The State from Below: Local Governance Practices in Jordan

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Abstract. This paper explores how the local level – as a space – is contested, and how processes of struggle between different forces that interact and intersect at the local level affect the transformation of the state from below. Based on the assumption that state power does not simply emerge fully formed due to its statist formation, the paper aims to overcome the conventionally assumed dichotomy between state and society. An in-depth analysis of practices of various agents and agencies in Jordan illustrates the dynamics of state-society relations. By elaborating on how their strategies and practices overlap, reinforce or cancel each other out, the paper elaborates on how the context of local governance is (re)constructed and (re)shaped.

1. Introduction

In 2008, the news reported a well-organized local oppositional coalition movement, including representatives of voluntary associations, members of Parliament, local economic elites, university professors, landowners, union members, professional syndicates, and politicians, which proved to be effective in their joint attempts to stop the central government's plans (MERIP, 2009). This incident, which took place in the Egyptian Mediterranean port city of Damietta, reflected an arena of escalating protests

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against a Canadian consortium building a fertilizer complex in Ra's al-Barr. It shows in an exemplary manner the process of joint protests of state and non-state actors and contests various theoretical assumptions that resonate in a range of works on the Middle East such as a statist understanding of state and insinuated fixed boundaries between state and society.

Drawing on the Weberian ideal-type of the modern rational state, different studies tend to focus on the state as if it were a stand-alone institution separated from the wider social environment. By outlining the state as an integrated entity, these accounts neglect such dynamics which have occurred during the Damietta protests. In most state-centered studies the state is conceived as an autonomous and coherent formation representing public interests and claiming control over a demarcated territory. The protests of Damietta defy this conception and give clues as to the non-fixity and fluidity of those social boundaries.

This paper is juxtaposed to those accounts assuming that state power simply emerges completely formed due to its statist formation (Schlumberger, 2007). Inspired by Migdal's (2001) state-in-society approach, this account approaches a process-oriented and inclusive conception of the state by considering both practices that produce the image of the state as a singular agent and practices *of* the state. This paper explores struggles between different forces at the local level and asks how these processes affect the transformation of the state from below. The paper focuses on encounters between parts of the state (mayor, police) and non-state actors (NGO leaders, tribal chiefs). An in-depth analysis of agents' practices at the micro level illustrates how these practices impact on local governance and on state-society relations and thus on the transformation of the state from below.

The paper investigates the Jordanian urban community, Jabl Z[1], in East Amman and Ma'an City, a town in a rural area in the south. The Jabl Z district is one of the twenty-seven sub-districts of Amman. Being one of the older districts in Amman, it has a population estimated at 225,000 and includes five main neighborhoods.[2] The majority of the inhabitants of Jabl Z

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[1] In order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees and informants who helped me gain insights into local governance structures in East Amman, the author uses 'Jabl Z' as a notional indication for the real area in which the data of this article have been collected.

[2] http://www.ammancity.gov.jo/english/areas/n2.asp, accessed 02.01.2009.

are Jordanians of Palestinian origin, among others by virtue of the Palestinian camp that was established as an emergency camp for the Palestinian refugees of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.[3] Installed within Jabl Z, it is spatially separated from it by the walls that surround the camp. The internal structure is organized according to the villages of origin in Palestine. About 9,500 people inhabit 648 housing units, with an average unit size of 50 m[2]. While there are five private clinics in the camp, there is neither a police station nor secondary schools (Department of Palestinian Affairs, 2002: 52-53). Ma'an City has a population of 30,000 and is mainly inhabited by Transjordanians[4] (CSS, 2002). It has been the arena of several clashes with the central government, including the bread riots of 1989 and the military intervention of November 2002. The inhabitants of Ma'an City work primarily in governmental agencies and the army, while the urban population of Jabl Z is employed in the private sector (CSS, 2002, Baylouny, 2008). Due to the differing geographical location and the social, demographic-ethnical composition of Jabl Z and Ma'an City, the comparison provides insightful findings about practices of different actors developed and deployed at the micro level.

The empirical data presented here is based on field research conducted in Amman and Ma'an during four months over the period April to May in 2008 and 2009 and on the basis of participant observation.[5]

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[3] There are three types of camps in Jordan: 1) official camps that are run jointly by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) and the Department of Palestinian Affairs (Foreign Ministry). Officially, there are ten of this kind of camp in Jordan, 2) Three governmental camps which are not acknowledged by UNRWA and thus serviced less than regular camps and 3) illegal gatherings in Madaba, Aqaba, and Zarqa.

[4] The distinction is one of national origin or lineage, not current citizenship. A Transjordanian is a person who traces his/her origin to the area now known as Jordan. Palestinians trace their ancestry to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, or what is now inside the boundaries of Israel (Baylouny, 2008: 278).

[5] Sixty people were interviewed, including tribal leaders, local leaders (Wujaha', Makhateer), head and council members of the municipal committee in Jabl Z, the mayor of Ma'an City, an Imam of a mosque in Ma'an City, the head of the Zakat Fund, academics at the Hussein Bin Talal University in Ma'an City, leaders of NGOs and local residents in Amman and Ma'an City.

2. Locality, Space and Practices

The analysis of daily practices of state and non-state actors draws on de Certeau's analysis of tactical actions: the innumerable tricks, deceits and simulations adapted by the 'popular' changing the order of things to meet their own needs and ends (1984: 26). For the analysis of these 'popular' practices of subverting the social order, the local level holds the richest and most instructive hints (Migdal, 2001: 88). Nonetheless, for a long time the question of local governance has been banished from Middle Eastern research. Quite recently, a small number of scholars have started exploring alternative patterns of politics that emerge beyond the scope of national politics (Singerman, 1995 and 2009, Harders, 2002, Ismail, 2006).

