



Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities (FPSH)

Department of Social Sciences

IDEES Research Laboratory

“...municipal space and sustainable development” 2014 - 2016

Presentation

The IDEES Laboratory was established in 2009 and is presided over by Mrs. Mirna Abboud Mzawak, Head of the Department of Social Sciences at the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities. This physical, mental and social space is devoted to scientific and technical experiments as well as targeted professional studies. The Laboratory fosters a working attitude emanating from real problems encountered in the social life in Lebanon.

The Laboratory has gathered a core of researchers working in the different domains and fields of social sciences; in this case, political sociology, urban and rural sociology, environmental sociology, sociology of commitment, conflicts, development, communication, peace, etc.

Rationale

IDEES suggests *“...municipal space and sustainable development”* as the main research subject for 2014-2016.

At the beginning of the XXI century, the concept of sustainable development, which became an indispensable concept and strategic map for each action aimed at realizing social, economic, ecological and environmental development, constitutes the central issue of the IDEES research laboratory during the two years 2014-2016. The actions of IDEES are based on the components of sustainable development; economic progress, social justice and environment conservation. As a result, four working axis will be related to the research program.

In Lebanon, there are 36 municipality federations and around 944 municipalities, that have a municipal council, distributed across the whole country. The first article of the legislative decree no. 118, issued on June 30, 1977, stipulated the following: “A municipality is a local administration applying, within the borders of its territories, the attributes given to it by virtue of the law. It has a moral personality, financial independence and the power to self-manage its local

interests". Moreover, in articles 49 and 50, which tackle the subjects of municipal finances, the law in question evokes prerogatives of the municipality and displays the wide spectrum of planning, decision-making, management and actions that can take place in the municipal space. The municipality is simultaneously actor and local partner on social, cultural, town planning, sanitary and educational levels. However, foreign policies and national defense are excluded from its prerogatives.

It is noteworthy that municipal activities focus on fields related to lighting, public works, granting licenses to citizens, cleaning projects (sanitation, roadworks and sewage), suppression of infringements, derogations and protection of private properties. This does not mean that projects in the fields of education, sports, culture, tourism, economics and society are excluded. The "classic municipality work" goes beyond the share of sustainable development which it is bound to undertake in terms of structural and financial priorities.

The research project suggested by IDEES aims at creating a futuristic vision for municipal action, related to sustainable development in Lebanon and based on a thorough knowledge of reality. For this purpose, IDEES launched a field of research and reflection through conceptual demarcation, quantitative and qualitative exploration and monographs, etc.

Overview of the Baladiyyat Project

The research and research/actions work of the IDEES Laboratory presided by Ms. Mirna Abboud Mzawak, Head of the Department of Social Sciences at the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities, within the framework of the Baladiyyat project, is based on a policy of interfaculty and interdepartmental partnership at USEK, and a reflexive and active collaboration with ministerial bodies and NGOs involved in municipal activities.

Thus, IDEES Laboratory conducts reflections, research actions and pilot projects relying on a triptych basis that consists of the following areas: USEK, municipal spaces and NGOs, which can be supported by ministerial bodies, embassies of Arab and Western countries, and international organizations, etc.

Municipalities that have signed a bilateral cooperation agreement with USEK include the following: Jounieh, Adma, Jeita, Shaile, Aintoura, Ain el Rihani, Ballouneh, Rayfoun, Kleiat, Faytroun, Bekkatet Achkout, Hrajel, Mayrouba, Daroun, Okaibe, Safra, Yahchouch, Jouret el Termoss, Fidar, Ehmej, Bejje, Lehfed and Jbeil.

To date, IDEES Laboratory partners including embassies, international organizations and local NGOs are as follows: the Italian Embassy and the Italian Development Cooperation, the Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO, the French Institute (Jounieh), Moubadarat Association, Arc-en-ciel Association, Lebanese Association of Girl Guides, OFRA Association, Fair Trade Lebanon Association and Kunhadi Association.

Pilot projects

Laboratory work in the form of pilot projects and research actions are assigned the following objectives:

- Enhancing the existing experience and municipal actions in relation to sustainable

development, through events and publications at the end of the Laboratory work;

- Establishing pilot projects in partnership between USEK, municipalities, NGOs and concerned and involved ministries. These projects aim at progressively producing actions that raise awareness towards the importance of sustainable development as a cornerstone of any action, through the involvement of the University as a place of expertise in municipal areas;
- Encouraging interfaculty and interdepartmental partnership in the social performance of the University;
- Encouraging partnership between the University and NGOs that are active in social, socio-cultural and social health work areas;
- Encouraging and provide reflection and exchange spaces concerning the components of municipal action in terms of fundamental concepts, action areas and levels of municipal experience. This goes in line with the purpose of any research actions, including the production of specific knowledge, within the framework of the Baladiyyat project, on the issues regarding municipal practices related to sustainable development, with stakeholders and partners.

Titles of pilot projects:

- Integration of the community health dimension in municipal health clinics;
- Rehabilitation of the Lebanese cultural heritage;
- Integration of "sustainable agriculture and environmental protection" in municipalities.

Fields of Research

1st Axis Municipal Action and Sustainable Development: Theoretical and Conceptual Field

This axis suggests the clarification of the sustainable development concept and its operationalization within the Lebanese municipal space. Thereby, it takes into account the socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-environmental conjuncture of the above mentioned space. In addition, this axis develops dynamic ideas, theories and concepts related to: municipal action – sustainable development.

2nd Axis: Sustainable Development and Municipal Players

This axis is at the core of the analysis of profiles and dynamics of players. It aims at extracting: a) The perception of municipal players on the role of the municipality in the implementation of policies and mechanisms for sustainable development; b) The aspirations and needs of the local population related to current and future municipal actions and arrangements. Thus, this state of affairs can be drafted as awareness guidelines for different kind of players: elected municipality members, local population, public and private institutional partners, NGOs, international organizations, etc.

3rd Axis: Sustainable Development in Municipal Spaces in Lebanon: Pilot Projects and Experiences

Sustainable development also takes the form of major action fields with different contents. This is how this axis intends to present case studies of municipal experiences linked both directly and indirectly with the sustainable development dynamic. A workshop to exchange expertise will be organized and will enrich municipal spaces in Lebanon.

4th Axis: Past, Present and Future

IDEES does not intend to repeat research and strategic construction actions in the field of

municipal action related to sustainable development. However, it presents itself as the updater of policies, systems and action propositions, which are elaborated according to trend data. Axis 4 calls different municipal experts and players to present their strategic suggestions according to qualitative and quantitative existing data, as well as data produced by the IDEES Laboratory.

Day of Study and Forum for Municipal Action

Following this research, a day of study and a forum for municipal action will be organized simultaneously.

The day of study will consist of the presentation of the results of conducted research and drafted strategic proposals. Articles written by the researchers, members and partners of the IDEES Laboratory will be published.

The following parties will participate in the Forum for Municipal Action: municipalities with concrete projects, NGOs working in the field of municipal space, related ministries, universities with programs and subjects professionally linked to the municipal space, international organizations which have promoted municipal action in Lebanon, adapted space for books and documentation, firms with products and services that could be of interest to municipalities and municipal players.