"Toeing the Sectarian Line": Negotiations between the Spatial, Economic, and Ideological Consumption and Production of Counter-hegemonic Resistance for "Beirut Madinati"

By

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Abstract

This thesis begins by situating political sectarianism, in its complex systems of operation, as the historical hegemony around which Lebanese civil society congregates to make meaning of its own discord and create possibilities for alternative ideology. I depart from a Gramscian analysis of sectarianism as a historically and politically situated power-sharing mechanism wielded by Lebanese political elites to determine and perpetuate the economic, social, and ideological positions of their members. Within a dialectical framework of resisting sectarianism through political participation, I investigate the possibilities of emergence and conditions of resistance for counter-hegemonic movements in Lebanon. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Beirut, I mobilize the case study of the self-proclaimed counter-sectarian civil society movement "Beirut Madinati." In particular, by interrogating the inner-workings of "Beirut Madinati," I argue that this oppositional movement's ability to resist is hinged on its access to and consumption of a neoliberal sectarian space, political economy, and formal discourse, which led to its counter-hegemonic paralysis. Vis-à-vis the case of counter-sectarianism in Beirut, I conclude by emphasizing that instead of focusing solely on the conceptual ideological terrain of resistance, it is imperative to re-imagine scholarly and activism connotations of resistance to include its pragmatic materialization in its situated spatial context.

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Introduction

<u>Narrative Overview</u>

Beirut stunk in 2015. In the wake of Lebanon's wretched garbage crisis, the capital swelled with heaps of uncollected trash that spilled indiscriminately at every doorstep, quashing the sticky summer air with a politics that reeked. The Lebanese are accustomed to unearthing solutions from the rubble of unapologetic state neglect that has inundated the country since its independence, but this was a new kind of inefficiency—one that blocked the quotidian path of resilience that ordinary citizens have incessantly followed to survive a hegemonic state deprivation. Furious and saturated, people from all segments of Lebanese society filled the streets in dissent. From the series of protests that the garbage crisis birthed, emerged the civil society movement "Beirut Madinati," Arabic for "Beirut Is My City," which intended to bring together these wide-spread responses throughout Lebanese civil society into one organized, cohesive and inclusive counter-sectarian space.

As an effort to challenge sectarian hegemony through political participation, "Beirut Madinati" created an independent, self-proclaimed non-sectarian electoral campaign, and ran for municipal council in Beirut in May 2016. Garnering 40% of the popular vote, a shocking percentage for a volunteer-based organization that emerged amid heightened sectarian tension, "Beirut Madinati" became a "beacon of hope" for the politically non-affiliated Lebanese and a symbol for a long-awaited civil society mobilization that is desperate for change (Kairouz: Al-Nahar, May 2016). Although "Beirut Madinati" failed to win municipal elections, its "success" in bringing together different Lebanese groups to transcend sectarianism and "provoking a rebellion in local Lebanese politics" ought not be dismissed (Louthan 2017).

In light of this movement, this research emerges from the necessity to examine forms of resistance and their conditions of emergence as counter-hegemonic efforts in their particular contexts. Thus, instead of focusing on the perceived continuous "failure" of alternative civil

movements in Lebanon, this research is directed toward the possibility of their emerging contestation, as well as the political, ideological, and socioeconomic patterns with which they occupy and consume a particular space. The analysis of Beirut's urban space as the materialized site of ideological production and economic consumption is central to this thesis, as it contains the processes of meaning-making and historical complexities of counter-hegemonic access in Lebanon. By speaking to members of "Beirut Madinati," I attempted to understand their subjective experiences with confronting sectarian hegemony, and set out to uncover the possibilities of resisting sectarian hegemony from within its rigid yet fraying contours: What does it mean to resist sectarianism for these members of "Beirut Madinati"? What are the possibilities of emergence and conditions of resistance for counter-hegemonic movements, such as "Beirut Madinati," in modern Beirut? Following their emergence, how do alternative groups that act in opposition of the sectarian state consume and produce their positionality and spatial particularity in relation to an overarching neoliberal sectarian, elite, undemocratic and privatizing hegemony?

To that end, any analysis that concerns Lebanon is incomplete if it does not account for political sectarianism in its endeavor. Though volumes have been written about sectarianism's historical origin and contested definition (Makdisi 1996; Hottinger 1996; Weiss 2010), this research does not attempt to participate in these discourses, but rather directs its focus to practices of sectarianism in modern Beirut, to expose the banal eminence through which political sectarianism became indoctrinated as a collective consciousness and a "divine[1]" (Machiavelli 1998) discourse. I depart from Bassel Salloukh's (2015) assertion that sectarianism is a "holistic political economic and ideological system that permeates almost every nook and cranny of Lebanese life" (p. 3). Bolstered by a cyclical clientelistic patronage network that derives the loyalty of Lebanese communities through sectarian incentives, in lieu

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[1] By "divine," I mean the omnipotence with which political sectarianism has managed to transcend and reincorporate historical conjunctures, instances of contestation, and threats of downfall.

of state welfare institutions, political sectarianism produces its subjects through neoliberal sectarian modes of "social provisioning" (Narotzky 2005) that are particular to the Lebanese case. When spearheading one's sectarian identity becomes the primary means to obtain fundamental services and reproduce one's material life (Power 2008), sectarianism trespasses from the symbolic, theological terrain into the field of socioeconomic and political power. Subsequently, the weakened post-war Lebanese state depends on this political, socioeconomic, and ideological stratification to thrive. Therefore, the discourse around sectarianism and its opposition in Lebanon is misunderstood if explored from a mono-disciplinary approach, as it cannot only emerge from a political ontology, nor can it be reduced to a socioeconomic agenda or a cultural phenomenon. This research situates sectarianism, in its complex systems of operation, as the historical hegemony (Gramsci 1971) around which "Beirut Madinati" congregated to construct a counter-hegemonic resistance and create possibilities for political alternatives to sectarianism.

In tandem, by positioning "Beirut Madinati" at the center of the study of counter-hegemonic possibilities in the Lebanese context, my aim is to actualize the theoretical underpinnings of this research by laying bare the complexities of counter-hegemonic access and operation in modern Beirut. To my awareness, to separate the resisting counter-hegemonic rhetoric from the mystified hegemonic order would be a reductionist and premature assumption. Although counter-hegemony suggests a deviation from the existing hegemonic structure and a complete transformation of its ideological and political space, it inevitably emerges from and thrives through hegemonic discourse, due to the inherent normalizing, mystified, and commonsensical processes of hegemony (Burawoy 2012). Therefore, I contend that in Beirut, there exists a conjuncture between sectarian hegemony and the counter-hegemonic "Beirut Madinati," even when the latter is directly in resistance to the former (Hall 1988). This marks the difficulty of sustaining a counter-sectarian movement, such as "Beirut Madinati," which

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does not risk reproducing sectarian ideology, discourse, and spaces. As will become palpable in the ensuing chapters, it is not enough to "celebrate the fragments" of a politics of difference, especially when this emphasis on celebrating difference often exacerbates the separation in a historically divided civil society (Russell 1997).

As a political movement opposing sectarianism but operating within the contours of an urban space dictated by its hegemony, "Beirut Madinati" could not snub the sectarian certainty it was attempting to disturb. Despite the movement's firm non-sectarian ideological declaration, to claim that there is a clear-cut stratification between sectarian and non-sectarian political discourse and its pragmatic sites of operation would be a reductionist oversimplification of the Lebanese reality. Then, for the purposes of this research, the question becomes how to account for this conjuncture between hegemony and counter-hegemony without reproducing the hegemonic discourses and practices from which this conjuncture emerges, or, according to Gramsci, how to weld the present with the future (Carroll 2006, citing Gramsci).

By way of contextualizing these theoretical postulations, Kingston (2013) declares that the Lebanese sectarian democracy model produces circuits of path-dependence (Mahoney 2000) that create powerful obstacles for change for the Lebanese civil society. I complement this assertion by extending the understanding of sectarian hegemony as a process which does not only focus on consent of the passive subaltern masses but also their struggle, which inevitably exists within and is shaped by the fields of force. Fundamentally, this work's aim is far from undermining "Beirut Madinati"'s vision or evaluating its "success" and "failure," but rather emphasizing, through an ethnographic account, sectarian hegemony as a "problematic, contested, political process of domination and struggle" (Roseberry 1994: 358), instead of a monolithic, impenetrable formation. Accordingly, if the sectarian system is pervasive and complex in its resilience, the weakness of the Lebanese state system prevents total domination over it, leaving space for what Kingston calls a "dispersed domination system" (p. 6). This gap

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allows for possibilities of agency in Lebanese civil society, often innovative and unpredictable, which penetrate the hegemonic order to assert their opposition to state ideology and their commitment to civil society, such as the case of "Beirut Madinati" developed in this research.

Consequently, "Beirut Madinati" was able to successfully introduce ideological "procedures that allow for the possibility of developing a common discourse" among different and unequal groups (Waterman 2000: 139). By comprising an inclusive participatory approach of counter-hegemonic efforts under the "all-affected principle" (Fraser 2005: 85), the movement focused on employing a "transformative politics" (Fraser 2005) that ensures the representation of every fraction of Beirut's urban society. However, ideology cannot function as an "ensemble of spiritual realities alone, but always has to be materialized in practice" (Mouffe, 1979b: 186). This, I argue, is where "Beirut Madinati"'s attempt to apply its conceptual ideology to sectarian spatial and political economic reality compromised its ability to resist. Through its inability to equally access sectarian spaces and its simultaneous inescapable consumption of sectarian economy, combined with its debilitating practice of "deliberative democracy" (Mouffe 2000) in an undemocratic and depoliticizing sectarian polity, "Beirut Madinati" faced a long series of refusals, threats, and obstacles that undermined its "war of position" (Gramsci 1971) and its ability to resist, leading to a counter-hegemonic paralysis.

