are employees of the central authority, but are physically located away from the seat of central authority. He added that the role of "secondary" cities in Jordan must be enhanced in order to reduce the dominance of Amman as the center of political, economic, and cultural activities, and to create a reasonable gradation in the roles of different cities in the country.

He also explained that public institutions in Jordan, including municipalities, should not have such an excessive numbers of employees. Jordan does not possess the necessary economic resources that would allow for the employment of such large numbers, and, more importantly, this over-employment has led to a deterioration in the performance of public institutions.

Survey on City Management in Jordan

A survey that included questions about the management of Amman was distributed to the Diwan al-Mimar members after the conclusion of the four sessions. The survey questions addressed issues about the short and long-term challenges that Amman is facing, the type of officials they believe can efficiently manage the city, and how to best allocate Amman's municipal budget to provide different services.

The Diwan members agreed on the characteristics that they feel a city such as Amman should possess. Although these characteristics might appear to be too obvious, they felt they need to be stressed since the cities of Jordan unfortunately lack them. In their answers to the survey, the Diwan members mainly focused on developing Amman into a more pedestrian-friendly city, providing an efficient public transportation system, and supplying enough green areas. They agreed on the need to develop a city in which waste recycling take place, and which includes multi-zoned areas that accommodate residential, working, shopping, and entertainment activities. This would make it easier for residents to access these services and commute between them. The members also agreed on the need to stop Amman's poorly regulated sprawl.

The main challenge is how to make a quantitative leap that would realize such a city. This highly depends on how the city is managed. The Diwan members accordingly focused on the need to elect the city's mayor and the members of its municipal council, which means that residents not only will participate in the decision-making process, but will also assume responsibility for the decisions they make in electing the city's officials. They also focused on the importance of enhancing the performance of municipal staff, since the current level of performance needs to be raised significantly. In addition, they emphasized the importance of rethinking training programs for municipal staff and raising their levels of efficiency. They were very well aware, however, of the difficulty of improving the quality of municipal staff while municipalities suffer from inflated staff numbers. Performance simply cannot be improved without

reducing those numbers. The Diwan members moreover focused on the necessity of enhancing the role of local communities, and felt that the best way to achieve this would be through establishing neighborhood associations.

The Diwan members felt that there is a need to develop this survey and to distribute it among a relatively large number of urban residents in Jordan. This was carried out, and the last part of this report includes a copy of the survey that CSBE developed and distributed to a significant audience, as well as a summary of the survey results.

Summary of the first session of Diwan al-Mimar (2011 – 2013)

Interview with Omar Maani, former Mayor of the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM)

Omar Maani was the first speaker of the 2011 – 2013 season of Diwan al-Mimar. Maani was the Mayor of Amman from 2006 until 2011. This Diwan interview took place on November 23, 2011, and was facilitated by Mohammad al-Asad, Diwan member and the Founding Director of CSBE.

Institutionalization of municipal work and its sustainability

Through his initial comments, Maani mentioned that when he was appointed Mayor of Amman, he noticed that participation in the decision-making process and that the free exchange of points of views were absent at the Greater Amman Municipality. He also noticed that there was no systematic process for the transfer of responsibilities from former mayors to new mayors, which is an indication of discontinuity in institutional work. Maani considered the institutionalization of municipal work to be one of the most important achievements of his administration. He added that weekly and monthly staff meetings were held to follow up on the progress of the work of his administration.

Maani stated that he considers his points of weakness to be on the political level, since municipal work combines both technical expertise and political skill.

Transferring expertise from the private to the public sector

Maani considers overall low levels of competency to be a major issue he faced at GAM. He noticed that most of the employees who work in the public sector look at it as a stable form for employment, and that efficiency is not a priority in this situation, which is a main difference between the public and private sectors. He also believes that developing the public sector by following the governance systems used in the private sector is possible. Yet, dealing with public money and having to address such a wide range of responsibilities complicates work in the public sector. Maani gave the case of public-sector employees in Singapore as an example of a condition to which Jordan should aspire. Their salaries are higher than the salaries of private-sector employees, and private firms compete to hire former public-sector employees once they leave the public sector.

The concept of “dependency” has been prevalent for a long time in the public sector in Jordan. Accordingly, very little is expected of public-sector employees, and a good number of them do not do much work. Maani also mentioned that someone who has worked in the private sector and is used to group work, efficiency, and being forthcoming faces many obstacles when moving to the public sector. He believes that he was assigned the mayoral position to contribute to improving the efficiency of the institution, to improve Amman as a city to live in, to work on developing a master plan for the city, and to stop the city’s urban deterioration. While Maani used to work with small board members in the private sector, as mayor, he had to work with the city council, which consists of 68 members representing the city’s 2.5 million inhabitants. The mayor also serves all the residents of the city rather than one client. However, supervisory governmental bodies such as the Audit Bureau find it difficult to work with an official who works quickly and in non-traditional ways. He therefore always found himself having to explain to these bodies that certain services such as public transportation should be part of the responsibility of GAM rather than the Ministry of Transportation since land-use and transportation are

strongly connected and a city's master plan cannot be developed without taking public transportation into consideration. Maani mentioned that his request to place public transportation under the responsibility of GAM faced many objections, and he therefore had to explain the reasons behind his request to numerous officials including the Prime Minister, but by the time he had convinced him of the validity of his request, the Prime Minister was no longer in his position. He faced a similar experience with the Minister of Transportation. Maani considers this situation to be one of the disadvantages of the rapid changes in governments taking place in Jordan.

Maani added that the mayor should face challenges and should not give up, and that if a person is willing to make sacrifices, he/she will achieve results. Public-sector employees, however, are still not ready to make nontraditional decisions, and there currently is a general state of confusion that is paralyzing the performance of public-sector employees. If a person chooses to go against these common patterns of behavior, he/she will have to pay a price.