In order to discuss questions of local governance it is imperative to define a framework within which local patterns of politics are located. Governance research provides clues for grasping the 'local' in geographical terms in order to stress small-scale spatiality and the variety of territorial, functional and identity-related boundaries (De La Rosa, Höppner and Kötter, 2008); other accounts define the local in relation to the national, regional and global level (Cantori and Bainchi, 1989; Clarke, 2006). In this account, Jabl Z and Ma'an City are conceptualized as socio-spatial spaces whereas sociality of space is constituted by practices within space (de Certeau, 1984: 117); it is the product of actions and movements and "occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient, situate, temporalize, and make it function," (ibid: 117). De Certeau's attention to everyday practices aims to depict how the 'consumer', that is, an ordinary person, plays with the social order that surpasses him using the products that the order imposes on him. By giving attention to the ability of popular practices, de Certeau illustrates the creativity of ordinary people to invent their everyday life; it shows how space is appropriated by its users. Understood as a practiced place, space constitutes a site of dynamic (hidden) struggles (de Certeau, 1984: xiii) that embodies social relations that are ultimately relations of power. To trace how power hierarchies, also in relation to the state, are shaped and transformed in Jabl Z and Ma'an City, I draw on Bourdieu's concept of capital. Bourdieu relates power over space to the overall amounts and relative combinations of capital available to actors who compete for social positions (Bourdieu, 1987)[6]. As we will see, the local space in Jordan is

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[6] Bourdieu positions actors according to economic, social and cultural dimensions: economic capital refers to monetary as well as other financial resources and assets and finds its institutional expression in property rights. Cultural capital exists in

increasingly appropriated by a new notability consisting of technocrats with high economic and cultural capital to assert their interests.

The research questions of this paper are posed against the backdrop of the retreat of state welfare services[7] accompanied by widespread schemes of welfare marketization (Bogaert and Debruyne, 2009), NGOization and militarization (Baylouny, 2008). I situate local governance in and of Jabl Z and Ma'an City's socio-spatial structure, relating them to questions of power and access to welfare services.

3. Informality and the Limited State: Some Theoretical and Conceptual Implications

An inability or perceived unwillingness of the state to ensure access to social welfare services compels citizens to resort to local brokers such as local notables (*wujaha', singular: Wajeeh*), tribal leaders (*shuyukh, singular Sheikh*) whose positions are conceived to allow them to demand resources from the state. Practices of these intermediaries who are linked to state authorities undermine, as Gupta (1995) pointed out, the conventionally made distinction between 'public' and 'private'. In the same vein as the Indian lower-level official in Gupta's narratives who used his home as 'office' where he was usually "surrounded by clients, sycophants, and colleagues" (Gupta, 1995: 379), we observe innumerable instances in Jabl Z and Ma'an City that illustrate the entrenchment of the 'state' and formal[8] institutions

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various forms. It includes long-standing dispositions and habits acquired in the socialization process, the accumulation of valued cultural objects such as formal educational qualifications and training. Social capital is the sum of actual and potential resources that can be mobilized through membership in social networks of actors and organizations.

[7] Social welfare is seen as a broad system intended to maintain the well-being of individuals within a society. A social welfare system is defined as the institutions and policies that provide protection for the lower classes. These institutions can extend into public services (Baylouny, 2008: 277). In this paper, social welfare services and public goods are used as synonyms and include services in the field of health, education and employment. The term 'basic and daily needs' refers to services such as housing, water, sewage, and electricity.

[8] Formal institutions include those "rules and procedures that are created, communicated, and enforced through channels widely accepted as official," (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004: 727).

with non-state actors and informal[9] institutions. Informal institutions are rooted forms of social self-management (Alhamad 2008: 40) that are bound together by a strong family ethos of kinship and collective solidarity and are exploited by people to fulfill their objectives. However, despite their appearance of independence, informal institutions remain interlinked and interwoven with the formal realm. In order to materialize the diverse interests of network members efficiently, these institutions are eager to integrate formally powerful actors into their network (Harders, 2009, Singerman, 1995). In Ma'an City for example, tribal leaders tend to integrate powerful kin members into their tribal assemblies (*dawawin; singular: diwan*[10]) though, as we will see, these new notables increasingly challenge their authority.

By elaborating on the collaborative and at times conflicting practices and interactions between different forces concerning economic and political resources, we gain insights on how fluid boundaries are. In its attempt to capture these dynamics, this paper reflects on Migdal's process-oriented analysis of state in society, relating it to Ismail's (2006) concept of the 'everyday state'. Hence, this paper conceptualizes the state as a field of power that is shaped by the (conflicting and contradictory) practices of different forces at the micro level of everyday life. A "field" refers to a site "of forces, whose necessity is imposed on agents who are engaged in it, and a field of struggle within which agents confront each other, with differentiated means and ends according to their position in the structure of the field of forces, thus contributing to conserving or transforming the structure," (Bourdieu cited in Reed-Danahay, 2005: 134). By referring to the state as a field of power, I mean situations in which people with certain capital (social, economic and cultural) are able to become dominant in a field. The process in which power – i.e. the ability to induce people to think and act in ways that they would otherwise not do – is exercised involves a constant struggle among state and non-state actors. Patterns of this struggle, the way that power flows respectively and how the change in flows is referred to as the state's dynamic (Migdal, 2005: 15). Within these processes social groups as well as the state as a whole and its parts are constructed and transformed, including their goals, and ultimately, the rules they promote.

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[9] Informal institutions are defined as "socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels," (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004: 727-30).

[10] The diwan represents an indigenous institution that includes exclusively adult males of the same tribe. Women have always been excluded from these structures.

Migdal alerts us to pay particular attention to both the image and practices of the state. While actors have a mental picture of the state as an integral entity in a given realm (Migdal, 2005: 14), practices, as de Certeau (1984) has pointed out, may unveil diverse ways in which state 'law' is circumvented, translated and adapted through the development of tactics. In Migdal's words, 'doing the state' involves diverse and multiple actions of state actors as well as the innumerable responses and actions of non-state actors. Migdal calls these actions "practices of the state" (2005: 15). With reference to Foucault's 'tactics of governmentality,' Migdal advises us of the importance of practices that work against the mythicized image of state and recommends elaborating on practices that pit themselves against the image of a unified entity (Migdal, 2001: 18-20). The focus on processes of state engagement with other social forces highlights the mutual transformation of the state and other social forces as well as the *limitations* of the state and other social groups.

