

NEOLIBERAL GOVERNMENTALITY
and the FUTURE *of the* STATE *in*
THE MIDDLE EAST *and* NORTH AFRICA

Edited by
EMEL AKÇALI



Neoliberal Governmentality and the Future of the State in the Middle East and North Africa

Edited by Farid Alqasbi

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CHAPTER 4

Welfare Genocide: Rentierism, Neoliberalism, and the Corporatization of the Public Sector in Jordan

Rami Farouk Daher

Introduction

Brenner et al. (2010, pp. 329–30) conceptualize neoliberalism “as one among several tendencies of regulatory change that have been unleashed across the global capitalist system since the 1970s: it prioritizes market-based, market-oriented, or market-disciplinary responses to regulatory problems; it strives to intensify commodification in all realms of social life; and it often mobilizes speculative financial instruments to open up new arenas for capitalist profit making.” I find this conceptualization very relevant and specially in its mobilization of speculative financial instruments in opening up new arenas for capitalist profit making. Previous research by the author (Daher 2008, 2013) elaborated on the details of neoliberal urban restructuring and new forms of spatial ordering in Amman. This paper critically investigates official discourses and practices of development through three phases of geopolitical and socioeconomic transformations that have taken place in Jordan. Phase one commences with the period right after World War II at the end of colonization. This phase is known by a, relatively, high level of welfare through “state” subsidizing fragile sectors of development including agriculture, infrastructure (mainly electricity and water), and education. Yet, during this phase Jordan demonstrated a special case of a nonoil rentier economy where financial support to the government was derived from nonproductive sources including oil rent, international aid, and remittances from mainly Jordanians

working in the Arabian Gulf (Knowles 2005, p. 9). Part of the welfare mechanism was obtained through public sector employment and subsidies on basic goods that benefited the general population.

During phase two and with the enforcement of structural adjustment programs from the World Bank and the IMF toward the late 1980s, Jordan witnessed a substantial decrease in the country's welfare mechanism and the removal of state subsidies through the beginning of privatization of sectors including water, electricity, and telecommunication. This phase witnessed as well intensive neoliberal urban restructuring where the "state" and its transnational capitalist class (Sklair 2001) not only subsidized real estate developments for the elite of the country, but also entered as partner in many of these neoliberal endeavors and land speculative deals. In Amman, neoliberal urban restructuring and emerging forms of spatial ordering included high-end business towers, upper-end residential "gated" communities, and even low-income residential cities that worked to push the poorer segments of society to the outskirts of the city in new zoned heterotopias. This phase is also characterized by the establishment of special economic zones similar to the ones in Aqaba and Petra where these regions of the country became subject to a new set of regulations and deregulations aiming mainly at economic neoliberalization.

The third phase, after the financial crises of 2008–9, discussed in this paper is characterized by a postneoliberal excessive corporatization of the "state's" public sector institutions (including mainly electricity, water, and social housing) and a period of deregulation. In this chapter, I will argue that this excessive corporatization is leading to almost an end of welfare and is being camouflaged and pacified by the preoccupation of the masses with attempts for economic reform (e.g., the "state" establishing councils and commissions that adopt a liberal-charged discourse camouflaging the mobilization of speculative financial instruments in opening up new arenas for capitalist profit making) and "democracy politics" such as parliamentary and municipal elections. While this opens the way for a major state and societal transformation, it is noteworthy to identify the nature and potential of any form of contestation or resistance taking place to counteract these processes of neoliberalization.

Jordan as a Rentier State: Oil Rent, Foreign Aid, Remittances, and Social Security through Public Sector Employment

According to Bayloumy (2008, pp. 284–85), foreign sources of income constituted over 54 percent of the budget in 1980 in Jordan and thereabouts for most of the 1970s, declining to about one-third in 1988. She also elaborated that in the early 1980s, "40% of the labor force worked outside the country, and remittances formed the largest component of the national income" with reported

remittances at their highest during this period equaled to 124 percent of Jordan's trade exports providing around one-third of the GNP (gross national product) (ibid.). During that period, the country enjoyed a high level of state subsidies to fragile sectors of development including agriculture, social housing, water, electricity, and education. Part of the "state's" welfare mechanism was public sector employment and subsidies on basic goods that benefited the general population (ibid., p. 287). In a public lecture by Razzaz, he emphasized that loyalty to the official system was obtained by public sector employment while the state controls the manipulation and distribution of main public resources and assets.¹