Services that should be provided by municipal institutions

Maani spoke about the services that in his opinion should be provided by municipal institutions, and services that may be outsourced. He pointed out that urban planning should be carried out in-house since it requires local expertise and knowledge of local conditions, but that some planning services may be outsourced as needed. He mentioned the Amman Institute as an example of an institution that was established by GAM and that included local planning expertise that may even be provided to municipal institutions other than that of Amman. He mentioned public transportation as an example of a service that should be organized by municipal institutions, but run by the private sector. Regarding waste management, Maani thinks that part of the activities that this service entails, such as waste collection, should remain under the responsibility of GAM, but that other activities may be outsourced. He added zoning and issuing construction and occupancy permits to the list of services that should remain under the responsibility of municipal institutions. Maani, however, believes that there is no general rule that determines whether municipal services should be outsourced or not, since each situation has its own specificities and each service should be addressed separately.

Delegation of authority

Maani believes that the role of the Mayor has not been clearly understood since the 1970s. He therefore worked on restructuring GAM and introduced the position of City Manager, who is in charge of implementing plans and programs on the ground. The City Manager in turn is supported by five executive officials who are in charge of the rest of the administrative staff. He added that most of the process of delegating authority started after two years of his appointment as mayor. Maani pointed out that the major issue that the process of delegation faces in the public sector is that certain administrative officials in the organizational structure, such as heads of departments, avoid delegation because they are afraid that others will take over their positions. He noticed, however, that the City Manager and the executive officials at GAM worked extremely well together and that their relationship was characterized by cooperation and mutual support.

Merging municipalities

Maani pointed that there is a need for merging surrounding areas with the city of Amman since the city will grow and spread to eventually reach them. In this context, he mentioned the Amman Development Corridor, which passes through several municipalities, but should be under the supervision of one authority. He also mentioned the need for unifying billboards along Airport Road, which passes through a number of municipalities. As for transferring the growth of Amman to other Jordanian cities, Maani thinks that developing large urban settlements of the same scale as Amman has not succeeded and that migration to the city continues. He also believes that the officials and specialists who have been involved in urban planning on the national level need to develop urban settlements in a manner that takes into consideration the social conditions of surrounding areas, but that these officials have not succeeded so far, and have dealt with planning in a superficial way. Maani believes that the reason behind this failure is the absence of political and social planning. He added that he believes Jordan will remain a single-city country, although it is still possible to develop the port city of Aqaba as another main urban center in the country.

Electing the Mayor of Amman and the experience of its City Council

Maani mentioned a question he was asked by a journalist when he was appointed Mayor of Amman about how he would like the city's residents to remember his tenure once it is over. Maani's answer was that he would like to be remembered as the last appointed (rather than elected) mayor of Amman. However, he changed his mind two years later. He still believes that it is the people's right to elect the mayor of Amman, but thinks that it is still too early for this to happen. Maani believes that electing the mayor of Amman will depend on a further development of Jordan's political life and political parties, and also on the country undergoing a complete electoral cycle and on producing political leaders. Regarding his experience with the Amman City Council, Maani mentioned that the Council included 68 members with an impressive mix of educational and cultural backgrounds. He also believes that the debates and decisions that the Council made had achieved their desired goals.

The characteristics of the upcoming Mayor of Amman

Regarding the characteristics of the upcoming Mayor of Amman, Maani mentioned that the Mayor should not be highly involved in politics, should have been raised in Amman, and should have a strong personality and a reputable résumé. He added that it is not necessary for the mayor to be specialized in city management since he can put together a strong and specialized support team. Yet, the Mayor should have a clear vision and should be able to delegate tasks effectively. He also should also have good communication skills and an ability to communicate effectively with local communities. In addition, he should have a minimal understanding of political thought in the country.

Summary of the second session of Diwan al-Mimar (2011 - 2013)

Interview with Walid Masri, former Mayor of the Greater Irbid Municipality

Walid Masri was the second speaker of the 2011 - 2013 season of Diwan al-Mimar. Masri was the Mayor of the Greater Irbid Municipality from 2003 until 2006. He also served as Deputy to the Mayor of the Greater Amman Municipality before that. This interview took place on January 30, 2012, and was facilitated by Natheer Abu-Obeid, Diwan member and the former Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the Jordan University of Science and Technology. Abu-Obeid is currently the President of the German-Jordanian University.

The municipality and its authorities

Masri started the interview by discussing two levels of governance. He explained that the first level is that of central governance, which is represented by the central government. The second level is that of local governance, which is represented by municipalities. Local governance in Jordan dates back to the end of the nineteenth century, during the Ottoman period. It is associated with society's right to manage its organizational affairs and services, and with allowing citizens to manage their everyday issues in a specific geographic area independently and without referring to the central authority. Laws in Jordan up to the 1970s used to define municipalities as public institutions that are financially and administratively independent, but the concept of local governance started deteriorating since then as the country shifted to centralization, and the authority of municipalities was increasingly limited until it has reached conditions of local management rather than local governance, which are two different notions.

The roles of municipalities were associated with all the issues that address the everyday life of Jordanians. These issues include securing education, health, food supervision, water, electricity, gas, and transportation. Municipal laws until 1955 had even assigned two additional roles to the mission of municipalities. The first was providing housing for those who could not afford it; and the second was providing job opportunities for the unemployed. Masri added that the condition of municipalities started deteriorating when they shifted from being institutions of local governance to ones involved in local management, and found their responsibilities being limited to areas such as issuing construction permits and implementing land-use and zoning regulations. Masri believes there is no other way for reforming municipalities but by reinstating their role as institutions of local governance.

Merging municipalities and the Greater Irbid Municipality

Masri considers that merging municipalities is important. This was implemented in Irbid since there was an urgent need to unify the planning process in Irbid and adjacent areas. The process, however, involved numerous deficiencies such as unequal representation of residents. The argument was that small areas should not have a large number of representatives. Moreover, the master planning carried out for the city and the municipalities merged with it did not consider issues such as transportation. This goes back to the fact that the municipality itself does not have much authority. Masri added that residents assess mayors in a rational way, and that they usually remember and appreciate those who served their community, even if these mayors preceded them.