Then, by dialectically considering sectarianism and "Beirut Madinati" as its counter-hegemony, this work arrives at the tension between counter-hegemonic ideological production and the materialization of this conceptual resistance in a setting dictated by a neoliberal sectarian hegemony. When "Beirut Madinati" is operating from within the sectarian political process, how is the nature of its resistance determined? And how is this determination measured in light of its paradoxical spatial, political economic, and formal ideological consumption and refusal of hegemonic space and discourse? In reflecting on the publics and counter-publics (Warner 2002) of sectarianism in a country where the citizen is given little choice between

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exclusionary politics or a "self-destructive gratification born of rebellion against the resurrected confessional social order" (Makdisi 1996: 13), this research considers the largely neglected realities of counter-sectarian resistance in Beirut, through exposing the inner-workings of "Beirut Madinati" and the spatial, political economic, as well as formal ideological roadblocks it encountered on its path to resisting sectarianism.

To provide an in-depth background for my reader and a chronology for my argument, I begin by extrapolating sectarianism's historical modes of governance and its practices in the everyday lives of Beirut's residents. I then dedicate a chapter for "Beirut Madinati"'s inception, operation, and ideological counter-hegemonic program, to demonstrate how this movement followed an informed and deliberate path for resisting sectarianism. The third chapter builds on combining the logics of its preceding chapters and exposing the sectarian obstacles, compromises, and negotiations that "Beirut Madinati" endured on its struggle to materialize its oppositional ideological program in modern Beirut.

Ultimately, what emerges from this study is an ethnographic framework of the hegemonic social and political economic reproduction engineered by sectarianism's total control over every junction of quotidian life in modern Beirut. Through the historically reproduced practices of sectarian clientelistic patronage networks, neoliberal hegemonic privatization, and a total, often violent surveillance over civil society, sectarianism quells the possibilities of counter-sectarian resistance in Beirut. The perpetual reproduction of these historical sectarian foundations works to reinforce particularistic sectarian agendas and practices of reciprocal sectarian claims-making. As a result, I argue that sectarianism's hegemony produces an intensifying de-politicization of political possibility that in turn de-mobilizes non-sectarian opposition, leading to the impermissibility of resistance and the impossibility of political practice under sectarianism.

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The undertaken case of "Beirut Madinati" embodies this conundrum—its inevitable consumption of sectarian space, political economy, and doctrines compromised its ability to resist sectarianism beyond the symbolic realm. Simultaneously, its inability to access a political economic space controlled by sectarianism's hegemonic privatization and violent paramilitary frontiers stifled the pragmatic actualization of "Beirut Madinati"'s exemplary ideological program, leading to its counter-hegemonic paralysis and reincorporation into sectarian hegemony. By tracking the inception and operation of the counter-sectarian movement "Beirut Madinati," I demonstrate that the consumption of sectarian space and its political economy, paired with the necessity to abide by sectarianism's formal liberal-democratic system and the inability to confront sectarian paramilitary violence, positions sectarianism at an even sturdier hegemonic position. Especially when the political battle renders unsuccessful, these prerequisites to resistance through political participation, allow sectarian hegemony to reincorporate these instances of struggle and resistance into its hegemonic life-cycle to present itself as more powerful.

Research Specificities

In tandem with the theoretical analysis that is involved in this thesis, I gathered information about the movement "Beirut Madinati" by conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Beirut during the month of April 2018. This fieldwork included five in-person, semi-structured interviews with distinct members of "Beirut Madinati," including two volunteers, one organizer, a crowd-funding manager, and a founding member. I presented each of my research partners with the same set of questions (Appendix B). In two instances, I followed up with my informants over phone conversations to clarify their responses and locate missing narrative links. I assigned each research partner a pseudonym at the beginning of the project and refrained from referring to their real name in my notes or written findings. My informants spoke mostly Arabic but were all fluent in English, and thus occasionally used English words and phrases to

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state their claims. I translated these interviews into English, and attempted, to the best of my ability, to maintain their accuracy and preserve their literal meaning.

In addition to interviewing, I conducted a content-analysis of documented media accounts with representatives of "Beirut Madinati," and reviewed the movement's coverage through newspapers, social, and visual media. Since media outlets in Lebanon have certain political alliances, and thus censor information due to their affiliations, I reviewed numerous sources in order to present a more accurate depiction of the movement's representation, while simultaneously questioning what is "accurate," and according to whom. The significance of this approach is to achieve a multi-layered perspective, across local contexts and institutions, on the reception of the movement and its operation in Beirut. With that said, my objective here was not to collect "facts," but rather to observe patterns of politicization and representation across subjective realities.

Due to my positionality as a Lebanese local and a politically non-affiliated member of Lebanese civil society, and the consequent subjective intricacies of this research, I consider the best methodological approach to be one which acknowledges and employs this subjective bias. Since my research concerns political sectarianism in Lebanon, it is important to keep my reader informed about my positionality. As a Lebanese native, I am aware of my own political and moral biases, and the ways my personal experiences may taint how I approach this research. Having been a member of the "You Stink" movement and the ensuing protests surrounding the garbage crisis in 2015, and having supported the rise of "Beirut Madinati" in 2016, I have several ties with members of civil society in Beirut, which facilitated my access to civil society networks for potential research partners. Despite my commitment to resistance mobilizations in Beirut and my critique of sectarianism, I have maintained a professional distance from my research partners and refrained from employing my personal opinions throughout this work. I

ask that my reader excuse this trespass and recognize that the information I present here is not by any means holistic, but simply a glimpse of a more incrusted subject matter.

In addition, my positionality as an insider who pursued a western higher education certainly influenced my work. Not only did I arrive at this topic through my own history with sectarianism's intersectional oppressive apparatuses, but I also have had the privilege of distancing myself from my native context, and have thus acquired western biases that have colored my interpretation of power and resistance in Lebanon. I would venture to assume that being an outsider would have informed my research differently, perhaps allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the matter or maybe a more superficial one. Finally, the information that my research partners have shared with me is not cohesive or factual, nor is it meant to be the essence of this subject matter.

During my interviews, I was careful to act with sensitivity and professionalism while asking questions about the details of each research partner's professional and personal involvement with "Beirut Madinati." This entailed that if any participant expressed signs of discomfort at the questions being asked, I have responded accordingly and changed the direction of the interview. I have also carefully abided by the American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics (AAA 2012). Prior to the start of my interviews, I made sure to obtain informed consent (Appendix A), which provided a space for me to notify each participant on how I will preserve their anonymity. In addition, all voice-recordings of my interviews were deleted at the completion of this project in June 2018. For the purpose of maintaining my informants' confidentiality from the beginning until the completion of the project, nowhere in my notes, my research, or my thesis are the real names of my research partners revealed. In addition, my informants occasionally requested that the information they revealed to me remains "off the record," which I honored in the writing of this thesis. Finally, I can say with confidence that I have approached every aspect of this project with the utmost integrity.

Note on Limitations

The totality of sectarianism illustrated in this research, combined with its narrow focus on the juncture of sect and class, is not meant as a dismissal of the intersectional complexities of Lebanese subjectivities. I acknowledge that there exist numerous interruptions in the predictability of sectarian hegemony, as well as a myriad of interpretations located in subjectivity, which complicate my attempt to depict a Lebanese or Beiruti urban "reality." More specifically, intersections of gender, race, class, citizenship, sexuality, ability, respectability politics, and dominant conceptions of beauty are not accounted for in this research. These mentions are significant because they are part and parcel of sectarian practices in modern Beirut, which sometimes precede sectarian obstacles or gloss over them, persuade them in various unpredictable directions, and soften or harden a subject's experiences with sectarianism's banality. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, I was unable to discuss certain paradigms that shift the meanings and practices of power and resistance. In a longer work, I would be interested in the agents of resistance as themselves sectarian subjects and the complications of resisting the politically produced self. Moreover, my elaboration on the violence with which sectarianism ensures its domination and the coercive powers of sectarianism as a system of domination is restricted in this work, but ought to be accounted for in larger depth in future research. Specifically, this research focuses only on Lebanese citizens through their encounters with sectarian hegemony but does not account for the common marginalizations of non-citizens, migrants, and refugees, or include the patterns of other "othering" that these groups face daily in modern Beirut.

Chapter One

<u>"Sectarian Divinity"</u>

> *Sectarianism is a sickness. From before the Lebanese Independence, even back to the Ottomans, everything political included sects and sectarianism. The people themselves didn't necessarily feel it, we didn't know who belonged to which sect before the war, and we didn't care! The civil war had many reasons, but sectarianism was not the reason. After one or two years, it turned into a sectarian and religious war. To this day, in every political, social, or economic association, and all public sectors, sectarianism dictates everything; it became rooted in the Lebanese fabric. The Ta'if was supposed to erase political sectarianism, but it did the opposite* (Interview with Nada on April 17, 2018).

While the historical origin of sectarianism is largely debated among specialists on the region, with some scholars[2] dating its birth back to 19th century Ottoman reform in Mount Lebanon, and others[3] marking sectarianism's institutionalization under the French Mandate as its official introduction into Lebanese politics, the purpose of this chapter is not to participate in the contestation of sectarianism's historical inception, nor to offer a definition of sectarianism as a *fait accompli*, but rather to focus on its present operations and practices in everyday life. Therefore, I begin by qualifying that it is not sectarianism's historical momentum nor its political abstraction that maintains its hegemonic status, but rather its banality—that is, the ways in which it is internalized into quotidian life as a dominant discourse and practiced as a form of preordained consciousness.