Toward the middle of the twentieth century, concepts of development and nation-building were mostly linked to large-scale national projects supporting health care, education, and infrastructure provision including key projects of water and irrigation (e.g., Eastern Ghor Canal Project, which was considered one of the most important successful stories of Jordan in the 1970s). One other example is the state's proud involvement in terms of level of electricity supply to urban homes, which improved in dramatic proportion from 39 percent in 1961, to 78 percent in 1979, and to 99.7 percent today (Verdeil 2009, p. 6). Hart (2009) elaborated how many third world countries enjoyed several of these "Big D" developments that emerged in the context of decolonization and were considered as part of "development" as a post-war international project. Yet, and according to Bayloumy (2008, p. 286), and as is often witnessed in rentier or aid-dependent states, Jordan witnessed a decline in agricultural activities from one-third of all employment in the 1960s to less than 10 percent of domestic labor in the 1980s while the service sector increased without accompanying industrial development.

In the next section of the paper, I will discuss the gradual shift and transformation from a rentier to a neoliberal state in Jordan. With decreasing rent made available (either due to rising oil prices or decreased remittances) and with structural adjustment programs enforced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, it is very obvious that the state is shifting to a neoliberal economy where the formal "state" rhetoric is more privatization and withdrawal from social services and infrastructure provision. The irony is that the "state" is subsidizing real estate development benefiting the transnational capitalist class and multinational companies and agencies with which certain state agencies and high-ranking officials are entering into different types of partnerships.

Jordan Neoliberalization Process of Privatization, Urban Restructuring and Spatial Ordering

During phase two, as stated above, with the enforcement of structural adjustment programs from the World Bank and the IMF toward the late 1980s,

Jordan witnessed a substantial decrease in the country's welfare mechanism and the removal of state subsidies through the beginning of privatization of sectors including water, electricity, and telecommunication. Under the rationales of economic liberalization and privatization of the state's enterprises and investments; the world is now part of a neoliberal moment anchored by more conservative politics and excessive economic liberalization and restructuring. Such a moment was manifested in excessive privatization, the withdrawal of the state from welfare programs, the dominance of multinational corporation politics, and as far as the third world is concerned, the restructuring of international aid to the third world in the form of structural adjustments and policy instead of project-oriented aid. This was coupled by the surfacing of several discursive tactics for such a neoliberal transformation such as dominance of the World Trade Organization (WTO), international gatherings such as the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, NAFTA, and several similar other economic restructuring at the global level (Daher 2007, p. 270). The mid-1980s witnessed a regional recession triggered by regional oil price decline, which was translated, as far as Jordan is concerned, into a radical drop in foreign aid money and labor remittances and an increase of foreign debt as the country continued borrowing to support continuous spending. According to Baylouny (2008, pp. 291–92), the Jordanian Dinar decreased by over a third by 1989 and “with no foreseeable end to the crisis, Jordan turned to the International Monetary Fund, which policy-makers considered the only source of relief. Negotiations yielded a structural adjustment plan which included the removal of subsidies, privatization of public sector investments, cuts in state employment, and gradual elimination of customs duties.” The Structural Adjustment Programs triggered regulatory restructuring supporting “policy reform” and the selling of state assets to international investors. Privatization of state institutions included the telecommunication, water, and electricity sectors. With government subsidies and welfare services being scaled back, the neoliberalization of public institutions and services led to more socioeconomic inequalities. The role of the state in the delivery of public services (e.g., water, electricity, public transportation) was gradually being substituted by new roles for NGOs and the private sector. State bureaucrats facilitated also regulatory restructuring supporting free trade and establishment of prime economic development zones (e.g., ASEZA: Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority) and Qualified Industrial Zones in different places of the kingdom.