Types of services that municipalities offer

Masri pointed out that public-sector institutions and services in Jordan are generally weak. He added that there is a large number of unqualified municipal employees who act arrogantly with the public. Municipalities as a result need to undergo a serious rehabilitation process. In this context, Masri pointed out that planners in Jordan are hard to come by, and that many of the officials who work in planning do not have any training in the field, and primarily gain experience through an accumulation of mistakes.

Masri stressed the importance of transferring knowledge between municipalities through exchanging experiences among the employees of different municipalities. He said that this by itself is a great learning opportunity for municipal staff.

Sources of income for municipalities

Masri pointed out that taxes are the only source of income for municipalities in Jordan, but that the amount of taxes that municipalities are able to levy today is much smaller than in the 1930s and 1940s. He also explained that in many countries, the sales tax is divided between municipalities and provincial or central governments, but that unfortunately is not the case in Jordan.

Evaluation and quality assurance

Masri mentioned the unfortunate absence of evaluation practices that assess administrative performance, which is essential for city management. He pointed out that there is a need to include residents in the municipality's activities, and that there should be continuous communication between the municipality, city council, and residents in order for the management of municipalities to be successful. He added that when he was Mayor of Irbid, he used to visit each of the city's districts four times a year to stay in touch with residents and to know their needs. However, he did not find this enough without effective communication with the city council, which is among the responsibilities of the municipality. Masri also suggested forming neighborhood associations to represent the city's residents in the best manner possible, and to improve interaction between the municipality, the city council, and city residents.

Masri added that municipalities should carry out studies that include opinion surveys before and after any project is implemented to see how the public reacts to it and to be able to take their opinions into consideration.

Interaction between city residents

Masri stated that there are economic gaps and various boundaries that prevent city residents in Jordan from connecting with each other more effectively, add to this a lack of public gathering spaces. He also mentioned that no attempts have been made to address this problem mainly because of negligence. He commented, however, that neighborhoods, and particularly neighborhood associations, provide a starting point for effectively dealing with this subject and addressing the lack of a comprehensive identity that brings city residents together. After all, interaction between residents from different backgrounds is direct and continuous in a given neighborhood.

Mayoral elections

Masri thinks that mayors should be elected, and that city residents are capable of electing mayors objectively and independently of family or tribal relations. He also thinks that if cities reclaim municipal tasks that had belonged to them in the past, such as overseeing services relating to transportation, education, and health, this would encourage residents to elect the mayors they believe are capable of building a better future for them and their cities. This was the case until the 1960s and 1970s, when municipalities were responsible for a wider range of tasks. Since then, however, Jordan, has become a rentier country, and the state believes it knows the needs of its people better than they do. Moreover, since the roles of municipalities are now limited to issuing construction permits and specifying land uses, people tend to elect municipal officials based on personal benefits rather than the public interest.

Masri's participation in the upcoming mayoral elections

Masri mentioned that he had started preparing to participate in Irbid's upcoming mayoral elections, but is still not sure if he will run in the elections (this was before he was appointed Minister of Municipal Affairs). He also stated that his participation will depend on whether there is an intention to return to local governance or whether the government will continue its current policies regarding municipal administration.

Improving Irbid

Masri would focus on completing three missions if he became Mayor of Irbid. The first would be to complete the city's master plan, which in his opinion is a priority since it will give the residents and real estate owners various possibilities for developing their properties in accordance with the needs of Irbid's different areas. He stated that completing the plan will require three years. His second mission would be to develop the city's downtown area and to create enough open public spaces in it. The third mission would be to encourage forming neighborhood associations, which would be the most effective way to unify the city's residents and to bridge differences between them, whether social, economic, or relating to differing racial or geographic origins.

Summary of the third session of Diwan al-Mimar (2011 – 2013)

Interview with Mohammad Balqar, former Commissioner for Land, Infrastructure, and Services at the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA)

Mohammad Balqar was the third speaker of the 2011 – 2013 season of Diwan Al Mimar. Balqar had served as the Commissioner for Land, Infrastructure, and Services at the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA; 2001 – 2005). He also was the Associate Director of the Aqaba Regional Authority (ARA; 1998 – 2000), and was responsible for planning and zoning at ARA between 1984 and 1991. The interview with Balqar took place on the March 7, 2012, and was facilitated by Farouk Yaghmour, Diwan member and the Principal Architect of Yaghmour Architects, Planners, and Engineers.

His early beginnings in Aqaba

Balqar pointed out that a large number of individuals who work in Aqaba live in Amman and commute between the two cities instead of permanently living in Aqaba. However, as he started working at ARA, which was established in 1984, he moved to live in Aqaba and has since then felt a deep belonging and strong attachment to the city.

Two different administrative systems for one city

Balqar pointed out that he dealt with two different administrative systems during his stay in Aqaba: that of ARA, and that of ASEZA, which was established in 2001. He considers both systems successful, and finds it difficult to choose one over the other. In fact, many of the authorities that were assigned to ARA were transferred to ASEZA when it replaced ARA. Balqar believes, however, that a number of the new mandates that ASEZA enjoyed contributed to increasing its financial revenues and allowed it to attract investments in a manner that was not possible for ARA. He added that the potential for Aqaba's development increased after ASEZA was established, and that it became less dependent on Amman on the administrative and the financial levels.

Balqar believes that what has been achieved in Aqaba since ARA was established in 1984 should be preserved. He also believes that the accomplishments that were achieved in Aqaba relied mainly on the institutional structures of both ARA and ASEZA, but that these accomplishments have varied over the years in terms in scope and type, depending on the individuals who have managed the development process and on their capacities. Balqar thinks that the management of the city during the last five years has not always achieved the desired results, and that the situation has gotten even more complicated during the last two years due to the prevailing hesitation in decision making resulting from what he referred to as the "Jordanian Spring."

