ABSTRACT

The emergence of recent global concepts and phenomena such as globalization, urbanization, liberalization of world economies and democratization resulted in greater emphasis on and new challenges facing cities and towns. Therefore, concepts and approaches concerning urban planning have been influenced. New planning approaches that revolve around strategic and participatory planning concepts have emerged while the old ones have vanished.

The Palestinian Territory has been also influenced by the global effects of such changes. In addition to its unique challenges as a result of the Israeli occupation; new social, economical, and environmental challenges have emerged and/or increased. Despite that, the Palestinian approach to urban planning has remained unchanged and the heritage of former colonial regimes has been influencing the planning of Palestinian cities and towns.

Following the municipal elections of 2005, several Palestinian municipal governments have tried new approaches to plan their cities and towns. Most of these planning initiatives have been referred to as strategic or/and development plans. This research explores Ramallah-Al-Bireh-Beitunia, Salfeet, Beita, and Maithalon municipalities' experience in practicing strategic planning.

This research discusses and compares the different planning approaches that have been followed by different case studies through a comparative analysis approach. It explores the reasons behind initiating these planning processes, the planning approach, the scope of plans, the outputs of plans, and the linkages with physical/spatial plans. It also looks at the attempts of institutionalizing these processes as well as the established mechanisms for implementing and monitoring such plans.

The research concludes by referring to the key learning issues that are critical for practicing strategic planning at the local Palestinian municipal level and suggests a skeleton approach for a better preparation of strategic plans in Palestinian cities and towns.