According to Bank and Schlumberger (2004), this new formal state's shift is also made possible by the new “Economic Team” around the king. A shift in Jordan's policy priorities had been more than obvious since the first days of King Abdallah's reign: from regional politics to far-reaching reform

of Jordan's economy, excessive privatization, and economic competitiveness and activism. The emergence of the new guard: The King's Economic Team (the new politically relevant elite entitled the Economic Consultative Council [ECC]) facilitated the structural adjustment program, Jordan's accession to the World Trade Organization, the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, and paid lip service to privatization (e.g., telecommunication, power, water, tourism, and planning). Early in 1997, the government decided to restructure the national electricity-generating company to provide “investments” and increase performance of the sector's delivery and opted to privatize both the generation (by 60 percent) and distribution (by 100 percent) of electricity while transport and control remained in the hands of governmental institutions. Furthermore, the government sold 55.4 percent of its shares in Irbid's Electrical Company. More privatization took place in 2002 when the state borrowed 140 million Jordanian Dinar (JD) from local banks to generate early revenues linked to the privatization processes.²

Verdeil's (2009, p. 2) most valuable work on the privatization of the electricity sector presents one very significant example of more needed empirical research addressing specific examples of neoliberalization. Verdeil researched recent transformations in the electricity sector at both national and local levels where “new coming national and multi-national corporate investors” are becoming dominant stakeholders in this privatization process. One can take the privatization of the electricity sector as an example of the changing role of the state vis-à-vis its role as a public service provider in general and urban infrastructure provider in particular. The current privatization of the electricity sector, where the state is no longer subsidizing the sector (ibid., p. 3), stands in sheer contrast to previous state's involvement in infrastructure provision. Verdeil (ibid., p. 7) also stated that moving to privatization was strongly correlated with the end of subsidies to electricity, leading to increased prices in 2004, and in 2008 and to hard-felt social effects of rising urban poverty and strong inflation.

Similar structural transformation took place in the water sector where management in the form of billing, distribution, and customer service were delegated to the private sector while contracts, control of tariff, and assets remained with the state. According to Mahayni (2014), the Jordanian government initiated network rehabilitation projects and implemented public-private participation and commercialization of the water sector in the capital Amman, starting in 1999. “Between 1999 and 2006, the Water Authority of Jordan granted a concession to LEMA (a consortium of water companies: *Lyonnaise des Eaux—Montgomery Watson—Arabtech Jardaneh*) while the World Bank provided loans for the privatization of the water sector conditioned by increasing tariffs.” Mahayni (2014, pp. 5–6) elaborated that urban water “reform” projects in the 1990s and 2002s came amid deep

financial crises that “reduced government investments in water delivery services and infrastructures.” Mahayni (2014, p. 11) added that institutional reforms in the water sector were accompanied by staff trainings to better incorporate “private sector management logics” into the water sector. Bayloumy (2008, pp. 293, 295–97), on a related issue, also elaborated that the 1990s witnessed high levels of inflation in the country and that prices of fuel, cigarettes, phone bills, and residential water increased by 50 percent while heat and electricity bills increased by 150 percent.

Processes of neoliberalization were coupled with a changing nature of development projects. Today, we witness less state-funded and orchestrated “Big D” development projects (e.g., projects of infrastructure networks, social housing, public service buildings including hospitals). The tendency today is to concentrate on promoting ‘competitiveness’ and facilitating the influx of direct foreign investments (e.g., Gulf investments in Jordan). The responsibility of ‘development’ is shifting from development induced by state institutions to development funded by donor agencies through NGOs supporting what the author labels as “small d” developments (e.g., projects supporting a microeconomics approach to development, private sector entrepreneurship and financial initiatives, capacity building, minorities politics, projects supporting the promotion of the service sector such as tourism, projects supporting free-trade agreements and the establishments of qualified industrial zones, developmental aid for women’s enterprises, and environmental and democracy politics). Examples of such donor agencies-funded projects include the European Union funded EJADA (Euro-Jordanian Action for the Development of Enterprises), which was launched in 2001 and concentrated on creating a catalyst for private sector modernization and development of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). Other examples included the USAID-funded AMIR Program with its six major initiatives: Micro Enterprise Initiative, Business Management Initiative, Financial Markets Development, Information and Communication Technology Initiative, Private Sector Policy Initiative, and, finally, the Enhanced Competitiveness Initiative. According to Bayloumy, “micro-financing of private initiatives was a hot trend, promoted by international institutions as one way to alleviate poverty” (2008, pp. 299–300).