Public demands and city management

The session facilitator, Farouk Yaghmour, stated that the current demands by Aqaba residents are primarily related to their exclusion from participating in the management of the city and in being represented in ASEZA's Board of Commissioners. In response to this statement, Balqar analyzed Aqaba's management system. He explained that during the period when ARA administered the city, its Board of Directors used to make decisions, but that implementation was carried out through ARA's administrative system. The council also included representatives from Aqaba and from the Southern Badia region, which

provided the representation that Yaghmour pointed out. After ASEZA was established, however, a Commissioners Committee was established as well, and was assigned executive tasks, but it did not include local representation as was the case earlier under ARA. He added that such representation is difficult to incorporate since the Commissioners Committee consists of members who should have certain professional competencies that might not be locally available. Balqar added that the residents of Aqaba have the right to make those demands, and that he did not agree with giving executive tasks to the Commissioners Committee. He also believes that the relevant laws should be amended in a way that strengthens community representation and provides for further separation of duties.

Land distribution in Aqaba

Aqaba traditionally was a small town with a population that did not exceed 10,000 inhabitants. The Brown Plan, which was developed for Aqaba during the 1960s (and named after the planner in charge of it), anticipated that the city's population will increase to reach 30,000 inhabitants. New residential areas were developed to accommodate such growth, and land plots were provided to its residents at inexpensive prices that did not exceed the cost of providing infrastructure for them. This pattern of land distribution prevailed and continued as the government introduced new residential areas and sold them at low cost. The city's residents got accustomed to this process and considered it an acquired right.

Municipal tasks

Balqar pointed out that Aqaba's municipality was eliminated after ASEZA was developed, although it continued to exist under ARA. The municipality's tasks addressed matters such as cleanliness and establishing public parks. He mentioned that there was constant collision between ARA on one hand and the mayor and the local governor on the other regarding the mandates that each would have. By the end of the period during which Aqaba was under ARA's administration, one of its directors even became the person in charge of running the municipality, and the head of ARA became Aqaba's governor, although there was no particular law that specified this arrangement. Moreover, Balqar mentioned that the director of the Aqaba Ports Corporation used to have considerable authority before ARA was founded since he ran the city's richest institution. At one point, he was also in charge of planning and zoning for the city, and the role of other officials in Aqaba was secondary to him. The strength of the Aqaba Ports Corporation, however, eventually declined after ARA was established.

The establishment of the Aqaba Development Corporation (ADC)

Balqar explained that the Aqaba Development Corporation was established in 2004, after ASEZA came into being and after a number of investment projects were proposed for the city. The idea of establishing the corporation was included in the law establishing ASEZA, and aimed at avoiding any conflicts of interests between the legislator, regulator, and manager on one hand, and the executors of investment projects on the other, as they should be separated from each other. Accordingly, the regulator should be separated from investment interests, and the aim of establishing this development corporation was to carry out development projects without any involvement in legislation. The initial concept for the corporation was larger than what was carried out on the ground. Bids were issued to search for an international private-sector developer that would develop the whole city through the development

corporation. This idea, however, was quickly abandoned, and a government-owned corporation was established instead due to the inability to guarantee the competencies of the international companies that applied for the bid. For example, a visit to the offices of one of those companies showed that the number of its staff members and its size did not in any way satisfy the needed work requirements. It therefore was agreed that although the idea seemed to be logically excellent, it might attract parties without adequate qualifications, and these might even take advantage of the bids they win to achieve quick gains through trading in real estate instead of carrying out development work. Balqar generally believes that the idea of ADC is an excellent one, but that it has not been implemented in the way that was planned.

The planning of Aqaba

Balqar stated that Aqaba probably has undergone more planning studies than any other part of Jordan. The first plan to be developed for Aqaba was the Brown Plan, which was carried out during the 1960s, before the 1965 agreement with Saudi Arabia for the exchange of a 12km coastal strip in Saudi Arabia for an area of Jordan located at its southeastern border. After this coastal area was incorporated as a part of Jordan, it was managed by the Jordan National Planning Council, instead of a local planning organization. This situation lasted until ARA was established.

Aqaba was a small town that consisted of a coast and a port, with a railway line passing through it. During the 1970s, the Greek Planner Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis designed a vehicular coastal touristic road that goes along with the topography of the area and ends at the border with Saudi Arabia. The National Planning Council focused on promoting industry in the area, since touristic projects were not a priority at that time. Industrial facilities therefore were established near the Saudi Arabian border, but that was done in an unplanned manner. These areas were later merged with Aqaba and placed under the jurisdiction of ARA. In 1985, the regional consulting firm Dar Al Handasah worked on the first master plan that links the southern coast with Aqaba, with the aim that the expanded area would accommodate 200,000 inhabitants. This plan developed a clear network of roads and set the foundations for expansion and for accommodating different economic activities. Besides the master plan, Dar Al Handasah worked on developing more detailed urban plans and zoning studies. Their work was used until ASEZA asked the American consulting firm Gensler to update the Aqaba master plan in 2001.

In this context, Balqar finds the legislation associated with managing the master plan more important than the master plan itself. For example, he and his colleagues focused on the quality of design in the city, and sought the support of organizations such as the Center of the Study of the Built Environment (CSBE) to develop legislation that is related to building materials, colors, and billboards. They even regulated issues such as the square areas of red-roof tiling or the types of stone that may be used in a building. Balqar mentioned that the local community initially strongly resisted such legislation, especially since it imposed substantial fines on violators. He explained that the community perceived such fines as a form of money collection although the aim was to ensure a high level of design quality, but it gradually accepted these changes since they enhanced the aesthetic aspects of the city.

The projects of which he is most proud

Balqar considers the rear truck highway and the road that is parallel to the coastal road to be among the most influential projects in Aqaba and its southern coastal strip, and feels proud to have been among those who contributed to accomplishing these projects. He mentioned that the city and the southern coast were in terrible condition during the 1980s, and that the trucks heading to and from the port used to pass through the city, and that the southern coast ended up as a large resting space for the trucks and their drivers. After the truck highway and the parallel road were constructed, however, truck traffic was converted to an alternate route that passes to the east of the city instead of through it. This made it possible to develop Aqaba as a clean and normal city, and to allow for tourism to evolve in it instead of being a city that is overwhelmed by truck traffic and the various services that accompany it.