Sectarianism as a political institution was made official through the Lebanese "Document of National Understanding," referred to hereafter as the Ta'if Accord, which was

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[2] See Makdisi (1996), *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Ottoman Lebanon* for a detailed historical account.
[3] See Weiss (2010), *Practicing Sectarianism in Mandate Lebanon: Shi'I Cemeteries, Religious Patrimony, and the Everyday Politics of Difference* for a detailed historical account.

signed on 22 October 1989 and affirmed through a constitutional amendment, which was approved on 21 August 1990. It is the product of negotiations between 62 Lebanese parliamentarians, one half Christian and the other half Muslim, who were last elected in 1972 prior to the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War (Russell et al. 2005). According to convention, the top three public offices, that of the President, Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament, are reserved for the Maronite Christian, Sunni Muslim and Shiite Muslim communities, respectively. Representation in the 128-member Chamber of Deputies is divided equally between Muslims and Christians, with the 64 seats in each communal block allocated proportionally to the Sunni, Shiite, Druze and Alawite (Muslim), the Maronite, Greek Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian Orthodox (Christian) and a number of smaller named denominations (Article 24).

The Ta'if Accord was meant to be a conceptual approach to dealing with the challenge of sectarian divisions: namely, that political accommodation and peaceful coexistence are best secured within a divided society through "extensive institutional provisions, which guarantee people will be treated as members of distinct communities" (McGarry et al. 1993: 35-37). The alleged positive consequence of this arrangement suggests that the Lebanese political system has a built-in electoral mechanism to dilute sectarian loyalties and promote inter-communal collaboration and civic leadership. Yet, simultaneously, a closer reading suggests that the power sharing upon which the Ta'if Accord is premised only reinforces sectarian divisions through institutionalizing a "discourse of difference" (Joseph 1978) among divergent fractions of Lebanese society. This system remains unamended today, and many analysts have attributed the pervasive cultural and socioeconomic stratification of Lebanese society and its demographics to this sectarian structure (Makdisi 1996; Maktabi 1999; Russel et al. 2005; Salloukh 2015).

Vis-à-vis the Ta'if agreement, Lebanese citizenship became a dissected identity defined by religious alliances, which became synonymous with political affiliation under this confessional parliamentary division. Subsequently, Monroe (2016) identifies political sectarianism as a "sub-nationalism," whereby the locus of citizenship became centered on a sense of membership in, and identification with, specific sects as polities apart from—though often overlapping with—that of the nation-state (p. 14). By substituting Lebanese nationalist discourse with sectarianism, the construction of differences became premised upon the power of sectarian belief, which worked to create and transform not only the identities, but also the material realities of Lebanese populations (Joseph 1978). Therefore, the hierarchical structure of the Lebanese government did not end in the realm of politics, but rather translated into a social hierarchical spectrum, whereby Maronite Christians became regarded as the privileged elite and Shi'a Muslims reduced to a subaltern category in Lebanese society (Makdisi 1996). The institutionalization of sectarianism in the constitution, instead of its intended purpose to relegate sectarian divisions to the disenfranchising past, formalized doctrines of difference into social facts, whereby the "us" vs. "them" discourse is legitimized as the reference point from which practices of claims-making are justified and made customary. To crystallize this rhetoric, one of the pioneering members of "Beirut Madinati," Salma, describes the process by which sectarianism is transformed into cultural discourse:

> *Sectarianism is when you pit people against each other and convince them that there is a difference between them based on religion and sect, when you tell people that their existence depends on their sect and the obliteration of other sects. It [sectarianism] is the creation of an enemy to control a people, creating an enemy through a discourse of "divinity" (Interview with Salma on April 10, 2018).*

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Nevertheless, this "creation of an enemy," far from being laid to rest on an ideological ground, is further exacerbated through an (almost) absence of public provisions provided to citizens by the state, leaving wide scope for private, nonstate actors to supply basic services as incentives for political mobilization (Cammett et al. 2010). Henceforth, rather than resorting to the state for welfare services, populations turned to their representatives, as the rights, status, and survival of respective communities was now hinged on their sectarian affiliation. Further, as remnants of the spatial divisions between "Christian" and "Muslim" that the Civil War mobilized as combat frontiers (Monroe 2016), geographic spaces became associated with a specific political sectarian party, inhabited by the followers of the same political party, and protected by this party. These processes led to the creation of specific subjectivities and modes of provisioning that are particular to the Lebanese case. By conceptualizing the economic systems generated by sectarianism as processes of "social provisioning," the economic activities adopted by Lebanese and non-Lebanese populations according to their sectarian divisions become indicative of the ways in which residents of Lebanon organize themselves collectively to make a living and reproduce their material lives (Power 2008). Hereafter, under the Ta'if Accord, political alliances became configured through religious identity, and religious identity tangled with political representation, to the extent that "benefits could not be obtained simply on the basis of citizenship rights because jobs, housing, telephones and education were guaranteed not by the state but through appeals to deputies and ministers and presidents who were themselves appointed or elected according to sectarian laws" (Makdisi 1996: 4).

To illustrate, about half of Lebanon's schools, hospitals, and clinics operated by non-state organizations are run by religious charities or political parties with sectarian orientations (Cammett et al. 2010). To portray a more specific example, in 2006, only about 5 out of 160 hospitals in Lebanon were government run and about 10 percent of Lebanon's approximately 453 registered health care clinics were officially run by public agencies (ibid). More intricately,

many allegedly public institutions are in fact privately operated by sectarian officials who maintain their power through (re)appointment to public office. For instance, the Hariri family has maintained control over the Prime Ministry over dispersed periods since 1992[4], and simultaneously created the Hariri Foundation, which despite its claims of being an ostensibly humanitarian foundation, is in fact a Sunni sectarian institution that distributes services to Sunni populations through demographic development projects and a variety of monetary services (ibid).

On the other hand, Hezbollah, a Shi'a Islamist political and militant group, plays a critical role in the social welfare provision of low- and middle-income Shi'a communities throughout Lebanon. Accordingly, Hezbollah built schools, hospitals, and clinics in Beirut and Mount Lebanon to protect and provide for "their own"—namely, Shi'a groups in the country (Cammett et al. 2010). More dramatically, in the aftermath of the 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon, during which most of the Southern suburbs of Beirut were demolished by Israeli attacks, the Shi'a communities who populate these areas turned to Hezbollah, not the state, to rebuild their homes and neighborhoods. Concurrent with this command over resources, importantly, is the geopolitical monetary and military support that Hezbollah and the Hariri Foundation receive from Iran and Saudi Arabia, respectively. While the analysis of sectarian and religious social welfare systems in Lebanon is admittedly incomplete without an account of the geopolitical alliances that uphold and reproduce these systems, this panoramic examination is beyond the scope of this research and ought to be developed through future ventures.

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[4] Rafik Al-Hariri was appointed Prime Minister from 1992-1998, and again from 2000-2004. After his assassination in 2005, his son, Saad Al-Hariri was appointed Prime Minister from 2009-2011, and again from 2016 until today.

Pointedly, these empirical realities are symptomatic of the ubiquity of sectarianism in decreeing the life chances of distinct communities in Lebanon, not only through a symbolic ideological discourse of difference, but also through sectarian systems of social welfare that retain and reproduce a demographic, socioeconomic, and social status stratification in Lebanese society. Thus, following Susana Narotzky's (2005) argument that "systems of provisioning are historically grounded" (p. 81) and her emphasis on power as crucial for understanding "the shifts and articulations along the chains of provisioning" (p. 81), it is evident that the modes of provisioning spawned by sectarianism attribute specific meanings to the possibilities for consumption and economic organization across sectarian lines. In turn, these systems of meaning contribute to the identity constructions of Lebanese and non-Lebanese subjectivities on the basis of their consumption, which further exacerbates the power inequalities and discrimination practices sustained by sectarian divisions (Narotzky 2005). The socioeconomic and political analyses of space, therefore, are necessary when addressing systems of social provisioning around sectarianism in Lebanon. Accordingly, I argue that the manifestation and reproduction of sectarianism throughout physical spaces, namely the capital city Beirut, which will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters, are directly tied with the consumption patterns and ideological production of that space.

Additionally, in light of this division in representation, corruption became the effective social security system for the Lebanese. In fact, the country ranks 28th on the corruption scale out of 176 countries, classified among the highly corrupt countries in 2016 according to Transparency International (Corruption perception index 2016), and the world's fourth least effective government according to the World Economic Forum. One of the founders of "Beirut Madinati," Nada, crystallizes the corrupt clientelism under sectarianism through the following statement:

Sectarian leaders took on power-sharing not only in office, but also in every inch of the country, as though the country is their private property and there are no people. The people, citizens, and populations were merely instruments for leaders to stay in power, and they saw that mobilizing sectarian differences is very powerful in dividing the people and making them fear "the other," in a way that they had to resort to their representatives, their "saviors," and say "come rescue us from these" "other" people who want to kill us, want to compromise our rights, steal our resources and territorialize our neighborhoods." They [sectarian leaders] were hypnotizing, drugging, and scaring people to death for their loyalty, making them think that separating from their sect is detrimental to their existence, and it worked.

I argue that this omnipotence of sectarian edifices qualifies sectarianism as "divine" (Machiavelli 1998), whereby this omnipotent ruling system continuously adapts itself to processes of change in Lebanese history and absorbs these changes to uphold its power and achieve its ends, to the extent that, as elaborated above, one cannot practice modern citizenship in Lebanon without also practicing sectarianism (Abu-Rish 2017). In short, sectarian identity remains salient in matters of politics, civic life, and livelihood, as building networks with one's sectarian community "continues to enhance individuals' access to social services and provides avenues for socioeconomic mobility" (Monroe 2016: 59). With the absence of reliable state services that ensure the dignified livelihood of Lebanese citizens, sectarian politicians continuously manipulate and reproduce their populations' dependency on their services—as Rana, one of the crowd-funding organizers at "Beirut Madinati," frames it:

Sectarian leaders deliberately don't provide services consistently so that populations will remain dependent on them, and they [sectarian leaders] use this economic need to their benefit in times of elections and periods of political decision-making, by giving

monetary incentives to keep the people reliant on their help (Interview with Rana on April 20, 2018).