This phase is also characterized by the establishment of special economic zones similar to the ones in Aqaba and Petra or qualified industrial zones (QIZs) present now in different cities of Jordan. These “zones” became subject to a new set of regulations and deregulations aiming mainly at economic neoliberalization. It is interesting to notice here the strong separation between economic and political reform, in other words, official discourses of development (which previously linked the two based on the rhetoric and

teachings of the Arab Revolt of 1916) are now concentrating less on issues of regional (Arab) political concerns and are emphasizing more the competitiveness of the nation-state (Jordan) economic climate. In Jordan, discourses of development were now based on providing the right competitive climate to receive foreign direct investment and free trade (linked to the establishment of more “development zones” and the encouragement of public–private partnerships). Again, this is working to shift the responsibility of development from the state to multinational cooperation and to the private sector. Brenner et al. speak of transnational rule-regimes by studying “the role of multilevel governance arrangements in the construction, imposition, and reproduction of neoliberalized, market-disciplinary regulatory arrangements within national and sub-national arenas” (2010, pp. 335–36). Supported by the IMF and the World Bank, they add that such multilevel rule regimes serve to “promote institutional lock-in mechanisms to separate the economic and the political under conditions of democracy” (ibid.).

Current neoliberal transformations and urban restructuring are not affecting the capital, Amman, only, but other Jordanian cities as well such as Aqaba. In Aqaba, and after the peace process with Israel and the establishment of several qualified industrial zones (QIZ) in the country coupled with declaring Aqaba as a “free economic zone,” the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) was created. ASEZA was granted the responsibility of neoliberal socioeconomic transformations in the city and held a position of urban projects, tourism, and infrastructure developer; thus gradually replacing former regulating public bodies such as the Municipality of Aqaba, Aqaba Regional Authority, and Aqaba Governorate, which were either dissolved or regressed to a voyeur’s position (Daher 2011). As a consequence, Aqaba went through intense socioeconomic and territorial transformations. ASEZA, equipped with the tropes and slogans of modernity, efficiency, liberalism, and lack of government bureaucracy, is superimposing “first-class tourism developments” as termed by one of ASEZA’s officials. It is very obvious that the whole city is being taken over by multinational big money investments in the form of five-star hotels and large-scale development projects (e.g., Tala Bay, Saraya) (Daher 2007). The “hot” and most desired places on the shore such as popular old beach coffeeshouses, public beaches, fish restaurants on the beach, or even significant low-rise hotels from the mid-twentieth century are all being taken over by such “first-class tourism investments” (ibid.). Another type of “hot” spot that is also subject to severe processes of displacement are the existing slums in very strategic locations of the city overlooking the Bay of Aqaba (e.g., Al Shallalah). Such developments are causing severe cases of urban cleansing, spatial and social displacement, and exclusion of a certain part of Aqaba’s history, heritage, and urban poor and residents (ibid.).

Linking Neoliberal Processes of Urban Restructuring with the Larger Picture

Understanding and researching neoliberal processes of urban restructuring and spatial ordering in Jordanian cities (mainly Amman) requires the research to step back and comprehend the larger picture of political economy in the region. It is interesting to understand the effect of the circulation of global capital (Arab Gulf surplus oil revenues) and huge reserves of money in search for high yielding and secure investments, excessive privatization, and circulating urban flagship projects in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, all over the Arab Gulf States, and throughout the Arab region on the transforming of urban space, property values, and speculation, and nature of public life in these cities. The six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council enjoyed between 2003 and 2004 a surplus of about \$50 billion, which rose to \$400 billion between 2007 and 2008, and was estimated at \$47.4 billion in 2009 and about \$142.2 billion in 2010.³ It has been estimated that over the period of 2005 to 2020 the Arabian Gulf states are likely to have a US \$3,000 billion or so spent on investment within the Middle East and North Africa (Elsheshtawy 2008).

Middle Eastern cities are currently competing in order to attract international investments, businesses, and tourism developments. Currently, development projects in Dubai and in the United Arab Emirates such as the world's two largest man-made islands (Palm Jumeirah and Palm Jebel Ali), and major skyscrapers and luxurious resorts on Sheikh Zayed Street are becoming the precedents and models to follow in other cities of the region. This reality stands in sheer contrast when compared to a previous time around the 1960s when cities like Cairo or Beirut presented cutting edge urbanism for the rest of the Arab world (Daher 2011, pp. 275–76). New emerging urban islands of excessive consumption for the chosen elite together with the internationalization of commercial real estate companies and construction consultancies capable of providing high-quality services signify this neoliberal urban restructuring in places such as downtown Beirut (Summer 2005), Abdali in Amman (Summer 2005; Daher 2008), Dreamland in Cairo (Adham 2005), Financial District in Manama, the Development of Bou Regreg River in Rabat,⁴ Pearl Island Reclamation Project in Doha and even in the heart of the Holy City of Mecca through the Jabal Omar Project.⁵ Cities are obliged to create the right milieu, competitive business climate, and first-class tourism attractions in order to lure people to come live, invest, and entertain. Barthel (2010, p. 5) labels these real estate ventures as the “Arab Mega-Projects,” in reference to their scale, and he situates them at the core of contemporary Arab town planning. Adham (2005) had noted that circulating images of such neoliberal urban restructuring mimic developments in the West and represent as such an “Oriental vision of the Occident.”

