The Aqaba Gulf and the city of Aqaba are extremely important for the future of Jordanian investment plans. It is the only port in Jordan. The coast of Aqaba is also important for the internal and external tourism because of natural resources, variety of landscape and historic sites in the area.

On the other side of the Gulf lies the new city of Eilat, established in few years with an ambitious development plans. Israel’s strategies aim at benefiting from regional potentialities (geophysical structure in the Gulf of Aqaba, Red Sea, Sina’a Desert, Wadi Rum Desert, Petra, etc.), establishing a modern mechanism of communication networks, publicizing and creating an attractive tourist city through an innovative system of infrastructure, particular urban spaces and advanced structures of tourist facilities.

The Jordanian strategy, by getting advantage from its own resources in view of the regional challenges and to compete with Eilat, declared the formation of Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA), in order to encourage foreign investments, elaborating a new Master Plan to the city. More than 7 billion dollars are invested in Aqaba in the last 7 years, used mainly in the development of tourist sectors. But the existing inefficient infrastructure of the city center, the shortage of public facilities and the degradation of popular residential quarters, laid shadows on the economic success of ASEZA.

Becoming a semi public institution in 2004, ASEZA’s active role in urban planning plays a contemporary direct beneficiary of the economic development, which created serious socio-economic conflict to deal with its own interest and the local community needs.

Jordanian Governors have to differentiate between Eilat as a free modern planed city and Aqaba with its history, environmental recourses, Arab tradition, stability and security, which Eilat misses. It is an important issue to compromise between the economic development of the region and the sustainability of the proper human and natural recourses.