



Managing urban growth in the city of Amman, Jordan

Jamal Ahmad Alnsour

Al-Balqa Applied University, Salt, P.O. 19117, Jordan



ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 16 December 2014
 Received in revised form 19 July 2015
 Accepted 22 August 2015
 Available online 16 September 2015

Keywords:

Urban management
 Urban growth
 Urban planning
 Amman
 Jordan

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to examine the practices used to manage urban growth, based on Amman, the capital city of Jordan. A qualitative method, employing in-depth face to face interviews with experts from the urban management sector was adopted to meet the research objectives. This study also utilizes extensive national and international literature to present the evolution of urban growth from 1918 to the present time, and the challenges which were faced. Findings reveal that there have been several positive transformations in the management of urban growth, by means of institutions, laws, regulations, plans and actions which have been instituted during this period. Taken together, these transformations have worked to achieve relatively sustainable development, and constituted an important framework for managing urban growth and development. Nevertheless, several gaps must be taken into account, such as the lack of policies for urban design, the lack of evaluation of the policies that do exist, the extent of appropriateness of these policies in terms of local income, the lack of public participation, and finally, institutional challenges in the fields of human, financial and technological resources. Recommendations for future action which would improve the performance of growth management, are proposed at the end of the paper.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Cities are a complex mixture of physical and human formations which interact with each other by diverse social, economic, environmental and cultural factors. This interaction does not operate in a vacuum; rather it is subject to institutional frameworks, laws, resources and social influences. At present, one of the major obstacles facing the public sector in many developing countries is its ability to improve quality of life, provide effective urban services, and raise living standards under severe challenges of rapid urban growth (Zhao, Lü, & Woltjer, 2009). For these reasons, managing urban growth is usually achieved by means of policy instruments such as master plans, development plans, urban boundaries, zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, infrastructure investment, property taxes and development fees. Such policy tools are designed to coordinate the timing and location of urban growth and development, with the aim of creating suitable urban centers (McGill, 1998; Porter, 1997; Richardson, 1993; Werna, 1998).

The term “growth management” is often used to describe the policies and regulations which control and guide urban growth and development (Garba, 2004; Rakodi, 2001; Wong et al., 2006). Urban growth management can be defined as a set of actions to control the location, quality, scale, rate, and timing of development (David & Brower, 1979; Pollock, 2008; Porter, 1997; Richardson, 1993; Schulz & Kasen, 1984). In most countries, these actions are carried out at local, regional and national levels. By exploring growth at these levels it is possible to identify

and understand the various impacts of urban growth and the way it can be managed through political tools, actions and regulation.

The involvement of local communities through participation in the preparation of detailed master plans may offer opportunities for municipal boards and politicians to make locally appropriate decisions about development, particularly when short-term action is required. Managing urban growth at the local level requires decentralization so that the decision making process is transparent and accountable. The management of urban growth at a regional level tends to support the local level by means of advisory policies. The basic function of regional authorities is to facilitate collaboration and coordination between national, regional and local organizations. Regional plans deal with long-term issues in the context of creating an equilibrium between the present and future needs of an urban population. At the national level, laws pertaining to urban growth are more guided in terms of policies than regional and local levels, in order to ensure that both regional and local levels then have the ability to produce their own systems in order to manage urban growth effectively.

The responsiveness of urban organizations with reference to policy tools is often influenced by two factors. Firstly, the extent of their effectiveness in terms of available resources (i.e. human, financial and technological), autonomy, legal framework, relations with individuals and the private sector, coordination among local agencies, and utilizing best practice (Alnsour, 2014; Alnsour & Meaton, 2014; Garba, 2004; McGill, 1998; Rakodi, 1991, 2001; Richardson, 1993; Wong et al., 2006) and secondly, the extent of their ability to understand urban growth itself. Urban growth as a concentration of population and construction over time does not occur in isolation. It is, rather, associated

E-mail address: Jamal.alsour@bau.edu.jo.

with driving forces (i.e. demographical and social-economic motives); actors (i.e. managers, developers, planners, householders, etc.); process (i.e. the size of spatial expansion over time) and pattern, which is the final output of growth, and which may be regular or irregular. These elements must be taken into account in order to understand urban growth and to produce effective policy tools. However, a further broad range of issues are directly related to growth management policies, including land use, landscape, housing, transport, environment, services, quality of life and heritage planning. Therefore, growth management tools can facilitate and enhance the dynamics of sustainable development environmentally, economically, socially and culturally. Evaluating practical management applications, as a primary objective for most cities of the world, is useful to manage urban growth effectively (Blair, 2001).