Sectarianism, therefore, is a modern socio-economic and political system of power that "produces and reproduces sectarian subjects and modes of political subjectification and mobilization through a dispersed ensemble of institutional, clientelist and discursive practice" (Salloukh 2015: 3). Accordingly, I posit that sectarianism in Lebanon is the dominant hegemony (Gramsci 1971) around which Lebanese society, specifically the fraction of civil society concretized in this research, congregates to make meaning of their positionalities and secure practices of claims-making. Following Antonio Gramsci's description of hegemony as a process of ideological domination (ibid), the sectarian ruling class dominates not only the means of physical production but the means of symbolic production as well. Its control over the material forces of production is replicated, at the level of ideas, in its control over the ideological sectors of society, culture, religion, education, and the media in a manner that allows it to disseminate those values that reinforce its position (Mouffe 1979a). Correspondingly, by employing coercive and non-coercive mechanisms of surveillance over civil society, hegemonic sectarianism utilizes overt threats of violence to de-mobilize oppositional movements in Beirut.

Aptly, a deeper discussion of Lebanese media is pertinent to this postulation of sectarianism as hegemony. Lebanon's mediascape, especially its televised media, not only reflects the country's sectarian divisions, but also exacerbates them (Salloukh 2015). This is because the majority of television stations in Lebanon are directly owned either by individuals with sectarian associations or by sectarian political parties. As a result, a casual perusal of Lebanese television channels exposes a color-coded canvas of contradictory assertions and unapologetic erasures, to the extent that any preservation of "truth" is effectively smothered and what remains is a doubt-bruised viewer. To illustrate, each sectarian political party in

Lebanon has adopted a certain "color" that denotes it, and subsequently ascribed this color to every associational television channel, flag, or campaign that represents it. To name a few, Hezbollah owns and controls the Shi'a yellow channel, "Al-Manar[5] TV," Hariri presides over the Sunni blue "Al-Mostaqbal[6] TV," and Michel Aoun, the current Lebanese president, regulates the Christian orange "OTV[7]." Correspondingly, flipping between "Al-Manar TV" and "Future TV" embodies the propaganda of sectarian politics, by which every strand of information, including apparently "factual" accounts, is incongruous. Nevertheless, television stations deny the allegations that they fuel sectarian tensions and proclaim that this rhetoric only represents "an already-existing sectarian public sphere" (ibid, 141). This hegemony over the dissemination of information not only shapes the sectarian reality upon which it relies, but also simultaneously constructs and instructs a fractured Lebanese public to seek "their truth" through their sectarian identity.

Hegemony, then, is the state of "total social authority" which, by a combination of "coercion" and "consent," but under conditions through which the organization of consent takes precedence over coercive domination, enables a certain class to win over the whole social formation, and its dominated classes (Hall 1988; Mouffe 1979a). For sectarian hegemony to be maintained, it has to be continuously reconstructed by incorporating other historical events it is faced with into its hegemonic structure (Hall 1980). Thus, sectarianism in Lebanon became hegemonic through the construction, codification, and reproduction of identities in the socioeconomic, political, and legal spheres (Salloukh 2015). Under the ideals of "equal representation" and "coexistence," sectarianism was sold to the Lebanese public(s) as the singular, inevitable, and natural arrangement for the possibility of a peaceful Lebanon (Mikdashi 2014). Sectarianism's political economic agenda was predicated to ensure the

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[5] Arabic for "lighthouse."
[6] Arabic for "The Future," also after the political party's name, "Future Movement."
[7] "OTV" was licensed in 2005, after Aoun's return from exile in France, and is the mouthpiece of the Free Patriotic Movement, championed by Aoun, who is currently Hezbollah's ally.

survival of the Lebanese "elites" or "*ahali*," comprised of a group of historically powerful families, predominantly Maronite Christian, who have dominated Lebanese society since Ottoman rule and are protected by European powers under French colonialism (Makdisi 1996). This agenda was "mystified," borrowing from Burawoy (2012), by the rhetoric that the stark religious divisions in society must be reflected in Lebanese political governance as the only way to guarantee the representation of a highly fractured society (ibid).

Hence, in order for sectarianism to thrive, it had to be reproduced by sectors of Lebanese society through the "manufacturing of consent" (Burawoy 1979), whereby the Lebanese people were implicitly driven to perpetuate sectarian structures in their everyday lives to ensure their access to services and citizenship. In other words, by securing participation through mystification, which Burawoy defines as "the gap between experience and reality for all who enter a specific set of social relations" (p. 191), sectarianism obscures its conditions of exploitation, allowing for the establishment of rules which are socially sanctioned (Burawoy 2012: 189) by the sectarian hegemony *as well as* ensured by sectarian subjects who have internalized sectarian doxa (Bourdieu 1977 [1972]), to the extent of embodiment at the level of identity.

To contextualize this framework, Salloukh (2015) analyzes sectarianism from a Foucauldian perspective. He posits that sectarianism's hegemony is manifested across multiple channels of influence, including a disciplinary, and often violent apparatus, through the creation of "docile sectarian subjects" (p. 39) able to incorporate the sectarian ideology, reproducing and propagating it in society. Through this pervasive and encompassing system the sectarian elites control both the levers of political power and those of the economic system. In a broader sense, they control the entire society. As in the case of "Beirut Madinati," this control extends to obviating attempts at resistance from Lebanese civil society. Sectarianism, then, is a changing site of production, strongly rooted in Lebanese identities, and "a producer, echoing Gramsci, of

ideological, social and economic hegemony fueled, over the years, by neoliberal policies, that increase social inequalities" (Di Peri 2017: 427).

Yet, to essentialize sectarian identity in Lebanon, to assume that social actors are entirely immersed into the discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) of hegemonic sectarianism, risks ignoring the unremitting awareness and contestation of sectarianism in Lebanon. As will become evident through the case of "Beirut Madinati" developed in the next chapters, sectarianism is not wholly embraced by Lebanese society, nor is it a product of the impossibility of Lebanese coexistence (Monroe 2016). It is rather a historical framework of governance inherited from colonial legacies and secured by Lebanese elites to justify their race to power (Makdisi 1996). Though, for those who insist on resisting sectarian forms of subjectification, the punishment ranges from "exclusion from [sectarianism's] clientelistic and political rewards to denial of proper burial rights" (Salloukh 2015: 7). Still, even for those of us who strive to contest sectarian ideology and refuse to accept its pompous rhetoric, the question remains, as one of the volunteers at "Beirut Madinati" elegantly poses it: "how do you resist the totality that produced you?"[8]

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[8] Interview with Karim on April 18, 2018.

Chapter Two

<u>"If One Hand Can't Clap, It Can Slap"</u>

This is the life of a Lebanese citizen: We have three bills for water—one for the government, which is not a reliable supply, so you need to pay an extra bill for expensive private water suppliers, and one for drinking water. We have two bills for electricity—one for the government, which depending on your area, provides electricity for a few hours per day, and one for a street-level power generator to cover the daily outages. We pay for private schooling, because public schools are a complete disgrace. We pay for private healthcare, because the government does not provide us with even the most basic health services. Hell, you can die at the hospital door if you don't have sectarian connections. We as citizens are used to finding informal cracks to survive and save ourselves from crisis. We find employment, we get our rights ourselves, even though we are paying the government as though it is providing these services. When the garbage crisis erupted, people woke up. We all don't have electricity, we all don't have water, we all manage to provide ourselves with services that the government is supposed to provide; except garbage, what can we do with it? We can't eat it (Nada, founding member of "Beirut Madinati").

It was rubbish, where it all started. The Lebanese government had outdone itself—after decades of failure to provide its citizens with basic services like water, electricity, healthcare, and education, and fourteen months of a vacant presidency, the state-contracted, private waste management company, Sukleen, halted trash removal from the streets. Although waste management had been a major issue since the Civil War, it was until trash manifested itself on the ground, not only in low-income areas, but also in the capital city, high-income neighborhoods, and tourist resorts, that it became a matter of concern for all Lebanese people. One can argue that the sight of garbage in its physical embodiment is what stirred the public to

mobilize. This immediacy, brought to life not by the ramifications of garbage or its future consequences, but rather by the urgent and offensive statement it communicated in the moment of its immobility, is in itself a performance and conceptualization of garbage that took a set of complex cultural and political meanings. Symbolically, the garbage crisis itself became a reflection of the deep-rooted decay prevailing in the Lebanese political system. Under the slogan "You Stink" (tol'it rihetkun), protesters denounced the absence of public services, as well as the clientelistic and corrupt political elites, demanding a durable and ecological solution to waste management, and the downfall of the Lebanese political system (The Daily Star: Lebanon News, 2016).

One of the chief characteristics of the "You Stink" mobilization around garbage is that it succeeded in bringing together different sections and confessions from Lebanese society, including the middle and upper classes and youth from more diverse backgrounds. The trans-confessional and trans-communitarian characteristics of the movement are undeniable as these distinct groups of individuals united under common goals (Al Nahar-net, July 2015). For once, it was a problem that was affecting *all* people, in spite of socioeconomic status, sect, or political affiliation. As one of the organizing members of the "You Stink" movement, Reem, remarked, the rapidly growing number of protesters and their effervescent unity terrified the Lebanese government[9]. This resulted in an exacerbation of the confrontation between protesters and Lebanese security forces, and on August 29th, when tens of thousands took the streets of Beirut in rebellion, state violence escalated in the form of tear-gassing, water-hosing, and arbitrary arrests (L'orient Le Jour, April 2016).

