

STAYING ON THE MAP: AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES OF AMALGAMATION OF PALESTINIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE WEST BANK

By

Majida Awashreh

MSc, Development Studies, University of London, UK

MPhil, English Language and Literature, University of Bergen, Norway

BA, English Language and Literature, Bir Zeit University, Palestine

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**Department of Geography, Environment and Population
School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Arts
The University of Adelaide**

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List of Acronyms

APLA	Association of Palestinian Authorities
CEC	Central Elections Commission
JSCs	Joint Service Councils
LGU	Local Government Unit
MDLF	Municipal Development and Lending Fund
MOLG	Ministry of Local Government
MOPAD	Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development
NIS	New Israeli Shekel
OCHA	United Nations Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Abstract

Since 2010, a large-scale consolidation policy has been enforced in Palestine motivated by building capacity of small Palestinian local governments and improving service delivery in West Bank rural areas. Theoretical justifications for consolidation anticipate increased efficiency in local government performance based on assumptions of economies of scale resulting from increasing population size of local governments. Arguments against consolidation point to a negative relationship between population size and local democracy and participation. Both theoretical assumptions have not been empirically proven. A large body of literature that investigated outcomes of consolidation has found mixed results for local government efficiency, organisational capacity and democratic government.

This thesis uses a mixed method approach to analyse immediate outcomes of Palestinian consolidations against a control sample of non-consolidated units. Due to the unavailability of data on performance prior to consolidation, the methodology included comparative analysis with a sample of consolidations that occurred in the last decade. This thesis argues that internal and external dimensions of local government capacity need to be addressed, particularly financial resources, functional mandate, jurisdictional integrity and democratic government. The thesis had three research hypotheses. Firstly, given the policy objectives, improvements in human and material resources, structure and service were anticipated. Secondly, local democracy and participation was expected to decrease after consolidation due to the decline in the number of councillors, strong traditional ties to local communities and territorial fragmentation of population centres. The third hypothesis was that consolidated LGUs are unlikely to exercise full control over territorial jurisdictions and populations due to geopolitical fragmentation.

Findings show that consolidation has mixed results on institutional capacity, negative effects on political representation and democracy and no effect on territorial defragmentation. Outcomes varied significantly between individual LGUs of the same population size. Citizens were most satisfied with improvement in local infrastructure and least satisfied with disruption to social relationships between communities and community representation within elected councils. Results show that post-consolidation capacity is dependent on pre-consolidation capacity of constituencies, state support of consolidation policy, extent of public acceptance of consolidated governments and other reform policies implemented concurrently with consolidation. Public policies focusing on debt

reduction and utility reforms have more serious impacts than consolidation on local government resources, functions and sustainability potential.

The findings of this study have implications on future local government reform. Structural reforms need to be governed by specific legislation regarding boundary delimitation which provides opportunities for public participation throughout the policy process. Building capacity of local government also necessitates a revision of division of functional roles and fiscal responsibilities between government tiers in addition to resolution of major territorial issues.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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SIGNED Majida Awashreh DATE: March 05,2016

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