4. Local Governance Structures: Social Contract and Neoliberal Practices of Government

Migdal's conception provides us with tools to zero in on the conflict-loaded interactions between different forces in their attempt to get their way and to explore how these processes affect state-society relations. The focus on governance at the micro level does not imply that the 'local' is sharply demarcated from other levels. Indeed, these dynamic interactions become visible on the ground, but they have to be embedded into the national context of institutional arrangements and policies.

The 1989 financial collapse of Jordan compelled the country to adopt structural adjustment programs[11] which were based on liberalization and privatization. Economic reforms of the 1990s forced the Jordanian state to relinquish its 'social contract' arrangements, which typically included free provision of health and education and extensive subsidies on food and essential commodities; a social contract that had guaranteed income support in exchange for loyalty and political acquiescence. The removal of subsidies on some essential goods and services[12] caused popular demonstrations that

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[11] For an overview of the economic liberalization and reforms in Jordan see Harrigan andEl-Said (2009: 75-104); for the social and political impact of the reform process see Harrigan and El-Said (2008).

[12] According to a study by the Centre for Strategic Studies of July 2007, food prices have risen by 21 percent since 2002 and fuel prices 54 percent since 2002.

took place in different parts of the Kingdomsuch as Ma'an City in 1989 and 1996 (Hamarneh and Salem, 2007, Alissa, 2007).[13] For Transjordanians, the social contract meant employment in the public sector with "attendant benefits for the entire family". Along with a steady income, these jobs provided access to health care and cheap consumer goods" (Baylouny 2008: 281).[14] In contrast, Palestinians were largely excluded from public employment and were therefore "collectively organized in the private sector along profession and kinship lines," (ibid: 281). Rising economic and political frustrations within Jordanian society due to the failure of reforms to improve living standards were addressed by the state with the launch of the 'Jordan First' campaign in October 2002, emphasizing the need to invest in education and health and to fight poverty and unemployment (Harrigan and El-Said, 2009: 101-102). While continuing the liberalization process, for example by amending the rent law No.33 which enables landlords to evict tenants and to increase rents (Jordan Times: 16.04.2009), initiatives like "Decent Housing for Decent Living" have been launched to try to absorb the social costs of these policies. The initiative intends to provide housing for low – and limited – income Jordanians such as civil servants, Jordan Armed Forces personnel and civil and military retirees living in urban communities (Jordan Times 31.08.2009), while beneficiaries living in rural areas like Ma'an City receive plots of lands and seed capital of up to 5,000 – 6,000 Jordanian Dinars (€5,000 - 6,000). Notwithstanding this initiative having been launched by the governmental agency Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), the construction costs are mainly financed by the private sector. Investors cover over 80 percent of the total costs and in return HUDC provides them with sufficient beneficiaries who acquire the built apartments aiming to allow the investor to receive a good return for his investment.[15] These forms of initiatives alongside programs like "Adopt a Village" promoted by Royal NGOs like the Jordan River Foundation[16] which seek to seduce the private sector to invest in the infrastructure of neighborhoods and capacity building of small

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[13] Eleven people were killed and hundreds injured during the riots (Andoni and Schwedler, 1996: 40-42).

[14] This included cash allowances to heads of tribes, reserved university places and scholarships for Bedouin children, development projects of the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, assistance by the National Aid Fund, the Zakat Fund, Royal NGOs, tax exemptions, and the like.

[15] Interview with the Housing and Urban Development Corporation in Amman, April 2009.

[16] The Jordan River Foundation was established in 1995 and is headed by Queen Rania.

municipalities reveal how the implementation of neoliberal policies is interlinked to the relocation of social welfare (in this case public housing, infrastructure and educational trainings) to the private sector, NGOs and other associations.[17]

Due to the increasing marketization and NGOization of public services, citizens of Jabl Z and Ma'an City are increasingly dependent on social welfare provided by non-state actors and agencies. This compels them to devise new 'tactics' to ensure access to these resources. These practices may be translated in terms of memberships in social networks such as family or kin associations[18], or by inventing traditions, for example when Jordanians of Palestinian origin set up family gatherings similar to tribal gatherings of Transjordanians in order to promote their interests. They also revert to services provided by faith-based charity associations such as the Islamic Centre Charity Society in Jabl Z. Acting as the charity arm of the Islamic Action Front, these associations reach thousands of Jordanians by providing services which are much cheaper than those of private providers and much better in quality than those of the state (Harrigan 2009). In contrast, in rural areas like Ma'an City, my empirical findings reveal that it is less the community-based institutions, but predominantly kin networks which are used to pool resources to help kin members to find employment, and receive medical treatment or university scholarships. The distribution of resources along individual ties and connections (*wasta*) in combination with neoliberal tendencies to reallocate social welfare services to non-state sites has made access to these resources precariously competitive. This changing context has not merely shaped patterns of relationship between the state and its citizens; it also affects the social hierarchies of power within non-state institutions as will be shown.

To sum up, the ancient social contract between the state and its subjects of domination did not disappear; instead it was streamlined. Its implementation is delegated to non-state forces and is linked to increased efforts of the state to gain control over spaces as will be illustrated in the case of Jabl Z. The competition for limited resources in return forced

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[17] Orange Telekom took over the village Rasul in the governorate Ajloun, Dubai Capital is investing in Dibeen Forest and a third project is sponsored by a French cement company in Lafagge in Tafileh. Interview with Jordan River Foundation, Amman, April 2009.

[18] There are about 600 family associations in Jordan and the majority has been set up during the reform period 1989-1999 (Baylouny 2006).

potential beneficiaries to adapt their practices and strategies to the changing world of social welfare provision.