Reem continued to emphasize that the main reason behind the failure of the civil society movements in Lebanon is the mobilization of fear and terror, especially that there lacks an accountability for killing or hurting protesters: "they arrested students and young activists and

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[9] Interview with Reem, a prominent activist and active member of the "You Stink" movement, on April 19, 2018.

took them to trial militarily, as though they were spies or war criminals, and a threat to state sovereignty, then people were tranquilized and got scared and went home." In fact, Lebanese law allows military courts, under the control of the Ministry of Defence, to try civilians simply because they have clashed with security forces. As a result, protesters who have been on the receiving end of riot police, firing rubber bullets and teargas, are routinely arrested under military justice rules. The Human Rights Watch detailed the effects of the widespread use of this system, ostensibly set up to deal with treason and terrorism, to quench ordinary civil disobedience and legitimate protests against the state (Waszul, January 26, 2017).

After the 2015 wave of protests and civil society movements were sabotaged and fizzled out, people were forced to resign back to their residences with an overwhelming sense of hopelessness, desperation, and exhaustion. Nada, one of the founding members of "Beirut Madinati," credits the inception of the movement to the restless disappointment that plagued Lebanese civil society in response to these failures:

> *It was simple. People who were part of the protests had been approaching me, with the knowledge that I am a prominent activist, and saying: "why don't we start our own party? We need to do something, all of us who are desperate and tired need to mobilize and enact change ourselves."*

Soon after, at a conference she was attending at the American University of Beirut, Nada suggested to the speakers, whom she knew personally as activists and educators in Beirut, that they combine their expertise and knowledge to enter the political realm as an organized party. They then shared with her that they were planning on running for municipal elections as an independent party, even though they were aware of the time constraints they would face and asked if she were interested in joining them. "I immediately got on board," Nada shared, "and that was the birth of "Beirut Madinati."" This was at the end of October, 2015, and the new-

founded civil society movement had a mere five months to create, publicize, and gain support for their independent municipal electoral campaign.

Primarily, the movement's objective was not to win the elections, nor was it to eliminate sectarian hegemony and establish their own system of governance, it was rather, as one of the founding members noted, to form an oppositional, counter-sectarian movement through political participation, and exert pressure on the existing sectarian order on the municipal level. In short, to hold sectarian institutions accountable for their corruption, negligence, and exploitation of the people: "we wanted to shake sectarianism from within," said Nada, "to show them that we are here, and organized, and can do their job better than they have been doing it."

Despite "Beirut Madinati"'s adamant support of and involvement in the "You Stink" protests, they believed that protesting in parallel to the system is not enough. As one of the volunteers explained, "for the first time, we wanted citizens to feel like they have the power to participate in the decision-making process and not only be able to pressure politicians to decide[10]." This perspective allowed "Beirut Madinati" to gain legitimacy and support from Beirut's public(s) (Warner 2002), as they were viewed to be politically aware and credible (Civil Society Knowledge Center 2016). The group's members were cognizant of the difficulties facing them, however, and remained realistic about their goals, as one of the volunteer organizers stated, "we don't want to *become* the government, we understand that we are a small civil society movement, but if one hand can't clap, it can slap[11]."

In addition, it is important to note that "Beirut Madinati"'s choice to challenge sectarian hegemony on the municipal level was a deliberate one. The immediate reason was that the municipal elections, at the time, were the only democratic elections meant to occur in Beirut in the near future. Furthermore, in contrast to the parliamentary composition, municipal councils in Lebanon have no sectarian quotas, which entails that cross-sectarian alliances are possible

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[10] Interview with Karim on April 18, 2018.
[11] Interview with Salma on April 11, 2018.

and encouraged, since candidates must gain the highest number of votes to be elected and would therefore need the support of groups outside of their own to triumph. Hence, municipal politics are an important site of executive power-maneuvering in Lebanon (Abu-Rish 2016). However, the officially non-sectarian nature of the municipal electoral system is rendered more complicated in practice. This is because individuals are restricted to run and vote only in their official district of origin, which is dictated through patriarchal designations, taking after the father's place of origin for men and unmarried women, and after the husband for married women[12].

Consequently, even though a significant proportion of Lebanon's population resides in Beirut, only the ones who are registered to the district of Beirut are permitted to vote and run for elections in the city. For "Beirut Madinati," which ran for municipal office in Beirut, this meant that their list of candidates had comprised of individuals who are registered in Beirut, and their target population was restricted to voters who are eligible to vote in the city, not the entirety of the city's residents. Thus, despite the group's ability to garner popular support in Beirut and recruit volunteers regardless of whether they were eligible to vote, their only operative audience that could sway the elections in their favor were voters registered in Beirut.

Due to the prevailing demographically sectarian divisions in Lebanon, this meant that each neighborhood comprising Beirut's three quarters is represented by a certain sect. For example, Mazraa, a predominantly Sunni neighborhood in Beirut populated by a majority of Hariri supporters, would vote, by hegemonic sectarian tradition, for Sunni candidates backed by their representative. Therefore, even though municipal politics are officially non-sectarian, they are made sectarian by a patriarchal lineage system and a prevailing sectarian spatial politics. This informal insertion of sectarian hegemony onto a formally liberal democratic, non-sectarian site of electoral politics marks one of the complexities through which sectarianism

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[12] For more information, see *Marsum Ishtira'i Raqam 188: Qanun al-Baladiyyat, 1977.*

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exercises its totality in urban Beirut, and initiates the saga of obstructions in the path of "Beirut Madinati"'s resistance that are revealed in this research.

Breaching Apathy: "I Do Not Vote"

The municipal elections yielded only a 19% voter participation. Out of these 19%, "Beirut Madinati" won 42% of the votes, and other lists also won some votes, so the sectarian list that won the municipal elections represents a mere 9% of Beirut's residents. This 9% is the fraction that is afraid of the "other," out of the 19% that voted, but where are the rest, where are the 80%? (Interview with Reem on April 19, 2018)

From a Gramscian perspective, a viable counter-hegemony must address marginalized social forces in an inclusive manner and create a concrete alternative ideological and political conception of the world, bringing different groups together for a larger common interest that transcends their differences (Fraser 2005). As a politically non-affiliated, counter-sectarian movement, "Beirut Madinati" defines itself as a "political movement that seeks to build a political alternative from the local level outside sectarian frameworks and private and narrow interests. It upholds the principles of partnership, transparency and accountability and believes in the values of equality, sustainability and social justice. It also demands the social, economic and political rights of the people and preserves the environment and the cultural and natural heritage of the city" (Beirut Madinati Webpage, 2016).

In other words, "Beirut Madinati" strove to establish an alternative to sectarianism, by presenting itself as "everything sectarianism is not[13]" throughout every stage of the movement's development. The group's focus on civil matters and issues of everyday life became one of the pillars of their campaign, as Salma notes: "we were not the Maronite-right, we were not the Shi'a-minority, we were the voice of the unheard, from the people, for all of the people." A

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[13] Interview with Karim on April 18, 2018.

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major unanimity among my interviewees revolved around the significance of consolidating an ideological program that preceded the campaign and verified the movement's distinction from sectarian parties. However, the majority of my respondents added that it was the mere existence of the program that brought them popular support, not its specificities, mainly because the Beiruti public, for the first time, felt "informed and included[14]," which became an avenue for bridging trust between the organization and the disenchanted public, especially since sectarian parties seldom publicize their electoral programs.

Not only did the crafting of a reliable program demonstrate "Beirut Madinati"'s expertise and its credible understanding of "the people's" needs, but it also provided an internal base for a robust ideological harmony between the organization's members. As Nada framed it: "we were all in agreement ideologically. The program was our scripture; if you didn't agree with the program, you had to leave." Hence, "Beirut Madinati" was able to successfully introduce ideological "procedures that allow for the possibility of developing a common discourse" among different and unequal groups (Waterman 2000: 139). By comprising an inclusive participatory approach of counter-hegemonic efforts under the "all-affected principle" (Fraser 2005: 85), the movement focused on employing a "transformative politics" (Fraser 2005) that ensured the representation of every fraction of urban society.

Subsequently, "Beirut Madinati" operated its electoral campaign with two target populations in mind: non-voters and first-time voters. During an interview with Salma, one of organizing members for the volunteer-force at "Beirut Madinati," she explained their strategy to garner support in Beirut: "our goal was not to appeal to sectarian voters or change their minds, mainly because they are now the minority, constituting as we saw in the results only 9% of Beirutis. Instead, we were appealing to non-voters and first-time voters who are accustomed to being manipulated and robbed by sectarian leaders."

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[14] Interview with Salma on April 11, 2018.

The intimacy with which "Beirut Madinati" attempted to secure support was evident in their campaign's strategies. An entirely volunteer-run movement, "Beirut Madinati" mobilized the commitment and faith of its members on the streets of Beirut, where volunteers would rush from their day-jobs and, wearing their "Beirut Madinati" t-shirts, go door-to-door around the neighborhoods of the urban jungle to introduce the movement's campaign and communicate their passion to potential voters, hoping to leave them deliberative, incrementally gain their trust, and eventually secure their vote[15]. In addition, the movement's call center buzzed with fervor day and night, as Salma put it:

> *As an independent electoral campaign, the most frustrating statement we encountered was "I do not vote." We tried to mobilize this resignation into potential for introducing our people-centered campaign. I remember having hour-long phone conversations with people who swore they would never vote, and by the end of the phone call they told me they would consider voting, and that alone was a victory*[16].