Aqaba's identity

Balqar mentioned that Aqaba has undergone significant changes during the past few decades. The port had dominated the city and defined its economic and demographic nature up until the 1980s. During the 1990s, however, all efforts focused on developing Aqaba as a touristic city, but this needs considerable time and requires developing large touristic projects. The recent global economic crisis of 2008 also had a negative impact on the efforts aimed at achieving such projects. Balqar moreover pointed out that Aqaba's identity is highly affected by governmental policies affecting it instead of being the result of local initiatives.

Summary of the fourth session of Diwan al-Mimar (2011 - 2013)

Interview with Omar Razzaz, the former Director of the Social Security Corporation

Omar Razzaz was the fourth speaker of the 2011 - 2013 season of Diwan al-Mimar. He was the Director of the Social Security Corporation (2006 - 2010) and before that was the director of the World Bank office in Lebanon. This interview took place on April 18, 2012, and was facilitated by Sandra Hiari, Diwan member and the Local Coordinator of the World Bank and USAID in the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

The social contract and its effects on municipalities

Razzaz started the interview by referring to his recent Arabic-language paper "*The Difficult Path Towards a New Social Contract: From a Rentier to a Productive Country.*" He mentioned that the relationship between the ruler and the ruled in most Arab countries has been based on tyranny. Arab countries essentially follow a rentier system in which the ruler controls the natural resources of the country, which in most cases consist of oil. Razzaz explained that the social contract in the modern state, in contrast, is based on the presence of a productive society where governmental institutions offer public services, and individuals and private institutions pay taxes to cover the costs of providing these services. This relationship is based on mutual rights and duties. The rentier system, however, is very different since the ruler allocates subsidies and bequests (most of which come from oil revenues) to the local community as he wishes.

The levels and types of patronage differ between Arab countries. These differences include the level of heavy handedness that the ruler uses when dealing with different components of the society, and how he grants bequests or refrains from doing so. In addition, while the rentier regimes of rich oil countries depend on oil revenues, the regimes in countries with no or limited oil resources need to depend on foreign support. Moreover, public money does not fall under the supervision of the state budget or an audit bureau, and ends up being a black box that the ruler spends from as he wishes. The relationship between the ruler and the ruled in such a rentier condition is based on privileges rather than rights. Razzaz adds that this is not a sustainable solution for a country such as Jordan, which lacks oil resources, since it cannot rely on international aid indefinitely. This is also not a sustainable solution for oil-rich countries, since oil will run out some day. Razzaz believes that if Jordan is to become a productive country, a restructuring of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, and of the country's economy, culture, and politics will need to take place.

Razzaz pointed out two main factors that are connected to changing the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. The first factor - which is purely political - is democratic transformation. He mentioned that the late famed Egyptian author Taha Hussein saw that building democracy starts at the municipal level, where citizens can directly observe how their votes are related to the level of services presented to them. Razzaz believes that democratic transformation in the Arab world depends on developing institutions that build up the necessary systems, laws, and incentives. The second factor - which cannot be achieved unless the first one is realized - is for the community to control natural resources and public money, and for all its members to feel that they own the country's resources and that they have the right to oversee the way they are used.

Local governance and levels of decision making

Razzaz does not support the idea of either absolute local or absolute centralized governance in running municipalities, but instead believes that there are decisions that should be taken at the local level and others at the central level. He adds that the measures that should be put in place for determining the level at which a decision is taken depends on the advantages and disadvantages it might have on those affected by it. Water and sewage networks as well as electricity services, for example, would be

administered more efficiently and in a less costly manner if provided through a central body, since cities and towns cannot afford to deliver these services on their own, but a central authority can do so, especially since it would serve a number of cities and towns. In contrast, some issues, such as education, health, and economic development, present variety and difference from one location to the other, so a number of decisions relating to them should be made at the local level.

In this context, Razzaz mentioned that there is a difference between decentralization and the de-concentration of centralization in the decision-making process. He explained that a number of the decentralization projects that Jordanian governments have tried to implement in recent years are examples of a de-concentration of centralized decision making, since these projects focused on expanding the authority of governors in each district. He pointed out that the governor is an official who works for the central authority, specifically the Ministry of Interior, and whose role traditionally has been limited to matters relating to security rather than public administration or development. Accordingly, granting governors increased authority will not lead to any form of local governance or decentralization, but aims at further strengthening the control of the central government over local communities.

Reinforcing the role of secondary cities

Razzaz pointed out the importance of the subject of primary and secondary cities, and added that no country, no matter how hard it tries, can halt migration from the countryside to the city. Such migrations take place because of the economic opportunities that cities offer, where industry and skills integrate and concentrate in a way that increases levels of productivity. He added that countries that succeed in developing urban life in several cities rather than in one city are those that work on achieving a gradual centrality by developing secondary cities characterized by economic and cultural diversity and richness. It therefore may be possible to reduce the dominance of Amman over other cities by enabling a city in the north of Jordan such as Irbid and another in the south such as Aqaba to provide economic opportunities to the residents of surrounding areas, who should be able to easily commute between their towns and villages and their places of work in those cities if a well-planned transportation system is provided. This, in his opinion, would allow for an acceptable gradation in the roles of different cities and villages in Jordan. He also believes that good use should be made of the opportunities that a certain region provides because of its location or natural resources, whether they are related to mining, tourism, or agriculture. Examples of this include the unique touristic and natural sites found in the south of Jordan such as Petra, Wadi Rum, al-Shawbak Castle, or the Dana Reserve, and the fertile agricultural areas found in the north of Jordan.

Reforming municipalities

Razzaz believes that political and economic reform depend on each other. Countries go through experiences and they reform their path according to those experiences. He brought up the example of the mayor who is hired by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and how such a mayor would be accountable to the Ministry more than to the local community. It is in this context that the importance of interacting with local conditions and the response of officials to them arise, as well as the importance of local representation in improving productivity and development. He added that there should be standards as well as economic, financial, and tax incentives connected to the performance of officials.