5. Internal Governance: Actors and Institutions in Amman and Ma'an

In order to disaggregate the state, Migdal advises us to look closer at the 'trenches' (Migdal, 2001: 117), the dispersed field offices and the like to understand how the state works in society. Hence, in order to capture interactions between state and non-state actors which can be conflicting due to the constraints imposed by the formal framework, we have to consider the governmental structure as the arena within which state actors are related to one another and produce the image of a coherent state (Migdal, 2001: 110-124). The Jordanian governmental system includes several, partly parallel, levels of sub-national government: the Governorate[19] (*Muhafazah*), Districts (*Mutasarifiya*) and Sub-Districts (*Alwia'*) which are administrated by the Ministry of Interior and function as de-concentrated entities representing the central government authority locally. The Governor (*Muhafez*) is appointed by the Cabinet and assisted by the Executive Council and the Advisory Council. The sector directorates (*Mudiriyyat*, i.e. offices of line ministries) are directly linked to their ministries, whereas the municipalities (*Baladiyyat*) are subordinated to the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs. To further complicate the issue, the Executive Council at the Governorate level is subject to the line ministries for budget and employment, and to governors for overall service delivery and operations. Within this diffuse system only the mayors and Municipal Councils are elected. However, Amman constitutes an exception. Since 1995 the mayor and half of the council of the Greater Amman Municipality are appointed. The elected half[20] consists of (district) mayors (*Ra'is Al-Lajna*) who each head one of the municipal committees in the twenty-seven sub-districts of Amman. As the state-in-society approach highlights, each of these state actors is at the same time an individual force in a field of interacting, at times conflicting, social forces. With regard to Jabl Z and Ma'an City, it is asked, which conflicting forces in the field of social welfare provision are shaping state-society relations? An array of tightly entangled state and non-state actors revolves around the issue of social welfare provision. Looking at the 'trenches' of the state in the case of Jabl Z, we may identify the district mayor (in charge of infrastructure, street cleaning, sewage systems,

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[19] Jordan is divided into twelve governorates.

[20] The last municipality election took place in July 2007. The Municipal Council holds office for four years.

electricity), heads of the offices of line ministries (particularly, water, health and education), the head of the camp improvement committee (in charge of services within the camp), the security apparatus, and the Islamic Committee for Charity (*Lajnat Al-Zaka'*) as the central state forces in charge of welfare services in the everyday life of citizens at the micro level.

In their daily performance these individual parts of the state collaborate, at times clash, with area-based figures of authority, such as local notables (*wujaha'*), tribal leaders (*shuyukh*)[21], directors of NGOs, and representatives of descent-related networks (*rawaabit*). As Migdal pointed out, the capability of social forces to exercise power starts internally within their own informal institutions. The efficiency of hierarchies and the capability to ensure access to state resources affect their ability to influence or control the behavior of people. Traditionally, the authority of these 'strongmen', as Migdal calls them, has been constructed in relation to conventional norms of virtue, and is strengthened by their visible links to state authorities (Ismail 2006: xxix) and consolidated by their embeddedness in the formal realm. Instances of embeddedness appear when local notables are recognized as *Shuyukh* by the Royal Court and sought out by state agencies to mediate in conflicts between tribes, or when local notables of the Palestinian camps in Jabl Z are integrated into the distribution process of the camp improvement committee by listing families that receive donations.

However, in their attempt to impose their own rules on ordinary life and everyday social relations, these strongmen are locally challenged by an emerging notability consisting of people with high economic, cultural and social capital such as merchants, higher employees of ministries, former MPs, and directors of NGOs. These new technocrats of authority are well educated, have visible links to state authorities and hold influential positions within state administration, the private sector and social networks. Struggles between competing interests of old and new notables are also observable in rural areas such as Ma'an City. As my empirical data reveals, the institution of *diwan* remains the major institution within which the bureaucracy of public services such as security, job opportunities, health and education are

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[21] Following Hottinger (1961: 85), I define *Sheikh* as a local "leader who possesses the support of a locally circumscribed community and who retains this support by fostering or appearing to foster the interests of as many as possible from amongst his clientele." These local leaders are ascribed to be generous helpers of their communities, accumulating demands upwards and distributing patronage downwards (Hottinger, 1961: 91).

negotiated and allocated (see also Twissi, 2008: 12). In this context, access to social welfare reflects the subjects' ability to maintain connections, to bargain and negotiate, rather than a right granted by citizenship. For example, kin members convince other kin members to secure them access to the Royal Court in order to get medical treatment. However, the *diwan* as an institution is presently undergoing massive transformations. Not only do disputes about the succession subvert the institution itself, but also the authority of the *Sheikh* who inherits the Sheikhdom, is increasingly challenged by *Wujaha' Al-'ashira*, the new faces of tribes. Their function is mobile, i.e. while being a *Sheikh* is a lifetime function, being *Wajeeh* is temporary. Their attempts to mobilize their own followers and thus exercise power, for example through establishing financial associations in order to provide their kin members with scholarships for university or capital for business, are opposed and challenged by similar efforts of other *Wujaha'* who for example are NGO directors and hence have access to medical treatment, such as the director of *Gam'iyyat Ma'an Li-Tarbiya Al-Khassa* [South Corporation for Special Treatment]. What the new generation of local leaders has in common is that they (partially) provide their own resources and/or who have the know-how to attract the required resources - in particular from donors such as foreign embassies -, while the former are mostly reliant on state resources. The same applies for the illegal practices of criminal brokers who have gained increasing influence within Ma'an City. They often provide financial support, help with their visible connection to politicians and formal state agencies and provide protection against other criminals.

However, the competition between different leaders with unequal abilities and access to resources embedded in the context of neoliberal liberalization does not merely shape internal social relations, but also affects state-society relations as will be discussed in the next section. The same obtains for illegal practices of the *Salafiyyen*, violent Islamists who challenge local leaders due to the inability of the latter to manipulate and thus control this group. Exercising social control is what enables these strongmen to make demands upon the state. As Migdal highlighted, the institutionalization of a field of power provokes strong reactions by others acting in the same field. The *Salafy* group opposes the existing social order by spreading its ideology and cultural visions mainly through informal realms aiming at extending their field of influence and thus gaining strength. These, at times conflict-loaded, interactions and struggles between these different social forces concerning whose rules people should follow

transform both those who seek to impose power and those whose behavior they aim to change.