Even through research and publications on the Arab city are numerous, the ones addressing recent neoliberal transformations and urban restructuring, emerging within the past decade, are still very few. Yet, they are of a significant value and include the works of Elsheshtawy (2008) on Abu Dhabi, Summer's comparative work (2005) on Amman and Beirut, Daher's work (2008) on Amman, Clerk and Hurault's work (2010) on Damascus, Barthel and Planel's work (2010) on Tanger, Adham's work (2005) on Cairo, and Krijnen and Fawaz's work (2010) on Beirut as well. Amman represents a clear example of neoliberal urban restructuring and emerging forms of spatial ordering and engineering such as high-end business towers that offer an exclusive concept of refuge and of consumption (e.g., Jordan Gate, *Abdali*), upper-end residential “gated” communities all over the city (e.g., *Green Land, Andalusia*), and even low-income residential cities (e.g., Jizza, Marka, Sahab) that work to push the poorer segments of society to the outskirts of the city in new zoned heterotopias. These endeavors all reflect dominant political and ideological practices of power regulated by neoliberal tropes and manifested through spatially engineered realities. In reality, several of these emerging neoliberal projects on the city are anticipated to lead to urban geographies of inequality and exclusion and to spatial/social displacement (Daher 2013).

Postneoliberalization and Excessive Corporatization of Public Sector Institutions

The third phase, following the financial crises of 2008–9 can be characterized by a postneoliberal excessive corporatization of the “state” public sector institutions (including mainly electricity, water, and social housing) and a period of deregulation. During this period, Jordan witnessed more enforced Structural Adjustments Programs enforced by the IMF. Furthermore, the financial situation in Jordan got worsened due to the current situations in Egypt and Syria leading to an accelerated wave of taxation on basic goods (including oil and cloths) in addition to the decreasing of state subsidies to fragile sectors including water, electricity, and essential commodities (e.g., bread). Consequently, Jordan witnessed a remarkable increase in external and internal debt-interest payments. In a public lecture by Razzaz, he emphasized that what the “state” had labeled as “economic liberalization” in Jordan turned into a “regularized steeling” of public sector institutions devoid of transparency and control. He added that it was very obvious that the “state” is withdrawing from protecting the poorer segments of society.⁶ In a more recent article in *Al Ghad* newspaper, it was pointed out the government is not increasing taxes on nonessential goods such as cars or cigarettes (as was the case before), but today, tariffs are increased on water and electricity and subsidies are removed from the most essential items including bread.

Al Rai' newspaper reported recently that Jordan had to pay 336 million JDs during the first half of 2013 to cover the interest accumulated due to government lending practices from external and internal sources. This amounted to 33.2 percent increase compared to the amount paid last year for the same period. The newspaper added that most of that amount in fact (290.3 million JDs) was paid to cover the interests of debt due to internal borrowing by the government from local banks and some public sector institutions⁷. Most recently, the prime minister of Jordan declared while attending the first sessions of the Socio-Economic Council, and in an attempt to pacify the situation, that the government of Jordan had made difficult decisions to "face pain rather than popularity."⁸ Immediately after that declaration, taxes on cloths were increased by 20 percent.⁹

The postneoliberal era in Jordan did not really witness a change in the practices of neoliberal processes but rather a continuation, and, if anything, this era could be characterized by an excessive corporatization of the "state's" public sector institutions (e.g., electricity, water) accompanied by what is declared to the general public as "policy reform" leading to a period of deregulation of public sector institutions. According to Tomaira (2008), in Amman, such reforms were part of a widespread deregulation and corporatization of public sector institutions and reflected the broader trends of privatization and commercialization in water-specific institutions. Mahayni (2013, p. 6) elaborated on the current corporatization and deregulation of the water sector in Jordan. This phenomenon is not restricted to Jordan; he added (citing Furlong and Bakker 2010) that, in fact, many third world countries are facing key shifts in the neoliberal era of water governance: First, public water institutions were institutionally reformed through privatization or public-private partnerships; and second, institutions were commercialized or corporatized to utilize market governance logics in water management.

