Abstract:

Increasing water scarcity is an urgent global concern, but effective response is often developed locally. Historically, some regions are more prone to suffer from limited access to water than others. Compared to most other Middle Eastern regions, Iraqi Kurdistan was well positioned to access water sources. However, this has changed in recent years. Longer dry seasons with limited rainfall and therefore more frequent droughts, as well as a history of oppression, wars, occupation, and sanctions have led to mismanaged, poorly maintained or destroyed water systems. As a consequence Iraqi Kurdistan’s water sources have diminished drastically in the last five decades. Currently, Iraqi Kurdistan’s population does not only have to handle the negative effects of oppression, a protracted conflict and the aftermath of the fight against ISIS, but also the deficiency of its most precious natural resource and basic need. Limited access to clean water constitutes one cause for migration and displacement in Iraq and therefore adds the ongoing IDP movements. This research project assesses the presence and impact of coping mechanisms to access clean water in urban Iraqi Kurdistan. The assessment is based on an analysis of the population’s needs and vulnerabilities, with a particular focus on their traditional and religious behavior towards water utilization and the extent to which their coping mechanisms are influenced by the state’s political and economic system, and decades of continuous conflict.