Razzaz pointed out that mayors in Jordan usually are elected according to tribal and sectarian relationships, and that decisions are made without any controls regarding public money. He added that municipalities also suffer from financial deficits because most of their budgets are spent on employee salaries, which indicates major institutional defects. Razzaz thinks that the solution for these problems lies in granting municipalities increased authority so that they can increase their resources and expand the

scope of the services they offer. At the same time, increased attention should be given to the accountability of mayors and municipal staff members whether financially or administratively.

Employment in municipalities

Razzaz explained that the patterns of employment in municipalities are directly connected to the patterns of employment on the national level, and that both are part of the prevalent rentier system. Mayors, however, should not bear all the blame for problems with employment, as mayors are one only link within a larger system. Razzaz added that a common understanding of employment in Jordan is based on looking for job opportunities in the public sector, but the Jordanian economy cannot be sustained by having an excessive number of employees in the public sector, as that leads to what may be referred to as “disguised unemployment.” This will result in a deterioration of the state represented by its public institutions, and will also keep many from specializing in the fields that the Jordanian economy needs, since employment opportunities in the public sector are not usually connected to the specialization of the job applicant.

In order to achieve change in the performance of municipalities, a differentiation needs to be made between current and capital expenditures; incentives that encourage capital expenditures need to be put in place; and new appointments should be banned except in very specific cases that are based on real needs, and that are carried out through a system that regulates the entire process.

Levels of tax collection in municipalities

Razzaz pointed out that tax collection levels are directly connected to expenditures and to collection mechanisms. For example, solid waste may be gathered more efficiently on the local level. Each municipality therefore should collect its own waste and impose the necessary fees that would cover the costs of doing so. In contrast, it would be difficult for municipalities to develop landfills since this is beyond their financial capacities. Therefore, developing landfills, as well as managing them and imposing the necessary taxes that cover their costs, should be carried out at the level of governorates or even at the national level. In this context, he added that municipalities should be granted the authority to collect taxes of a local nature (such as property taxes). They are better able to do so than central institutions such as the Ministry of Finance because they are better able to obtain the necessary local information that would allow them to collect such taxes more easily and efficiently.

Eliminating corruption in city management

Razzaz stated that the current public discourse about corruption does not address the principles and legislation that can reduce instances of corruption in the future, but instead concentrates on individual and sporadic cases. He added that we should identify flaws in the current system that might encourage or lead to corruption. In this context, Razzaz mentioned that the problems connected to a number of cases of privatization that have been implemented in Jordan are most probably not connected to financial corruption, but may be examples of squandering public rights, which is a result of an absence of transparency, experience, and the necessary specialized knowledge.

Real estate investment as a form of rentierism

Razzaz mentioned that rentierism also affects the private sector since the differentiation between private-sector institutions often depends on their proximity to the centers of government. He added that the real estate sector specifically is intimately connected to rentier systems of government. This connection is based on the fact that the economies of Arab are strongly linked to the real estate sector, which depends on profit taking rather than investing capital in productive economic enterprises.

Managing the utopian city

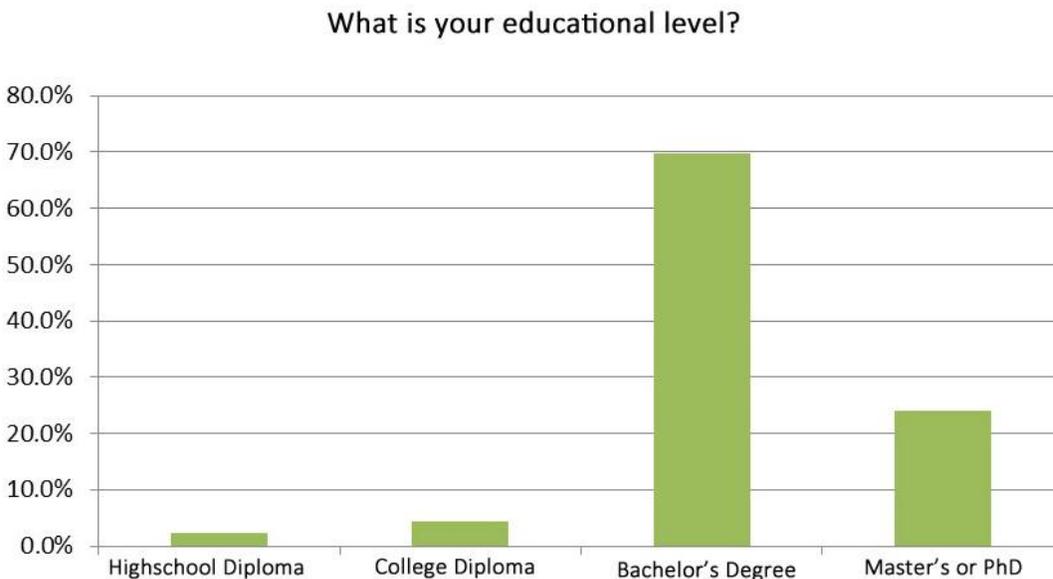
Razzaz stated that the path towards achieving better systems of city governance starts with reforming existing legislation. He added that this system will need to obtain its legitimacy from a democratic process that is defined through citizen participation. Through this, the Arab world's legislative systems may evolve to a level where each citizen becomes his/her own guardian. This would be the utopian city where the law is extrapolated from experience and participation, and where each citizen is accountable to him/herself rather than to somebody else.

Results of the City Management in Jordan Survey

Survey sample and the distribution process

This survey, which was distributed in April and May of 2013, was filled out by 300 people from different areas in Jordan. It was distributed via email and social media channels, and printed copies of the survey were also distributed. 77% of the survey participants live in Amman, and the remaining 23% live in Zarqa, Irbid, Karak, Mafraq, Ajlun, Jarash, Madaba, and Aqaba. 56% of the participants are males and 44% females. In terms of age, the largest number of participants (40%) is 15 - 25 years old, 35% are 26 - 35 years old, and 25% are 36 years and older.