Despite the fact that Jordan suffers from an acute lack of natural resources particularly water and energy, it has borne the brunt of successive waves of refugee migration, from Palestine, Iraq and Syria (Alnsour & Meaton, 2014). Today, the estimated population is about 7 million and the rate of urbanization has increased from 44% in 1961 to 83.6% in 2013 (Department of Statistics, 2013). This increase has resulted in augmenting the number of urban centers, with a concurrent contraction of the rural population. It has also resulted in a serious increase in the rate of inflation in urban centers, due to the inability of existing services to accommodate the increase in population and housing. In the period between 1970 and 1990, urban centers in Jordan grew at a rate of 4.1% (Department of Statistics, 1991), higher than that in Asia's largest cities, which grew at 3% per annum in the corresponding period (Ahmad, Mayo, Bajwa, Rahman, & Mirza, 2013, p.546). This continuous urbanization and influx of refugees has created numerous challenges, such as informal settlements, overcrowding, degradation of agricultural land, low quality urban services, road congestion and a lack of green space (Alnsour, 2014; Meaton & Alnsour, 2012). The continuous changes and challenges in Jordan justify the need to examine the management of urban growth, so that corrective policies and practices can be put into place in order to deal with urban change quickly and successfully. Evaluation of urban growth management can enhance the ability of urban organizations to better respond to the burdens of rapid urban growth.

A review of the current literature for urban management emphasizes the importance of managing urban growth to create sustainable urban development. Despite this emphasis and the importance of it for planning authorities and for residents, this topic has been relatively overlooked (Alnsour, 2014; Bengeston et al., 2004; Chakrabarty, 1998, 2001; Garba, 2004; McGill, 1998; Porter, 1997; Rakodi, 1991, 2001; Richardson, 1993; Werna, 1998; Wong et al., 2006; Zhao et al., 2009). Governments are clearly concerned with ensuring the provision of proper infrastructure and a sustainable environment, and a better understanding of the management of urban growth can improve the available knowledge regarding how to deal with growth challenges, and how to produce more effective urban policies. Consequently the performance of urban organizations may be enhanced in developing countries, and if the empirical findings discussed in this paper are studied and inaugurated into current best practice, urban centers in Jordan may benefit.

2. Methodology and the study area

A qualitative approach was identified as an appropriate method to meet the research objectives. In-depth, face-to-face interviews were undertaken with experts in the urban management sector. The aim was to undertake 45 interviews however, several of the selected experts were unable to participate and just 28 interviews were conducted. In Jordan, there are four organizations concerned with urban policy and planning. These include Greater Amman Municipality, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, and Housing and Urban Development Corporation. Hence, interviewees were selected from these organizations. The choice of interviewees is

justified on the basis of their work settings (i.e. Amman), years of experience (over 15 years), job titles (Head of Department, Manager, Mayor, General Secretary, Minister), and education level (Bachelor degree or more). Table 1 presents the breakdown of interviewees.

The paper endeavors to present the historic evolution of urban growth and development in Jordan, particularly the historic evolution of urban growth and development in Amman. Based on Al Rawashdeh and Saleh's (2006) analysis of the available data the period of study has been divided into four phases: the introduction phase from 1918 to 1953; the growth phase from 1953 to 1983; the rapid growth phase between 1983 and 1996, and the maturity phase from 1996 to the present. This paper also presents urban challenges and reports on changes to policy instruments during each phase.

Amman, the capital city of Jordan (Fig. 1), was adopted as a study area because it is the biggest Jordanian city in terms of population, housing, services and infrastructure, which will enhance and enrich the research results. The following section will present urban expansion and population growth of Amman in detail.

3. Managing urban growth in Amman

This section deals with the four phases of historic urban growth and development, and considers the evolution of urban policies.

3.1. The introduction phase, 1918 to 1953

In 1918, Amman's population was less than 5,000 inhabitants, with an urban area estimated at 0.321 km² (Al Rawashdeh & Saleh, 2006, p.214) (see Fig. 2). In 1921, Amman became the capital of the new state of Transjordan. Its population was estimated at 10,500 in 1930 and 45,000 in the early 1940's, with the city extending over an area of some 2.5 km² by 1947 (Potter, Darmame, Barham, & Nortcliff, 2009, p.118). In 1948, urban expansion increased to 4.123 km², due to the first Palestinian refugee influx, which represents an increase of 1.284% (Al Rawashdeh & Saleh, 2006, p.214). The population then climbed to 104,000 inhabitants in the early 1950's (see Fig. 2). Unfortunately, urban growth was accompanied by a lack of natural resources and hard economic conditions. Potter et al. (2009) argue that the growth of Amman has taken place in parallel with the construction of the state. Early urban growth took place primarily in the main agricultural areas in the valley regions, the start of the degradation of agricultural land. Throughout this period, two principal challenges emerged: the first concerned urban management agencies ability to provide social and physical services for a substantially growing population, in particular the Palestinian refugees and the second concerned the fledgling city's ability to control growth whilst ensuring it did not encroach on agricultural land.

Planning interventions were undertaken to construct refugee camps with assistance from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) (Alnsour & Meaton, 2014). During this period, two camps were constructed in Amman, namely the Al Hussein Camp in the north of the city and the Al Wehdat Camp in the south (Potter et al. 2009). The majority of the interviewees argue that these camps would later have serious consequences for the growth of

Table 1
Profile of interviewees.

Urban organizations	Target number of interviewees	Actual number of interviewees
Greater Amman Municipality	16	11
Ministry of Municipal Affairs	12	06
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation	10	06
Housing and Urban Development Corporation	07	05
Total	45	28

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1008206>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1008206>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)