6. Engagement of State and Society

As has been illustrated, the state is fragmented and faces a multitude of social organizations that vie for power to set the rules of the game. To trace all potential encounters between state and non-state actors would exceed the scope of this paper, hence I focus my investigation on a few actual instances that give insights into local arrangements and the coalition and clashes of forces that affect the everyday life of citizens.

7. Local Governance Practices in Jabl Z

In an environment in which the state is incapable of providing sufficient social welfare services, everyday forms of social organization – i.e. informal institutions – provide citizens with a framework designed to deal with a wide range of concerns, needs, and problems (Ismail, 2006: 46-47). But how do the inhabitants of the Palestinian camp in Jabl Z communicate with state actors and agencies? The pattering of relations between camp residents and the state must be traced back to the camp's origin and to its demographic expansion and infrastructural development. The Jabl Z Camp was established in 1967 as an emergency camp when another influx of refugees arrived in Jordan. The camp lacks basic infrastructure such as paved streets and connections to the water and sewage system even if according to official statements by the Department of Palestinian Affairs (2002) around 90 percent of the households are allegedly connected to the water and sewage system in the camp.

What became evident during several discussions with different interview partners is that the dynamics which guide the practices of people are contradictory and complementary at the same time. On the one hand, people continue referring to the state (*dawla*) as being in charge of providing welfare services. On the other hand, they avoid expressing their demands directly. In the case of Jabl Z, the district mayor functioned as the main reference node. Negotiations with him about services often took place in the framework of informal networks. For the inhabitants of the Palestinian camp, construction and infrastructure remain important concerns because despite the demographic growth in the camp, the state turned a blind eye on the need for new housing. The indifference by or ignorance of the state was opposed by ignoring state law on the part of the camp inhabitants. As de

Certeau highlighted, people find "innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other's game (here the one of state law) that is, the space instituted by others". This, he continues, "characterize[s] the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces" (de Certeau, 1984: 18). After all possibilities to extend horizontally were exhausted, people in the Jabl Z Camp started to build second and third floors although these practices conflict with the Jordanian building code which prohibits vertical construction for residential buildings. However, these illegal practices do not happen without the state's knowledge. It tolerates such practices as long as they do not become too widespread. Through their illegal practices, inhabitants deprive themselves of the legal entitlement of access to water, sewage and electricity. By seeking to gain entitlements and turning the order of things to their own ends, citizens join into "problem-solving networks" as a pragmatic means of finding solutions to their daily concerns (Auyero, 2000), including their appeal to local leaders who act on their behalf. Community leaders (*Wujaha'*) and refugee notables (*Mukhtar*[22]) are very often members of the camp improvement committee[23] and thus have connections to state actors and access to resources. Due to the lack of acknowledgment of the Jabl Z Camp by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), similar practices are deployed when seeking services in the field of health and education.[24] By involving intermediaries, people engage in an indirect process of making demands on state actors and agencies. The outcomes of these bargaining processes find their expression in individual concessions made by parts of the state. Concessions are made in return for social control[25] provided by those local figures who intervene on behalf of their community. The ability of non-state actors to ensure social control, gained from their ability to impose rules and to mobilize portions of the camp population, gives them a strength that can scare the state (Migdal, 2001: 54). When asking the district mayor of Jabl Z how he interacts with the inhabitants of the Palestinian camp, he answered very shortly by saying "I entered the camp to bring order on the streets." Bringing 'order' to the camp is the way to control it, to re-structure already existing social and power relations and by this it also provokes resistance. Migdal is right when

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[22] The institution "*Mukhtar*" appeared when the first refugees arrived in 1948 in Jordan. In order to have a dialogue partner the Jordanian government appointed Palestinian leaders. (Sawalha, 1996: 350).

[23] They function as a municipal council and are appointed by the Jordanian Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA).

[24] Interview with J.H, Institut Francaise du Proche Orient, Amman, April 2009.

[25] In this context, 'social control' is used as a synonym for power.

he stresses that different formations can offer individuals strategies of personal survival and, for some, strategies of upward mobility (Migdal, 2001: 49). By institutionalizing new networks, coalitions, and partnerships with camp-based leaders, the practices of the district mayor undermine actual legislation since the internal affairs of the camp are not subject to his authority. Due to partially ineffective supervision within the formal realm the district mayor uses his leverage with little regard to given policies. This allows him to commit local notables[26] to himself as he confirms:

> "When I was elected in the last municipality election, one of my first official acts was to invite the Wujaha´ of Jabl Z. You have to discuss all the concerns of the district with your community and not only municipal issues. People expect from you more than that; you have to take care of their needs."[27]

His access to de-bureaucratized social services and other state resources, even beyond the scope of the municipality, allows him to gain personal advantages by establishing new loose-knit informal coalitions. A resident of Palestinian origin in Jabl Z explains the setting of this recursive relationship between citizen and state actors in this way:

> "People want to survive and if they think that the district mayor can serve them better [than the Islamists], they will cooperate with him […]. When there is a problem with Security Forces for example, the state does not face Jordanians directly or at least they are treated more cautiously. If I would do something, they would take me immediately even from home and then you need the help of the older Jordanian Sheikhs. The father and grandfather of A. (head of the municipal committee) and his uncle are acknowledged by the state as Sheikhs. There are

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[26] These forms of personalized politics and relationships could be interpreted as the establishment of classical patron-client relations by the distribution of state resources from the top downwards. In this context I do not consider the clientelism concept as an appropriate tool to explore personalized relations because treating local politics as purely personal and instrumental affairs would neglect the cleavages and conflicts that exist in it. An array of clientelism approaches neglect the fact that the patron-client framework underscores the aspect of dependency and social control and overrates the mutuality and reciprocity of services (Lenner, 2004). For a critical review of the concept see Rieger (2002); Johnson (2001); Sidel (1999).

