**Book**

**Innovations for Land Management, Governance, and Land Rights for Sustainable Urban Transitions: The Middle Eastern Perspectives**

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**Book Chapter**

***Land*** ***Governance and Urban Development Under Political Instability Conditions in Palestine: Challenges and Potentials***

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Palestine is under Israeli occupation, which controls most of its land, natural resources, and borders. Consequently, the process of land governance in Palestine is both complex and exceptional at the global level, given its historical, geographical, and political circumstances. Land in Palestine is at the core of the conflict, as Israeli policies and practices in the Palestinian territories aim to control the land and natural resources, displacing its indigenous population from their land. On the other hand, Palestinians aim to resist these occupation policies, stay on their land, and achieve the sustainable development goals even under conditions of political instability. Understanding the relationship between power dynamics and land governance is therefore crucial for developing a sound and sustainable land governance system and achieving sustainable urban development in the occupied Palestinian territories. However, the relationship between land governance functions and urban development remains insufficiently clear. This study addresses two main objectives: first, to identify the key challenges facing the land governance system in Palestine; and second, to explore how these challenges impact urban development. To achieve these objectives, primary and secondary data were collected and analyzed using qualitative research methods. The study concludes that weak land governance in Palestine has significantly hindered urban development plans, strategies, and initiatives. In addition, Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 has posed a serious and significant threat to the advancement of the land governance system and the achievement of sustainable urban development. Accordingly, we build a logical framework for understanding the key challenges to enhancing the role of land governance in supporting and developing sustainable urban development in Palestine.

In this context, two main environments of actors influencing the "game" of land use and governance in Palestine can be identified: the external environment and the internal environment. The primary actor in the external environment is the Israeli occupation, which makes every effort to impose a *fait accompli* on the ground to prevent any possibility of establishing an independent Palestinian state that controls its own land, resources, and borders. The secondary actor in the external environment consists of international organizations involved in land governance and urban development. These non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focus on supporting the Palestinian government and civil society institutions to develop the land governance sector, but their agendas sometimes conflict with the needs and requirements of the Palestinians.

As for the internal environment, there is a strong relationship between landowners, investors, and some informal community forces aiming to maximize their economic gains by aligning their interests, often at the expense of achieving the sustainable development goals, particularly sustainable urban development. These actors profit from the weaknesses in land laws, the lack of a unified land classification system, the absence of a standard land valuation system, and the fact that more than 50% of Palestinian land in the West Bank lacks official registration. Additionally, the weak control that the Palestinian government has over the land sector and the absence of a unified institutional framework to regulate land governance activities lead to overlap in responsibilities among Palestinian institutions and challenges in sharing land-related information. This situation gives the general impression that these active forces have greater influence over the land governance sector than the Palestinian government itself in the context of the land use game in Palestine.

It is worth noting that the Palestinian government is making significant efforts to reform and develop the land management sector, acting as a key player and influencer in this "game." However, its efforts are unfortunately undermined by the dynamics of power and influence in both the external and internal environments. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Palestinian government prioritize addressing the internal challenges within the land governance context to support urban development, while also considering the external factors. To improve the land sector in Palestine, it is essential to establish a flexible and robust strategy, which requires genuine political will. To that end, the government should activate Law No. 6 of 2010, which calls for the establishment of the Palestinian National Land Council. This council should define the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in land governance, develop a national strategy for land governance, and oversee all land governance processes, including the registration of all lands, the amendment of land laws and urban planning regulations, and land use planning and development projects. The reform and development of the land governance system are the foundational steps needed to effectively support sustainable urban development under the current conditions of political instability in Palestine.

Access the book chapter [here](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-59671-1_4?fbclid=IwY2xjawEmEwZleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHWhfk7cWXoz8TBc5iMgcljR-9q4a0WzA9gqDkYoGjhiDn98UE5F7oqdrIA_aem_6BB2dEE-gLNCD7q1vAtyZg#citeas).

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