The following graph presents the educational levels of the survey participants.



31% of the survey participants are architects / engineers, 9% are students, 6% are journalists, 4% are information technology specialists and programmers, and 3% are accountants. Lawyers, teachers, and the unemployed each make up 2% of the participants. The survey sample also includes physicians, consultants, planners, and retired workers.

The level of satisfaction with the performance of municipalities

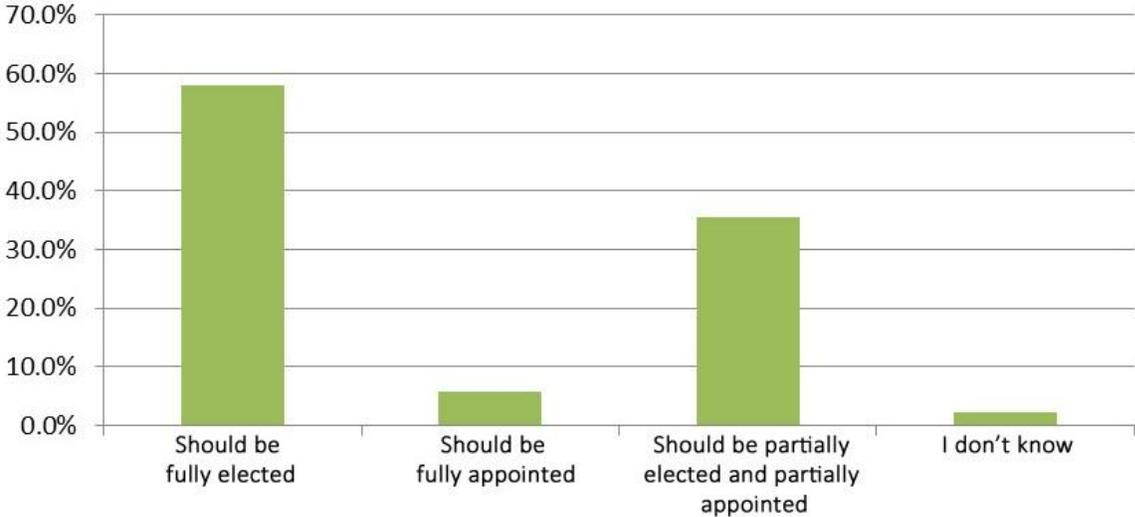
The results of the survey show that the level of satisfaction with the performance of municipalities in Jordan is extremely low. 71% of the participants stated that they are dissatisfied with the performance of municipalities in Jordan, and one out of every four participants stated that he/she is completely dissatisfied with the performance of municipalities. This dissatisfaction is connected to the lack of communications between municipalities and residents. 95% of the participants mentioned that they were never approached by municipalities for their input regarding issues related to their neighborhoods. The

remaining 5% who were approached by their municipalities were asked for input regarding services such as road paving, lighting, speed bumps, eliminating rodents, and waste collection. Only three participants mentioned that they were asked for their input regarding issues of a more strategic nature. These addressed de-amalgamating their area from the Greater Amman Municipality, city management, and buildings with a significant architectural and heritage value.

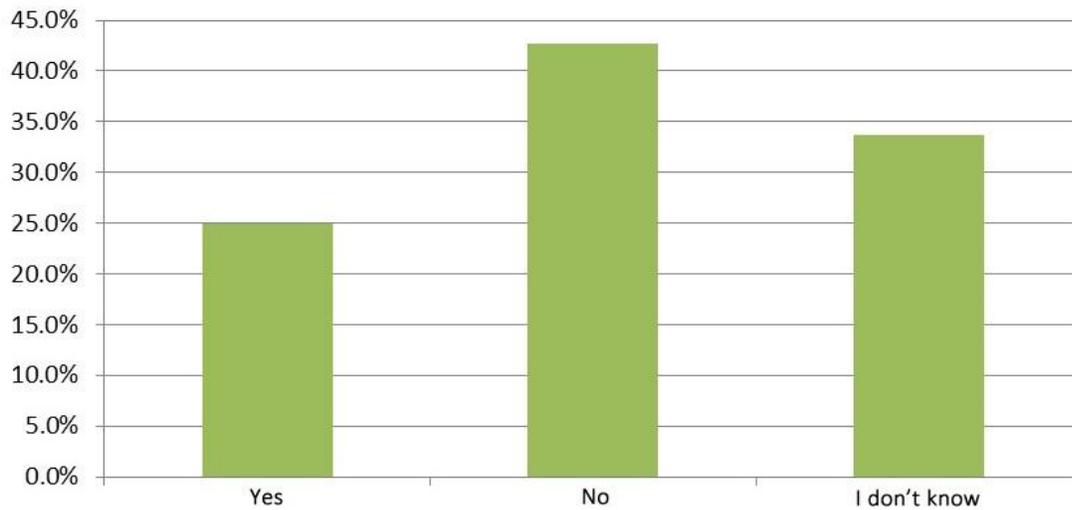
Municipal elections

As for whether they prefer the election or appointment of mayors and municipal council members, 65% of participants stated that they should be fully elected, and 35% preferred that some are elected and some are appointed. The vast majority rejected the full appointment of mayors and council members. Also, most stated that they will not participate in the upcoming municipal elections. 43% indicated that they will not participate in the elections, and one third indicated that they have not yet decided whether to participate in the elections or not. Only one quarter of the participants indicated that they will participate in the upcoming municipal elections.

Do you believe mayors and municipal council members should be appointed or elected?



Are you planning to participate in the upcoming municipal elections?



The responsibilities of municipalities

78.5% of the participants believe that the responsibilities of municipalities should be expanded so as to have a role in issues such as education, healthcare, and enhancing investment. When asked to rank spending priorities among municipal sectors, the participants ranked planning as first, followed by transportation, waste management, recreational parks and public spaces, social work, institutional enhancements, tourism, and management of investments.