In Amman, the corporatization of the water sector, according to Mahayni (2013, p. 1), resulted in selling, buying, and reselling again of state institutions. The shift in reality means a reworking of the state organizations from privatization to corporatization and commercialization through public-private partnerships. The shift from the privatized "LEMA" water companies (a consortium of water companies: Lyonnaise des Eaux—Montgomery Watson—Arabtech Jardaneh, which was strictly a management company responsible for billing, distribution, and customer services while contracts and assets of the water sector remained with the state) to today's MIYAHUNA, which is owned by the Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ) is a perfect example. WAJ is now responsible for regulating MIYAHUNA. Here, part of this deregulation is not only the fact that the owner is serving as regulator simultaneously; but rather this deregulation marks a shift in the priority of the management structure where the real emphasis is on how to

provide water and on cost recovery (where cost is expected to increase) especially in a time where the government is not investing in water harvesting projects, but rather in quick fixes that are expensive with no future rewards such as the Disi Project, which pumps water from the Disi aquifer in the south to Amman leading to the depletion of a major aquifer in Jordan. Of course, the utilization of market governance logics in water management was previously facilitated by the privatization of the sector (e.g., training of local government-sector employees by foreign companies' executives) and is reinforced today by the involvement of the transnational capitalist-class in the infrastructure domain for many of the executive committee members of MIYAHUNA come from the private sector.

The postneoliberal excessive corporatization and deregulation of the "state's" public sector institutions in the electricity sector was very evident, manifested by the government's selling, and reselling, of the sector's institutions while borrowing from local banks to facilitate these purchases. It was mentioned earlier that in 2006, the government approved the privatization of the generation of electricity for a second time around and negotiated with "ENARA" lead by Jordan-Dubai Capital; and in 2007, the Council of the Prime Ministry agreed to sell 51 percent from the National Electrical Company responsible for electricity generation to ENARA (in the amount of 140 million JDs) and to also sell 9 percent to the Social Security Institution. The purchase included that the main strategic investor (Jordan-Dubai Capital) should pay off 51 percent of the company's debt in the amount of 171 million JDs.¹⁰ The trend continue as most recently, as Jordan-Dubai Capital was sold in 2013 to an investment company from Hong Kong (HPF Private Investment Fund Company Ltd.) in the amount of 92 million JDs. The Hong Kong Company established a new trust in the amount of \$150 million to invest in several sectors in Jordan including infrastructure, industries, and services.¹¹

More recently, the Council of the Prime Ministry agreed in 2007 to sell out all the shares of the Electrical Distribution Company and 55.4 of the shares of Irbid's Governorate Electrical Company to Energy Investments (composed of three multinational Gulf companies: Jordan-Dubai Capital, the Privatization Holding Company (PHC), and United Arab Investors).¹² It is obvious that many Arabian-Gulf companies, and after the recession in the construction and real estate ventures, opted to invest in infrastructure provision and distribution in several other Arab countries. For example, the Privatization Holding Company (PHC), formerly known as Kuwait Privatization Projects Holding Company (KPPHC) was established in 1994 with a capital of 1 million KDs. PHC is a Kuwaiti Shareholding Company listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange with a capital of 79.3 KDs and a shareholder's equity of almost 161 million KDs. The objective of PHC is to invest directly

in infrastructure projects (e.g., energy, infrastructure, telecom, and utilities), and to own significant stakes in companies with the same objectives.¹³

Forms of Resistance

In an attempt to provide a substitute to state-orchestrated “development” projects, this period of postneoliberal transformations is witnessing the emergence of new concepts linked to development including “entrepreneurship” and “corporate social responsibility”¹⁴ where projects of development are now spearheaded by corporations (and even in certain cases some state institutions), by NGOs, or by foreign-funded. addressing these concepts. This signals, as the author had elaborated earlier, a clear shift from “Big D” to “small d” development projects. An example of these “small d” development projects orchestrated by donor agencies is the USAID-funded INJAZ Program. Relaunched in 2001 as an independent nonprofit Jordanian organization, the project emphasized entrepreneurship by thriving to inspire and prepare young Jordanians to become productive members in their society and succeed in the global economy. INJAZ brings various capacity-building courses to classrooms in public schools, universities, community colleges, and various social institutions, promoting financial literacy, social leadership, and business entrepreneurship.¹⁵