Far from consenting to domination, "Beirut Madinati"'s call-center and open discussion initiatives revealed that a preponderance of their target populations in Beirut, when provided the opportunity to voice their struggle, demonstrate an awareness of their exploitation; and they initiate subtle ways for living with, discussing, resisting, undermining, and opposing sectarian hegemony, at least ideologically (Scott 1985). In addition to appealing to voters through mass and social media, as well as direct communication through phone calls, "Beirut Madinati" hosted open houses and local events called *masahat niqash* (discussion spaces) where they provided accessible platforms to address the problems and distresses of the residents in their respective neighborhoods. This was a major turning point for "Beirut Madinati"'s success, one that gave their opposition a justified urgency and meaningful legitimacy, as Salma shared:

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[15] It is important to note that this intimacy with which "Beirut Madinati" operated is unusual compared to the traditional electoral campaigning procedures that Beirut's residents are accustomed to.
[16] Interview with Salma on April 11, 2018.

People are frustrated [...], they know they are being manipulated and oppressed by sectarian leaders, even the ones who have ingrained sectarian loyalties, but they are not given space to air their concerns and share their demands. We gave them that space, and we showed people from different political sects that their problems are the same, and that following sectarian leaders is going to drown them instead of saving them.

According to William Roseberry (1994), the power of the state rests not so much on the "consent of its subjects," but with the "state's regulative and coercive forms and agencies, which define and create certain kinds of subjects and identities while denying, ruling out, other kinds of subjects and identities" (Roseberry 1994: 357). Similarly, sectarianism's rhetoric thrives on its supposed "inevitability," that the stark religious divisions in Lebanese society can only be reconciled through fractured political representation (Makdisi 1996). By securing participation through mystification, which Burawoy (2012) defines as "the gap between experience and reality for all who enter a specific set of social relations" (p. 191), sectarianism obscures its conditions of exploitation, allowing for the establishment of rules which are socially sanctioned (Burawoy 2012: 189) by the sectarian hegemony *as well as* ensured by sectarian subjects who have internalized sectarian doxa (Bourdieu 1977 [1972]), to the extent of embodiment at the level of identity. What "Beirut Madinati"'s example emphasizes is its triumph on the path of de-mystifying sectarianism's ideology in urban Beirut, on the basis of demonstrating to a hopeless public that there is a hope for a viable alternative to sectarianism, at least in theory. Therefore, "Beirut Madinati" succeeded in publicly questioning the indoctrinated "divine" (Machiavelli 1998) inevitability of sectarianism, albeit for a fraction of urban society, and revealed sectarian hegemony's fragility through exposing its "gaps" (Kingston 2013), which allow for possibilities of opposing state ideology through introducing a commitment to civil society.

In conversation with these theories, there was a consensus among all of my informants that the most monumental accomplishment for "Beirut Madinati" lay in its introduction of a counter-hegemonic ideological discourse, which worked to restore the "hope," "faith," and "trust" between a significant segment of the Beiruti public and modes of political governance in an urban space where people had resigned into apathy after years of political betrayal.[17] Although they did not manage to attain a seat on Beirut's municipal council, the movement's members shared the new-found possibility that they introduced to Lebanese political discourse:

> *No one expected this to happen in Lebanon. When we started out, we could not have imagined gathering this much support. Seeing people genuinely dedicate their lives and hearts and time and money to this was extremely powerful. We might not have won, but we certainly achieved an impossibility in Lebanese politics*[18].

The 2016 municipal election, therefore, highlights an important reality of Beirut's status quo—it reflects the dominant public's (Warner 2002) resentment of either the general state of affairs in Beirut or the specific policies and alliances of individual parties (Abu-Rish 2016). In either case, the continuously declining voter turn-out demonstrates the overwhelming frustration and apathy of urban society in Lebanon, as some voted for independent lists such as "Beirut Madinati," and others simply opted out of participating in a seemingly dead-end political stagnation.

"Things Were Organic"

As challengers of the "Beiruti" sectarian municipal list, "Beirut Is My City" defined themselves as a "technocratic, politically unaffiliated coalition, and represented an array of middle-class and popular interests" (Beirut Madinati Webpage, 2016). Their list of candidates

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[17] Interview with Salma on April 11, 2018.
[18] Interview with Rana, one of the crowd-funding organizers, on April 20, 2018.

included a mixture of architects, engineers, businesspersons and artists[19], all highly educated at elite institutions. The members I interviewed agreed that the credibility of "Beirut Madinati"'s campaign originated from the fact that all of their constituents were "experts on every area, the best in their fields, and most educated." In other words, "Beirut Madinati" mobilized organic intellectuals (Gramsci 1971) as pillars of their counter-hegemonic resistance.

According to Gramsci (1971), one of the principles of a successful counter-hegemony is the deployment of "organic intellectuals," who are seen by Gramsci as "performing an essential mediating function in the struggle of class forces" (p. 3). These intellectuals are distinguished by their "directive" function in formulating the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they "organically belong" (p. 3). In the same token, "Beirut Madinati"'s technocracy became one of its steadiest ideological foundations, subsequently producing their "organic ideology" through the consolidation of the different ideological discourses of non-sectarian minorities and "the unheard" subaltern fractions of Lebanese society, under a unified counter-sectarian "war of position." The latter is defined by Gramsci as the struggle to gain decisive influence in society, which "opens space for new spatio-temporal totalities" (Joseph 2002: 218). More concretely, it creates the conditions under which a new social order can thrive.

Yet, despite the principle that an organic ideology must not represent any one class in particular (Gramsci 1971), "Beirut Madinati" faced a series of criticisms, especially from lower socio-economic status classes, who claimed that the movement's ideology represents an "elitist bourgeoisie[20]." Even though their prestigious "organic intellectuals" gained their electoral campaign major ideological as well as economic support, they were unable to reach certain groups with strong party affiliations or lower socio-economic status that are more dependent on

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[19] For a complete list of candidates, visit this page: https://stateofmind13.com/2016/04/22/meet-the-candidates-of-beirut-madinati/.
[20] Interview with Nada on April 17, 2018.

sectarian parties' services and cannot afford to apply a secular, formally liberal democratic political lens. Consequently, Nada explains:

Right before the elections, politicians usually give small clientelistic incentives to voters from lower classes, like a tank of gas, $100 or $200, and people are living in such desperate poverty and hopelessness that this is more of a win for them than trying to enact gradual and uncertain change. When we refused to do that, we lost voters who were demanding incentives by asking: "what are you going to give us instead?"

Hence, although "Beirut Madinati" succeeded in fulfilling an "intellectual and moral unity" (Gramsci 1971: 181) as a counter-sectarian movement with a weighty organic ideology, some critics were discontent with the policy matters brought up by the movement, such as the eradication of sectarian governance in the spheres of quotidian life—reconstructing Beirut's faulty infrastructure, eliminating sectarian clientelistic patronage networks for obtaining basic services, and denouncing the neoliberal modes of economic domination reproduced by sectarianism's hegemony. These ambitious policy demands were subsequently labeled as unrealizable, too focused on urban life in Beirut, and elitist for disregarding the short-term needs of people in lower social strata (Abu-Rish 2016).

Through a reflexive and careful oppositional ideology, "Beirut Madinati" crafted an exemplary political program—one that incorporates an inclusive participatory approach, checks all the boxes for the conceptual recipe of an effective counter-hegemonic movement, and abides by the formal rules of opposition through political participation. Yet, the effective implementation of this formal ideology in an urban space dictated by the informal cracks that maintain sectarianism's hegemony proved impossible in practice. As will become evident in the next chapter, I argue that ideology alone cannot win the struggle against hegemonic sectarianism, as any counter-hegemony, regardless of its conjectural robustness, must be waged against all levels of society - (1) the political, (2) the cultural, and (3) the economic (Gramsci

1971). It is precisely "Beirut Madinati"'s unforeseen encounter with sectarian political economic control and their struggle to actualize their liberal democratic ideology in an often-violent sectarian frontline that will be crystallized in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Negotiating Sectarianism: Permission to Resist?

Beirut is a city conceived of in fragments. A mere 85 km², Beirut's population is currently estimated at 2,272,000[21], comprised of eighteen different religions and sects, a considerable migrant worker population, and an estimated one million Syrian[22] and Palestinian[23] refugees. The politically polarized geography of the city has its roots in the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), wherein political parties "developed into militias and Beirut's neighborhoods became recruiting grounds" (Monroe 2016: 41). During the Civil War's first year, militias, who held distinct sectarian ideologies, divided the city across a "Green Line," which separated the Christian East and the Muslim West, and enforced boundaries of the city according to sectarian governance (Monroe 2016). Today, the demographic sectarian divisions in the country's capital are remnants of this Christian/Muslim disparity and heightened by sub-divisions between Sunni and Shi'a sects, championed by Al-Hariri family and Hezbollah, respectively.

Accordingly, Monroe posits that urban life in Beirut remains a "site of conflict" and "relations of social inequality are engendered through spatial movement" (p. 13). Indicatively, the politics of sectarianism in Beirut are pronounced and made visible through symbolic markers such as posters and banners of political figures, flags associated with certain political parties[24], and a literal ownership of buildings, monuments, and "public[25]" spaces (Monroe 2016). Therefore, even though entirely homogeneous neighborhoods in Beirut are rare, the

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[21] The last formal census of Beirut's population was conducted in 1932. The following estimates are provided by the UN World Organization Prospects 2018. For more information, see https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/.

[22] For detailed statistics about the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon, see: http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71.

[23] For Palestinian refugees, see: https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon.

[24] In the Lebanese political realm, each party has its own flag and color that serves as a marker for this party's territory and influence.

[25] Public spaces and services in Lebanon are often privately owned by the political elite, who themselves are wealthy businesspeople who have territorialized the city as their marketplace. For a more comprehensive discussion, see *The Insecure City: Space, Power, and Mobility in Beirut*.

spatial particularities of the city are often predominantly occupied and represented by a specific sect. For example, the eastern neighborhood of Ashrafieh is a chiefly Christian space distinguished by its "late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French-style architecture" (Monroe 2016: 20). In the west, the neighborhood of Zkak Al-Blat is territorialized by a Shi'a majority and securitized by the visible presence of political parties Hezbollah and Amal.

