

SUMMARY

Our research on « management, regulatory system of urban services and utilities in Palestine in relation to institutional empowerment», focuses on actors strategies and the specific goals and stakes of utility and urban services in the context of the Palestinian Israeli conflict.

Two main issues have been addressed : how urban services and utility management are instrumentalised in the conflict as a mean of territorial and social control, and also how the strategies of actors refers to the current and projected role of local authorities in relation to a national state. In other terms how the debate referring to decentralisation of urban services and of utility management can be discussed and reformulated in the context of the Palestinian claim for a national state which means reinforcing National Authorities. Our work was based on a detailed approach of two utilities with a high level of strategic and social stake: water and electricity. The field work and survey as taken place in the main cities of the Gaza strip : the town of Gaza (400 000 residents) and Khan-Younis (180 000 residents).

Our research as established how, in the context of the Palestinian Israeli conflict, utility management has been used by the actors of the conflict as a mean for establishing control on resources (like water) territorial identification (in developing the grid and infrastructure) and social and economic domination. This question has also been highlighted in the past months by the important destructions of infrastructure and wells resulting of israelian army incursions. Palestinian municipalities have historically played an important role in organising local urban services. The Oslo agreement as given a legal framework for national and local empowerment, this legal framework is destabilised by the recent events. The debate on the potential role and responsibilities of

municipalities and of the state is very much discussed by the different actors (Palestinian municipalities, Palestinian Ministries, international donators, NGO). Donators who are active in implementing projects in the field of urban services and utility management have a tendency to subordinate the financing of projects with the acceptance by the Palestinian actors of a very decentralised pattern for utilities and urban services. On the other hand Palestinian Ministries have tried by the past to transfer to national structures some of the responsibilities and tasks historically assumed by local authorities as to reinforce the construction of the potential Palestinian state.

The conclusions of our research tend to show that there is a possible reformulation of the apparent contradiction between a decentralised framework and the necessity of reinforcing institutional construction on the state level. It is possible to discuss a more complex model for organising the control and the regulatory system for urban services and utility management. The regulatory system must differentiate different territorial levels. In such a pattern for example, the state level seems to be the only feasible level for controlling access to fundamental resources as water but municipal authorities are also the only feasible proposition for organising a system which can be socially accepted and democratically controlled by the Palestinian civil society.

The proposition for a differentiated approach of the regulatory system of urban services opens new angles for future research work and for accompanying international support to urban services in Palestine with capacity building, training and managerial tools in the field of utility and urban services management.