After the financial crises of 2008–9 and the recession in the construction and real estate business, Amman witnessed the termination and failure of many neoliberal urban projects leaving the city full of empty construction sites with high environmental hazards. The current urban condition in a postneoliberal age has hence worsened by the second. In 1984, the famous Jordanian novelist Abdelrahman Munif published one of his most inspiring novels (*Mudun al-milh: Cities of Salt*). The novel is set in an unnamed Arabian Gulf country in the 1930s and attempts to describe the transformations that affected this desert Bedouin community when oil is discovered by foreigners (Americans) who end up directly and indirectly colonizing the country and the radical impact of that discovery on the physical and human landscape. The epic unfolds over a large span of years and sketches in detail the rise of this fake urban civilization and especially the abundance of surplus capital from the oil revenues, which is mostly spent on real estate development and lavish banquets. This novel is actually banned in several Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia. The novel ends in its fifth volume by a detailed description of the fall and demise of this oil-dollar/American colony culture and the author skillfully depicts (and especially in the fifth volume of the novel entitled: *Badiyat al Thulmat: Desert of Darkness*) the destruction and downfall of this oil-based economy and civilization.

The significance of this novel is not only in its sketching the details of the transformation of this desert-bound Bedouin community when confronted with the discovery of oil and its impacts on the physical landscapes and socio-cultural and human conditions, but also, it is in its prediction, as early as the mid-1980s, of the fragility and unaccountability of this oil-based economy and its related neoliberal real estate boom that had circulated to other places in the Middle East (Amman, Beirut, and Cairo to mention a few). The most recent financial crises of 2008–10 in cities like Dubai and in other places in the Middle East testified to the vulnerability and unreliability of such an economy with the ceasing of many real estate projects, termination of hundreds of thousands of jobs, and the lack of socioeconomic stability. Amman was very much affected by the latest economic crises and especially that many of the real estate projects were actually financed by major neoliberal transnational capitalist companies in places like Dubai and other cities in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Touring the city of Amman today, one cannot but notice the ceasing of several of these neoliberal real estate projects whose legacy had left the city’s urban landscape with unfinished projects with static cranes, rotted reinforcement, and huge craters in the ground with potentially severe environmental problems (Daher 2011). One can mention several cases such as several projects and business towers in Abdali, the Wall, Jordan Gate, and Limitless Towers in Abdoun.

Official discourses today are trying to preoccupy the masses with attempts for economic reform (e.g., the “state” establishing councils and commissions that adopt a liberal-charged discourse camouflaging the mobilization of speculative financial instruments in opening up new arenas for capitalist profit making). This is leading gradually to a separation between the economic and political reform initiatives that was evident immediately after the end of colonization in the Arab world where the way forward was paved through national large-scale development projects coupled with an inseparable high level of intellectual political climate. More recently the prime minister chaired a meeting of the Higher Agricultural Council declaring that the government is planning to strongly support the agricultural sector in the country by adopting a liberal position stating that this sector should be evaluated through its contribution to the subsistence of many families, emphasizing the social and future security dimensions of the sector. Yet the outcome of such a “liberal” position is translated into simply decisions about the preparedness of the sector to export to international markets.¹⁶ Bayloumy had elaborated that the 1990s began with “economic reform accompanied by significant political reform—the return of Parliament and the legalization of political parties” (2008, p. 279). She added that by the beginning of 2000, “economic liberalization had sped up while political reform had reversed,

resulting in what some have called “deliberalization” (ibid.). Today, I observe that “democracy politics” manifested in the popularity of parochial parliamentary and municipal election poles work as a pacification mechanism of any potential organized or serious resistance.