In addition, the physical space of modern Beirut has been barraged with a hegemonic privatization of public land and sites, rampant illegal building practices, and a thwarting of natural resources such as forests and beaches by private developers (Monroe 2016). The proliferating privatization of Beirut came to fruition in the Lebanese postwar reconstruction plan, pioneered by the then Prime Minister, Rafiq Al-Hariri. In particular, Hariri's government channeled substantial funds to the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), which was responsible for the reconstruction of the Beirut Central District (BCD) (Salloukh 2015: 45). Consequently, from 1992 to 2005, the CDR spent around US$7.4 billion on contracts with different sectors including fundamental public divisions, such as education, electricity, and waste management, with "$1.6 billion spent without any audit" (ibid, 45). The CDR's control over the reconstruction plan eventually led to the suspension of the Ministry of Planning, substituting public expenditures with private contracts through Hariri's companies, such as Sukleen, the corporation responsible for Lebanon's 2015 garbage crisis, and Solidere, a private real-estate company responsible for uprooting postwar downtown Beirut and displacing thousands of its residents (Salloukh 2015).

As a result, the CDR became "a quasi-privatized company run by Hariri and his protégés, rendering it beyond accountability" (ibid 46). Yet, the neoliberal monopolization of urban space in Beirut does not end at Hariri; his is only one example of the privatization mechanisms that allowed sectarian politicians to use their public office for private gains. Furthermore, in 2000, the Prime Ministry passed the general privatization law 228, and directly

after, founded the Higher Council for Privatization (HCP) in 2001. Under the guise of increasing investment, reducing public debt, and spurring economic growth, Hariri commenced his neoliberalization project, and proceeded to ratify laws that protected public assets[26], until Beirut became a conglomeration of private ownership marked by an epidemic spatial erasure and illegal displacement (Fawaz 2010). In turn, I contend that this "privatization of everything" (Brown 2015) reinforces sectarian hierarchies, strengthens clientelist and patronage networks, and diminishes the public(s)' ability to gather themselves into collectives and build social cohesion that transcends sectarian loyalties (Honig 2017). In other words, the loss of public space to extensive privatization obviates non-sectarian political mobilization by de-politicizing the existing sites of politics and de-mobilizing possibilities for political action.

Consequently, for an alternative civil society movement that identifies itself as oppositional, navigating these spatial realities through an all-participatory, inclusive ideological program is a monumental challenge. How, then, does "Beirut Madinati" consume and produce its political positionality and spatial particularity in relation to an overarching neoliberal sectarian, elite and privatization hegemony? When I asked my research partners what resisting sectarianism meant for them, they distinguished between an ideological resistance and a pragmatic resistance, whereby ideologically, they ensured that their discourse and language around resistance remained non-sectarian, whereas pragmatically, they envisioned applying this resistance by accessing every neighbourhood in Beirut equally[27]. However, as a political movement opposing sectarianism but operating within the contours of an urban space dictated by sectarianism, "Beirut Madinati" could not ignore the sectarian reality it was attempting to penetrate.

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[26] For example, the ratification of laws 431 and 462, which allowed for the privatization of the telecommunication and electricity sectors, respectively.
[27] A response documented through combining interviews with Salma and Rana.
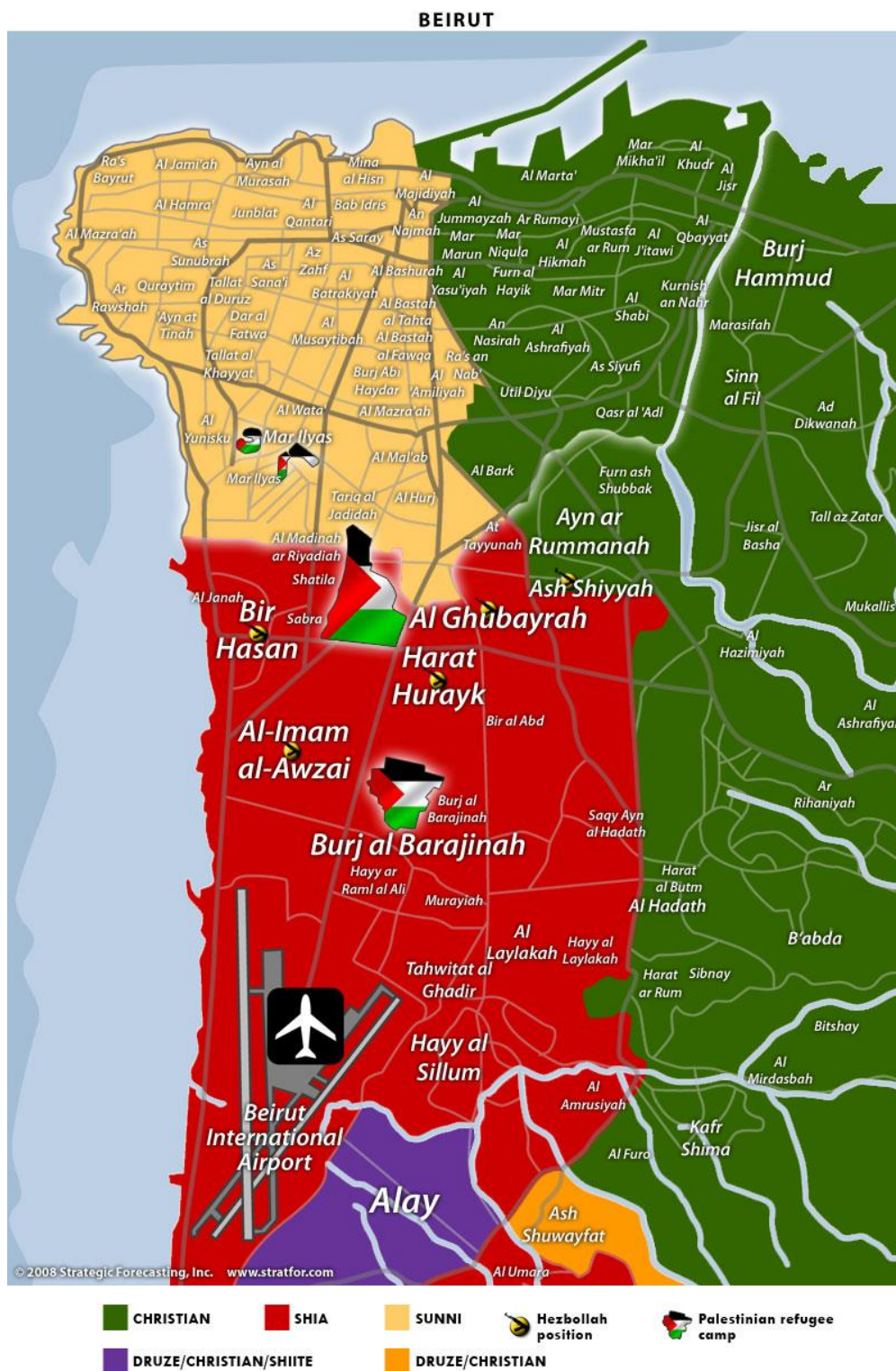
Figure 1: Map of Sectarian Beirut[28]

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[28] Map of Beirut by sect. For original source, see: http://www.mappery.com/Beirut-Relgions-Divides-Map. It is important to note that this map is incomplete and not entirely generalizable to demographic nuances in Lebanon. The sectarian connotations declared in this map represent only dominant populations by sect, but through a homogeneous lens that does not account for the heterogeneity of some neighborhoods in Beirut.

First, there was the office space—a resistance movement cannot exist in a vacuum, it must construct a reference point, a material site of operation which grants its presence the legitimacy and visibility that concretizes its resistance. After "Beirut Madinati" established its "war of position" (Gramsci 1971) as an independent, counter-sectarian movement and announced its electoral program for municipal elections, its conceptual agenda was ready to be directed into a system of operation. For this operation to be materialized, the movement had to begin by taking pragmatic choices about its site of operation. During its electoral campaign, "Beirut Madinati" occupied an office space in Badaro, one of the more "neutral" neighborhoods in Beirut, connotating that it does not directly belong, ideologically and in terms of literal ownership, to any one specific political party. According to my respondents, this choice was deliberate and strategic, as the movement organizers were well-aware that they would be scrutinized for the space they would choose as their headquarters, and that their self-proclaimed declaration of being a non-sectarian movement would be assessed and examined with every decision they make and statement they utter. When I asked Salma about the decision to situate the office in Badaro, she responded:

> *We put the office in Badaro because it's a neutral area, because we had to consider class and demographic alliances and reputations. If we put the office in Zkak Al-Blat, we're sectarian, if we put it in Ashrafieh, we're classist and elite.*

Importantly, Badaro's presumed neutrality is in relation to its heterogeneous composition across sectarian lines—explicitly, that residents of Badaro represent a multitude of sects, thus distinguishing this street from the relative homogeneity of its neighboring quarters. Yet, here is a prime example of the intersection of class and sect in Beirut. Badaro, in fact, is a tiny street squeezed between two areas, the predominantly Muslim Tayouneh and the primarily Christian Furn El-Chebbak. The neoliberalization of this street through processes of gentrification and the construction of consumerist hubs credits it the reputation of "neutrality."

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In other words, to be able to transcend spatial sectarian boundaries, the residents of Badaro possess a socioeconomic class privilege which affords them an upward social mobility. The term "neutral," then, refers only to sectarian heterogeneity, and further employs this rhetoric to invisibilize class privilege. Needless to state, non-alliance in Beirut comes at a cost. It is often the case that consumerism acts as an ideological replacement for sectarianism, wherein non-affiliated individuals and groups are able to distance themselves from sectarian discourse through their consumption of spaces that are afforded the label of "neutrality" through an inevitable consumerism.