[27] Interview with the district mayor of Jabl Z, Amman, April 2008.

always called to mediate between people in case of disputes, also within the camp." [28]

The mayor's effort to set up his own space of influence affects existing power relations in several ways. As part of the state he not only vies with other parts of the state over control and influence such as the camp improvement committee. In his attempt to create his own space of maneuvers, he is also challenging the internal governance of the camp as well by a mélange of practices including avoidance and subversion of the existing social and power hierarchies. His undermining of the current environment of power is opposed by those forces that perceive the camp as their space of influence and control. This includes camp-based figures of power but also Islamists, in particular the Islamic Centre Charity Society (ICCS). Drawing heavily on the notion of charity as a religious duty, the ICCS managed to establish a powerful basis in Jabl Z. By offering cash allowances, clothing, student scholarships and services like medical treatment and classes for children, the ICCS maintains tight networks with the camp-based local leaders and the inhabitants and thus exercises influence and control (Clark, 2004). Controlling space goes beyond the control of a spatial site; it includes an imposed (social) moral control in particular of women's behavior.[29]

However, in his attempt to intervene in the camp, the district mayor follows the strategy of linking up with, prioritizing, and at times creating 'lesser' notables (Ismail, 2006). In doing so, the opposing camp-based leaders and their allies have been partially excluded from the new alliances set up by the district mayor. Their refusal to cooperate (or to be co-opted) was answered by 'policing' practices of the state because ultimately the district mayor entered the camp having the police at his disposal. The mayor's interaction with inhabitants of the camp seems to revolve around efforts to force people's behavior into a more stable form. His policing practices banished street vendors to a market place at the fringe of the camp. In his effort he is supported by NGOs, in particular the Royal NGO Jordan River Foundation (JRF). Focusing on income-generating and capacity building projects, providing scholarships, and child healthcare programs, JRF serves as a major realm within which public services are channeled to the community. At the same time, by providing state authorities with

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[28] Interview with A., inhabitant of the Jabl Z area, 21.04.2009.
[29] Interview with a notable of Manara, May 2008.

information about the community it contributes to the efforts of regaining control over space.

To sum up, by excluding some local leaders who at the same time are formally integrated in the work of the state camp improvement committee, the district mayor not only challenges the authority of non-state forces; his practices, at times, even clash with those of other parts of the state who have a co-operational relationship with those excluded local leaders. At other times his practices and those of non-state actors intermesh and reinforce each other. The district mayor has resorted to the tactic of using local figures of power and influence, nongovernmental organizations and other social forces to extend state control over the Palestinian camp. In a similar vein, the establishment of new security structures like the Security Committee (*Majlis Al-Amen Al-Mahali*) and the Community Police (*Al-'Amen Al-Wiqa'i*) should be located in the efforts of national state authorities to (re)gain control over spaces. While the former is an institutionalized structure providing the integrated local leaders with an identity and hence contributing to their enhanced status within their communities, the latter is a loose-knit cooperation with volunteers who act as preventive agents in their districts.

These practices of the state create new spaces of interaction and meetings which may be thought of as a way of incorporating local forces. However, de Certau cautions us to pay attention to deceitful tactics of people who manipulate the order of things for their own needs. He stresses that "styles of action intervene in a field which regulates them at a first level (here the security structures and social stability) […], but they introduce into it a way of turning it to their own advantage that obeys other rules and constitutes something like a second level interwoven into the first" (de Certeau, 1984: 30). In other words, those integrated local figures turn the constraints of the imposed order in ways that allow them to appropriate space and to draw "unexpected results" (ibid: 30) out of it – results that leave their mark on everyday social relations. These conflicting and confrontational, while at the same time cooperative, interactions impact on the internal governance within social spaces since they create new alliances and confrontations and hence affect the recursive relationship between state and society.

8. Local Governance Practices in Ma'an City

The development of relations between the state and the society of Ma'an City[30] has to be explained in relation to the interplay between historic socio-spatial factors at the micro level and political determinants at the macro level.

The present social and spatial structure of Ma'an City developed historically along the trade routes between the Hijjaz and the former *Bilad Sham*. While the caravans arriving from Damascus settled down in the northern neighborhoods of Ma'an City (*Ma'an Al-Shamiyeh)*, the ones that travelled from Egypt (*Masr*) to Hijjaz found domicile in the southern part of Ma'an City (*Ma'an Al-Hijjaziya*). Along with this spatial settlement, two main tribal groups structure the social space of Ma'an City: those groups which are affiliated with the Hijazi-Masri tribes and those which are allied with the Shamiyeh tribes. The cooperations and unifications that evolved between different kin and sub-kin groups over the 19th and 20th centuries have lasted until modern times and form the basis of current local power patterns (Twissi, 2008: 12). These historical agreements have determined which tribe holds what political institutions, in particular the post of the mayor and seats in the Parliament and Senate. This historical determinant may offer clues that reveal the weakness of modern formal institutions in Ma'an City which could be characterized as having been infiltrated by informal modes of action. The fact that decisions about formal policies are taken within informal institutions reverse Migdal's argument of state in society into society in state, yet it confirms his argument of blurring boundaries between state and society. The historically developed socio-spatial structures affect how social forces interact and set the framework for actual power relations between different forces at the micro level, also in relation to the state.