Conclusion

Via an investigation of three geopolitical and socioeconomic transformation phases that the Jordanian state has gone through since the decolonization period, I endeavored to demonstrate in this chapter that the current situation in Jordan is that of an excessive corporatization (projects of development are spearheaded by large corporations [e.g., Manaseer] and the role of NGOs in development is growing), which then leads toward almost an end of welfare. Aid from the World Bank and IMF pushes Jordan furthermore to increase tariffs on infrastructure and to gradually corporatize and regulate public sector institutions creating a higher level of distress between public authorities and end users (e.g., water and electricity sectors). After the financial crises of 2008–9, many neoliberal urban projects have been terminated and/or failed, leaving the city full of empty construction sites with high environmental hazards with increasing spatial social segregation and no public housing plans. These processes are being camouflaged and pacified, moreover, by the preoccupation of the masses with attempts for economic reform and “democracy politics” such as parliamentary and municipal elections. Promotion of salvation through “democracy politics” manifested in the popularity of election poles (e.g., municipal, parliamentary) acts therefore as a pacification mechanism of any potential organized resistance. There are signs of burgeoning civil society activities questioning such neoliberal policies (e.g., TAKADDAM, Ammani School of Consciousness Building). However, this is a beginning of a political discussion with a “small p.”

Notes

1. Public Lecture by Omar al Razzaz at Ras al Ain Gallery on September 28, 2011.
2. Al Rai' newspaper, Thursday, January 17, 2013, issue 15424 Main Section p. 34.
3. Information is based on a public lecture delivered by Basma Moumani on December 15, 2010, at Greater Amman Municipality.
4. During a recent visit to Rabbat (October 2009), the author was astonished by the similarities in terms of investors, developers, and even rhetoric and discourses of development between neoliberal investors in Beirut, Amman, and elsewhere in the *Marshreq* and the ones in Rabbat. This global capital is definitely circulating not only surplus capital from the oil, but also images and models of neoliberal development.
5. www.jabalomar.com (viewed on April 23, 2005).

6. Public Lecture by Omar al Razzaz at Ras al Ain Gallery on September 28, 2011.
7. Al Rai' newspaper, September 13, 2013, issue 15660 (Economy section), p. 1.
8. Al Rai' newspaper, September 13, 2013, issue 15660 (Main section), p. 1.
9. Al Rai' newspaper, September 21, 2013, <http://www.alrai.com/article/608147.html>, (viewed on September 22, 2013).
10. Al Rai' newspaper, July 9, 2012, issue 15236 (Main section), p. 27.
11. Al Rai' newspaper, July 9, 2012, issue 15236 (Main section), p. 27.
12. Al Rai' newspaper, July 9, 2012, issue 15236 (Main section), p. 27.
13. <http://www.phc.com.kw/> (viewed on September 20, 2013).
14. An example includes *Ruwad al Tanmiya*, a community development project funded by Aramex (one of Jordan's leading logistics companies) as part of its social responsibility initiatives. It centers on social and community development in a Jabal al Natheef (a less-privileged neighborhood located in East Amman with a severe lack of social services).
15. <http://www.injaz.org.jo/SubDefault.aspx?PageId=186&MenuId=45>, (viewed on September 11, 2013).
16. Al Rai' newspaper, September 20, 2013, issue 15667 (Main section), p. 3.

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"Emel Akçalı's edited book bristles with intelligence and detail; it provides one of the best intellectual accounts of the Arab Spring's complex emergence and transformation."

—Vijay Prashad, LeftWord Books, India

"A fascinating book that makes a distinct and novel contribution to understanding the state and neoliberalism in the Middle East. The range of countries and themes discussed – combined with its sophisticated treatment of neoliberal governmentality as a lens through which to interpret power and contestation – mark this as an original and stimulating collection."

—Adam Hanieh, SOAS, University of London, UK

"In an environment where 'neoliberal' has become a ubiquitous label, this volume provides a refreshing and rigorous critique of the interactions between class, violence, state-building, sectarianism, religiosity, subjectivity, and political economy that shape everyday life. With chapters that explore the power and the limits of governments and people in Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Iraq, Turkey, and Israel/Palestine, the authors provide a critical, theoretical, and materially grounded outlook on state and society in the Middle East."

—Sherene Seikaly, Department of History, University of California, USA; Editor of the *Arab Studies Journal*

Through an analysis of diverse regional case studies, this edited volume aims to shed light on the ways in which neoliberal governmentalities have developed and functioned in various Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries. By scrutinizing whether or not resistance and a genuine revolutionary transformation in this important region have been futile, the authors seek to offer an outlook on the future of the state and society in the MENA. Furthermore, this volume aims to consider the ways in which global neoliberal discourses of democracy, modernity, emancipation, liberty, secularism, individual rights, and liberalism translate on the ground in the region.

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