Top five decisions that a mayor should make

The participants were asked about the top five decisions they would make if they were the mayor of a municipality in Jordan. The answers were as follows:

The subject addressed by the decision	The number of participants who considered this decision among their top five decisions
Developing infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, and sewage systems)	153
Improving the cleanliness of the city and developing a better solid waste management system that includes recycling	116
Improving public transportation and developing an efficient transportation network	98
Increasing the number of recreational parks and open public spaces	90
Including local communities in the process of decision making in neighborhoods	45

In addition, 39 participants included re-structuring and developing municipal institutions as well as tackling administrative incompetence among their top five decisions. 29 participants mentioned that they would make decisions related to putting in place development projects and income generating investments for municipalities, and 21 participants mentioned that they would address fighting corruption.

Main Notes

A section that asked participants to make general notes was included in the survey. The following are among the most prominent of them:

“A disregard of regulations often takes place in municipal work. An example of this is issuing building permits for malls without giving any consideration to the fact that their location will cause serious traffic congestion.”

“A solution should be found for the problem of electing unqualified mayors for whom municipal work is about paying back favors. This may be solved by appointing mayors rather than electing them or by establishing specific nomination criteria.”

“Developing a budgetary system through a participatory process and according to specific, clear, and methodical basis will lead to the complete satisfaction of residents towards their municipalities.”

“Reinforcing the concept of democratic local governance through local councils is important. Municipal work goes beyond engineering tasks, and every city has the right to have a democratically-elected municipal council that represents the interests of its residents.”

“It will not be possible to improve municipalities under the current municipal law. There is a major defect in the concept of services in Jordan. Moreover, authority and / or laws are often misused.”

“A city is an expression of its residents. As much as it needs an institution to take care of it, its condition is a reflection of the people who live in it.”

“The most important factor that will positively affect local city management is eliminating favoritism.”

“Mayoral candidates should be qualified to work in city management rather than being investors who will benefit from managing their city.”

“Genuine political will that pushes towards real development and reform on the political, economic, and administrative levels for all public institutions is the solid base for achieving social stability and societal well-being. City management is part of this process, and the will for sound implementation demands free and fair political will.”

“It is important to distribute budgets correctly after studying them, and to plan for the minutest details of a given project before implementing it.”

“All trees on sidewalks that hinder pedestrian movement should be cut down. Such trees have destroyed the culture of walking in Jordan and have meant that there are no suitable sidewalks.”

“Security and safety are two main components of city life.”

“Investment needs to be opened up in the fields of waste management and transportation.”

“One cannot manage a city without loving it.”

“Accountability and transparency are concepts that should be understood and activated.”

“Available technologies should be used to improve communication between municipalities and their residents in order to improve the level of municipal performance.”

General notes

The results of the survey show that there is a clear state of dissatisfaction with the performance of municipalities in Jordan. Many of the participants in the survey particularly complained about the level of services related to city cleanness, waste management, public transportation, pedestrian movement, vehicular circulation, availability and maintenance of recreational parks and open public spaces, and the general condition of infrastructure. They consider such deficiencies to be a result of an overall deterioration in the performance of municipal employees. This deterioration is due to several factors that include an excessive number of employees in municipalities, many of whom are not needed. It is also connected to the fact that appointments very often are made according to favoritism rather than competence, and also to the spread of “corruption.” Although corruption may be defined as the misuse of public office to achieve personal gain, there is no clear and widespread agreement in Jordan regarding the definition of the misuse of public position and the definition of achieving personal gain. What some may consider a form of corruption, others might consider a legitimate activity, as with many prevalent employment and appointment practices for example.

Many of the participants in the survey believe that the deterioration in the performance of municipalities is a result of the lack of transparency and accountability, both of which are essential in managing municipal institutions, and to the fact that many municipal officials are not elected, as is the case with the Greater Amman Municipality. It is also a result of the fact that municipalities do not enjoy any meaningful levels of independence, and that their authority and responsibilities are greatly restricted and subjected to the control of central government authorities.

Most of the participants in the survey seem unconvinced that any positive change can be achieved under the current conditions affecting the performance of municipalities and under the current laws and regulations that govern them. This is evident in the fact that only one quarter of the participants stated that they will vote in the upcoming municipal elections. In contrast, 43% mentioned that they will not be taking part in those elections, and the remaining one third mentioned that they have not yet decided on whether they will be taking part in the upcoming municipal elections or not.

It is worth mentioning that there is a surprising absence of any mention of land-use regulations in the answers provided by the survey participants, whether in terms of allowable land uses in different areas of the city whether residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, recreational, or defining the level of separation or mix between these different uses in the city's different areas. The issue of land use has a huge impact on the quality of life in the city, and it influences numerous factors such as the condition and ease of public transportation and real estate values. Determining and modifying land uses accordingly should follow clear and transparent procedures, and the absence of such procedures will affect the professional reputation of municipal institutions and also living conditions in the city, whether social or economic.

Appendix 1: Questions of the City Management in Jordan Survey

- 1) In which city do you live? In which area of the city do you live?
- 2) Are you a male or a female?
- 3) To which age group do you belong?
- 4) What is your educational level?
- 5) What is your professional field? What is your occupation?
- 6) How satisfied are you with the services that your municipality provides to the residents of your city?
- 7) Have you ever been asked by your municipality for your input regarding issues related to your neighborhood?
- 8) If the answer is yes, how many times were you asked for your input, and about what specific subject were you asked?
- 9) Do you believe mayors and municipal council members should be appointed or elected?
- 10) Are you planning to participate in the upcoming municipal elections?
- 11) Do you believe that the responsibilities of municipalities should be expanded to include issues related to education, health, and promoting investment?
- 12) If you became mayor of your city, what are the top five decisions you would make?
- 13) If you had the chance to set the budget for municipal services in your city, how would you prioritize expenditures for the following services: (1 for the service with the highest priority and 10 for the service with the lowest priority)
 - Transportation
 - Planning
 - Waste collection
 - Parks and public spaces
 - Social work
 - Institutional development
 - Culture and art
 - Tourism
 - Media and communication
 - Investment management
 - Other services (please specify)
- 14) Would you like to provide any additional comments about the subject of city management?