Beyond these historical settings, an investigation of state-society relations has to consider political determinants of the macro level that culminated in recurrent violent clashes between the state and parts of the Ma'an City population. Ma'an City's legacy of clashes with state forces

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[30] The author is aware of the fact the Ma'an City and its inhabitants do not form a homogenous block. Based on the historical development of the town and the violent experiences made with the state, a collective self has developed among people of Ma'an. Therefore, this paper uses the term Ma'an society to indicate a shared developmental history, also in relation to state agencies.

started in April 1989. The refusal of the government to adjust fees as compensation for the suddenly increased fuel prices, which seriously eroded the income of lorry drivers in Ma'an City, prompted local residents to take to the streets. Following the violent uprising, the military invaded and the city was put under siege. In August 1996, after a sudden increase in bread prices, Ma'an City was again an arena of clashes that had started in Kerak and Tafileh and were put down by the armed forces. The riots of 1998 occurred following a lecture given by Layth Shbeilat as a demonstration against the American sanctions on Iraq. The death of a Ma'an City citizen during the demonstrations turned the event into a riot during which the municipality building and the telecommunications centre were burnt down. In October 2002, after the assassination of an American citizen in Amman, the Jordanian police sought to question militant Islamists from Ma'an City, amongst them the well-known M. Shalabi. While returning from Amman to Ma'an City, Shalabi fled from the police, exchanging fire with them while being supported by his armed followers who took control of a public hospital. Following this, the police moved into Ma'an City to apprehend M. Shalabi and the armed forces of the Salafy movement (CSS, 2002, ICG, 2003). The recurring clashes between the state and the population of Ma'an City have negatively affected their mutual relationship and strengthened the perception of the Ma'an City residents of being socioeconomically deprived and politically marginalized[31] and created an environment of mistrust and hostility[32]. Notwithstanding, with regard to state-society relations, it should be acknowledged that the ill-feeling is not against the Jordanian state as implied in Midgal's 'image of the state', but is mainly expressed towards those agencies with whom people have direct and daily contact, that is to say public security and governmental institutions like the municipality.[33]

Against the background of the historical formation of Ma'an City and related to the many confrontations with parts of the state, the *diwan* remains *the* institution around which "lives of the people of Ma'an and

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[31] A study conducted by the Centre for Strategic Studies of 2002 gives an overview about the socioeconomic situation of Ma'an City. See also Talal Ben Hussein University (2003).

[32] In several interviews in Ma'an City, my interview partners confirmed their belief in the legitimacy and appropriateness of their reactions as an answer to police brutality. In contrast, state authorities interpreted the clashes as intolerable lawlessness and defiance of authority. Interviews with local leaders in Ma'an City and journalists in Amman, May 2008/9.

[33] Interview with local leaders and residents in Ma'an City, May 2008/9.

their behavior centre" (CSS, 2002: 19-23) and hence within which the relation to the state is constructed. As Gubser (1984: 129) illustrated for Karak, important issues of concern are dealt with in important homes in the frame of tribal gatherings and not within formal channels. Historically, the *diwan* functioned as a space of autonomy within which kin members were protected from state interference. Before the 2002 military intervention, Islamists used this form of social self-organization to escape from state authorities. Even if the activities of the *Salafy* movement were not approved by the majority of Ma'an City citizens, tribes accepted the integration of individual *Salafy* members into their institutions. The strong feeling of solidarity, which Ibn Khaldun (1987) described as '*asabiya*,' a feeling of affection for and attachment to kin members who are of the same blood, facilitated the affiliation of these *Abna' Ashiira* (Sons of tribes) with different *diwans*.

The forms of present relations between citizens of Ma'an City and state actors – the way that power has been transformed into routine patterns of actions – have derived from the interactions and tension between the image people hold of the state and its everyday practices. In relation to the state, and similar to Jabl Z, contradictory and complementary practices guide the interactions between both parts. On the one hand, in particular during times of crisis, the *diwan* constituted a mode of opposing and thus gaining distance from state authorities. On the other hand, and at the same time, claims and demands concerning security and welfare services are addressed to the state. The same ambiguity obtains for state practices that, on the one hand, display authority by disbanding *diwans* in Ma'an City as a response to their direct oppositional practices. At the same time the state acknowledges the authority of local leaders and their institutions by delegating to them mediator functions and by using the *diwan* as a mechanism to redistribute state resources. How can this contradiction in the practices of state and non-state actors be resolved? In other words, what logic stands behind these practices? The social control that local leaders exercise enables them to make demands upon the state. In the aftermath of 1989, by acknowledging their mutual dependency, state actors started to mandate (or co-opt) locally influential and powerful leaders – amongst them for instance the well-known former MP and Minister *Tawfiq Krishan* – as auxiliaries of the state so as to distribute welfare services to their own community. The services offered included employment within the public administration and the security apparatus, grants for education and health treatment.[34] Similar manipulative

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[34] Interview with local leaders in Ma'an City, May 2009.

practices were deployed after the events of November 2002 when the state called for recruitment for the security apparatus. Despite the expressed antipathy against the security apparatus, thousands of young men from Ma'an City were attracted as recruits for the security service and the military (ICG, 2003). In practice, several local leaders used the authority offered to capture parts of the state by having themselves or their kin members placed in official state positions. This in return ensured them the allocation of resources according to their own rules. These forms of state in society and society in state activities present complex instances of how state resources impact on state-society relations in ways that have strengthened local informal institutions at the state's expense, for example when job vacancies at the University in Ma'an City are decided within informal frameworks, as an interview partner explained:

> "The father of XY [who is responsible for new job vacancies] is a Sheikh. When people address his father and ask for jobs XY is obliged by his father to find a job for those people because he gave his word. Therefore we have the problem that we announce one vacancy, but employ five people." [35]

By ignoring or tolerating the fact that the implementation of state policies is determined within informal institutions, the state is not extending its authority, but undermining and thus reducing it. The same applies to the fact that, in contrast to Jabl Z where state authority is challenged by illegal practices on an individual level, the inhabitants of Ma'an City defy state authority collectively through direct and open civil disobedience (CSS 2002: 28). These practices are interlinked with their perception of the state as being merely present in Ma'an City.[36] Their relation to the state is one of overt resistance which some local leaders have sought to transform or appropriate for their own purposes. Through the reproduction of informal and illegal practices within formal realms the state is undermined, hemmed and thus transformed by these internal forces.

However, society is also transformed by the state. As Migdal observes, social organizations, and the structure of society as a whole, are molded by the opportunities and impediments that the state presents, just as they are affected by other social organizations (Migdal, 2001: 54). Through

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[35] Interview with a professor of the Talal Ben Hussein University in Ma'an City, May 2009.
[36] Interview with the mayor of Ma'an City, May 2008.

the outsourcing of social welfare to the private sector and to NGOs in combination with the neoliberal policies of the last decades, the state contributed to the emergence of new sub-elites that interact and increasingly contend with local leaders. Similar to the tendencies in Jabl Z, these new figures are well educated, economically and professionally successful, and have access to nongovernmental organizations. These emerging sub-elites exercise significant power over fellow kin and thus have enhanced social status. Drawing on already accumulated economic or social capital and alternative division of kinship in the form of sub-tribes, these new elites seek to establish their own power networks. By contributing "resources for organizational start-up and sustenance, they accumulate […] electoral possibilities (Baylouny, 2006: 353). In contrast to Jabl Z, in a tribal context decisions about electoral support during elections[37] start in the tribal guesthouses (*Maddafa*).[38] Due to the socio-spatial structures of Ma'an City, the mayor is a 'product' of tribal coalitions, thus he is both a servant of the tribe and at the same time a state technocrat. In contrast to Jabl Z where the mayor deploys policing strategies to enter the Palestinian camp, the socio-political context of Ma'an City would not allow such practices. To ensure electoral allegiance, the mayor of Ma'an City as a state actor interacts with his constituency within informal institutions. These instances of intermeshing practices of state and non-state actors (in this case one individual) make it difficult to locate the demarcation between the state and other parts of society and confirm the fluidity of boundaries between them. In the same vein, practices of state-tolerated criminals shape local patterns of power. These criminal brokers (drug and weapon smugglers) who are simultaneously embedded in the socio-spatial structure of Ma'an City and financially disengaged from state resources play an ambivalent role within Ma'an society. They have come to function as a new provider of security within Ma'an City. In the words of a citizen:

> "How can I live in a society where drug dealers are respected? […] my car was stolen in front of my house. In fact, it is the duty of the police to get my car back. […]. But reality is different. They tell you go to Mr. XY, who is a well-known drug dealer in Ma'an, and he will bring you your car back. I

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[37] In an interview with the mayor of Ma'an he told me that it was his tribe that decided that he run for election due to his educational level and professional experiences.

[38] Interview with H., Professor for Anthropology at the Yarmouk University Irbid, April 2009

went there and paid 200 JD and I got my car back within one day. These are the people who have power. These are the people who are governing us."[39]

This narrative confirms what Ellis has stated for apartheid South Africa where "some explicitly criminal gangs have developed close relations with the security forces" (Ellis, 1999: 61-62). For the apartheid South African case, he singled out that this has "produced within some sections of the security forces a highly ambiguous attitude towards certain types of crime (ibid: 61-62)." Besides intimate connections to the security realm, these criminal brokers – mainly due to their economic capital – are also embedded in the social structure through their participation in the *diwans* and social events. As a citizen of Ma'an City states:

> "It is right that they [criminal brokers] possess authority and it is also right that some security forces are affiliated with them, but you know we [the society] have made this '*Drug Shujukh*'. By allowing them to participate in our *Diwan* and our social life, we legitimated their actions."[40]

The tolerance of criminal activities by parts of the state and the acceptance by society has ascribed these local figures an ambivalent role in shaping local patterns of power. By cultivating links with local state and non-state authorities, for instance by inviting locally high ranking state officials and local leaders to banquets, these brokers introduce a criminal category into local governance practices. This situation, associated with contemporary constraints of neoliberal politics at the macro level, points towards the formation of new political claims over the space of Ma'an City. Despite this development, in Ma'an City informal practices backed by formal institutions and state resources remain the main references for the day-to-day life of the population.

Conclusion

In line with Migdal's argument, this paper intended to elaborate on the question of how power struggles between different forces that interact and engage at the local level affect the transformation of the state from below. Understanding how societies persist and change must, as Migdal (2001: 48)

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[39] Interview with a citizen of Ma'an City, May 2009.
[40] Interview with Sheikh M. from Ma'an City, May 2009.

puts it, start with the formal and informal organizations that exercise social control in an environment of struggle for power. By elaborating on the everyday practices of actors the paper aimed at gaining an understanding of the transformative impact they may have on local governance patterns and state-society relations. The empirical data presented in this paper highlighted the diversity of the local field that is structured by a system of linkages, negotiations, conflict, collaborations, and co-optations. These practices may diminish or impair state authority and challenge the existing logic of social power hierarchies. The paper discussed the functioning of local governance practices in Jabl Z and in Ma'an City against the backdrop of the state's retreat from the provision of social welfare. The streamlining of the former social contract implies a transformation of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled.

The comparison of Jabl Z and Ma'an City provides insights into the tactics developed by different actors to turn the changing micro and macro framework to their own ends. In Jabl Z as well as in Ma'an City, the state remains the main reference point for social welfare services. While inhabitants of Jabl Z acknowledge to a certain degree the inability of the state, Ma'an residents insist on the unwillingness of the state to protect its citizens. In Jabl Z as well as in Ma'an City, we observe transformative dynamics which defy existing patterns of power and thus are reshaping state-society relations. While in Jabl Z these dynamics are partially enforced by locally interacting state actors by excluding former local leaders and privileging new ones and by contesting the influence of the Islamists, in Ma'an City there seems to be an internal dynamic from within the social hierarchy that is influencing state-society relations. These dynamics are advanced by an emerging economic and socially strong sub-elite which competes with former local leaders and criminal brokers in the process of local governance. These practices of contestation and opposition enforced by the impact of neoliberal developments changed kin solidarities and tribal organization in the sense that former local leaders who are dependent on state resources can no longer afford access to necessary resources. At the same time, by deploying practices of delegating authority for the provision of public services to local leaders, the state continuously manipulates social order and thus undermines its own authority. The same applies to the state's acknowledgment of the historically developed political agreements between tribes with which the state supports the continuous infiltration of formal institutions by informal practices. In so doing, the state becomes part of the reconstruction and reinvention of itself from below. Furthermore, while in Jabl Z the demand for scarce public resources is countered by individual

concessions and a tendency of policing practices, in Ma'an City the logic of acquiescence and social stability against access to state resource through kin membership still seems to be the dominant mechanism to reallocate resources.

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