In turn, this creates what I call "sectarian zones" in the urban space of Beirut, whereby the privatization of public assets by sectarian politicians, who are themselves the socioeconomic elite, transforms each spatial configuration into a Sunni, Shi'a, Christian, Druze, etc. "zone." Through this proliferation of privatized sectarian zones, the possibility for political space is converted into a marketplace, whereby the Lebanese citizen (and non-citizen resident) is principally a consumer instead of a political subject. Whereas the consumption of sectarian space is hinged on clientelistic networks and modes of provisioning across sectarian lines, the consumption of non-sectarian space is predicated upon socioeconomic class privileges that require consumers to pay for their oppositional or non-affiliation. This "cost" of non-sectarian affiliation contributes directly to a neoliberal, gentrifying, and consumerist economy, again managed and operated by sectarian elites. Since the sectarian political elite in Lebanon are themselves the economic elite, any consumption of the hegemonically privatized Beirut, regardless of political affiliation, is directly profiting the sectarian economy, which in turn strengthens sectarianism's political control, and reproduces its ideology.

This same logic applies to civil society movements such as "Beirut Madinati." After finalizing their program and beginning their electoral campaign operation, "Beirut Madinati" tried to navigate these sectarian roadblocks by holding discussion platforms in public spaces

only, in order to avoid appearing biased or leaning toward the representation of one group in Beirut over others. However, as discussed above, the mere availability of public spaces in Beirut is close to nil. Hence, I argue that the privatization of modern Beirut is not a consequence of sectarianism, but rather a prerequisite for its successful continuity, one that became a core impediment for "Beirut Madinati"'s resistance. As Nada frames it:

> *Public spaces are dangerous for sectarianism. To allow people of different sects to mingle, to share ideas, concerns, to humanize each other and realize that they are all victims of the same system, that instead of fearing the "other" they should mobilize against their common oppressor, that would be the end of sectarianism.*

In tandem with attempting to populate the few public spaces which remain in Beirut, as a citizen-centered movement that prides itself on being "the voice of the unheard," "Beirut Madinati" made it its primary mission to hold open discussion platforms in every neighborhood in Beirut—essentially, to fulfill its promise of representing all demographics equally. Thus, "Beirut Madinati"'s program was centered around physically disrupting sectarian spaces by offering an alternative to their ideology through a literal occupation. After going door-to-door and documenting people's demands, the movement hastily organized five open discussion platforms in only twenty days[29]. These discussions were accessible to the public, for anyone who was interested in learning more about the movement and directing its campaign in ways that meet their needs, as well as any individual, regardless of their loyalties or political beliefs, who wanted to air their civic concerns in an inclusive space.

However, according to my informants, and contrary to their intentions, the movement was only able to reach five out of sixty-six neighborhoods in Beirut, as they were confronted with sectarian barricades that did not allow them to exist, much less resist, in certain spaces. For example, after the movement had successfully secured a venue in Tarik Al-Jadidah, a Sunni

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[29] Interview with Nada on April 17, 2018.

neighborhood owned and operated by the infamous Hariri family, they were not allowed entry into the venue on the day of the event, where they encountered armed young men, mobilized by Sunni leaders, who threatened to physically harm their volunteers if they attempted to enter the space. Despite efforts at long negotiations with these groups, "Beirut Madinati" was forced to retreat from the space and cancel the event, especially to ensure the safety of their volunteers and organizers. In another instance, the movement endeavoured to rent an office space in Zkak Al-Blat, a majority Shi'a neighborhood in Beirut, but before they could begin their daily operations, the office was broken into, its interior destroyed, its windows broken, and it was threatened to be set on fire[30]. Again, for security reasons, and because the young movement was not equipped to engage in a physical conflict or to cope with the consequences of one, they retreated and closed the office space.

Relatedly, Salloukh (2015) posits that "civil society organizations […] in Lebanon are subjected to both coercive and non-coercive means of intimidation by a sectarian/political elite determined to protect their clientelist and symbolic powers" (Salloukh 2015: 63). As demonstrated through the instances that the members of "Beirut Madinati" narrate, civil society movements that attempt to challenge the sectarian system are exposed to everyday forms of violence or threats of violence from sectarian elites and their paramilitary institutions. These suggestions and organizations of violence demarcate the outer limits of sectarian hegemony and complement the non-coercive mechanisms of power mobilized by sectarian elites, to ensure the attainment and maintenance of their political, socioeconomic, and ideological interests. Then, through a combination of vague legal rhetoric and intensive surveillance, sectarianism acts as a violent mode of governance that "entrenches the elite's surveillance over civil society" (Salloukh 2015: 53).

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[30] Interview with Nada on April 17, 2018.

When "Beirut Madinati" was unable to counter these violent sectarian interruptions, its members could not but retreat, both physically by escaping possibilities of violence, and ideologically by adjusting their articulated resistance agenda. Correspondingly, as Mouffe (1979b) asserts, "ideology cannot function as an ensemble of spiritual realities alone, but always has to be materialized in practice" (p. 186). Hence, "Beirut Madinati"'s process of claims-making was modified at different political conjunctures during its encounter with sectarianism's spatial territorialization. As material sites of operation are pertinent to ideological production, the application of "Beirut Madinati"'s firmly non-sectarian program took a route of intensive negotiations with political sectarianism in order to actualize its counter-hegemonic principles. Accordingly, Salma discusses the difficulties that the movement encountered while trying to apply its ideological program on the ground:

> *The difficulty is not ideological, because ideologically we were all in agreement. The difficulty was rather practically through political participation in sectarianism and having to play by sectarian rules while remaining transparent and accountable, which is the opposite of how sectarianism thrives*[31].

When I asked her for concrete examples, Salma explained how she instructed some of the volunteers, who had distinctly sectarian names[32], not to announce their last names when they made phone calls through the call center, for fear that potential voters would associate the caller's identity with "Beirut Madinati"'s. Moreover, during home visits, the organization was careful to send Sunni volunteers to Sunni neighborhoods, Christians to Christian neighborhoods, etc. "You cannot send *Ali Fakih*[33] to Ashrafieh," said Salma, "we don't live in Lalaland, we had to be realistic." Consistently, during my conversation with Nada, she explained how the movement was conscious to cater to sectarian neighborhoods and their

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[31] Interview with Salma on April 11, 2018.
[32] In Lebanon, someone's last name is usually indicative of their religion, and sometimes even their sect.
[33] The name "Ali Fakih" is known in Lebanese society as a stereotypically Shi'a name.

constituents as though they were their political allies. Further, she furiously narrated instances where the movement's organization and understanding of the sectarian spatial reality proved lacking:

When I was working on the electoral campaign in Zkak Al-Blat, I asked for volunteers, and they sent me volunteers with blond hair blue eyes from Ashrafieh who don't speak Arabic! I told them thanks, but if we go to Zkak Al-blat with these volunteers we will get beaten up and sent home.

Although "Beirut Madinati" was compelled to make compromises to sectarianism in order to reify its counter-hegemonic position, there were limits to compromise, as some were deemed acceptable, and others were unthinkable. One of my informants, Rana, spoke about the caution with which "Beirut Madinati" handled sectarian negotiations, "people called us purists as a result, but if there was anything that conflicted with our ethics, we did not compromise." Similarly, when I asked Salma about the movement's deliberation over possible alliances with sectarian parties, she protested:

An alliance with sectarianism is like saying: "so the Nazis are recreating their mission and inventing a new oppositional ideology, let's join forces with them for change." You can't, as a civil society movement, join forces with war criminals, with parties whose entire ideology is based on the obliteration of the "other," no matter what their present ideology and political practice is.

Yet, as elections-day was approaching, "Beirut Madinati" realized the limitations to its counter-hegemonic mission in the political realm. One issue that crystallized these actualities was that of delegates, which proved to be sectarian par excellence. Several interviewees explained that in Lebanese elections, there are two types of delegates, fixed and mobile (floating), who are paid to watch the voters and ensure that there is no cheating. However, delegates must be above the age of eighteen and from Beirut, and every electoral entity must

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obtain a license for individuals who meet these criteria to become delegates, which must be approved by the Ministry of Interior[34]. The latter, however, like many Lebanese ministries, is managed by sectarian leaders and strategically utilized to achieve sectarian ends. Consequently, Salma protested:

We had to get 800 delegates, but we were only able to secure 256, so we couldn't supervise all the voter boxes. We also didn't have the time to background-check everyone, and we realized on E-day that the Hariri Future Party sent us their delegates without our knowledge, and we assigned them because we needed delegates, but on the day of the election they didn't show up, and that tremendously skewed the results against us.

These instances are only brief mentions of a long series of refusals, threats, and obstacles that "Beirut Madinati" was forced to accommodate in its effort to enter and operate within neoliberal political sectarian spaces. Not only did the movement's resistance require a careful and thorough understanding of sectarian realities and rules in urban Beirut, but it was also forced to abide by sectarian divisions, guidelines, and regulations in order to maintain its existence, let alone resist sectarianism. Thus, sectarianism's ability to incorporate civil society into its hegemonic practices hinges not only on sectarian elites' silencing strategies, but also "on civil society's willingness to play by the rules of the sectarian political economy" (Salloukh 2015: 68). Despite the robust ideology with which "Beirut Madinati" conceptualized its resistance, the application of these concepts was built on being granted permission from sectarian leaders to resist sectarianism, which incrementally but steadily compromised their ability to resist.

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[34] These facts are consolidated from interviews with Karim, Salma, and Nada.

We created this thing in Lebanon called consensual democracy, which basically allows for political deadlock, it allows the government to be in a state where it cannot resolve situations and where we are in a perpetual state of mismanagement. "Beirut Madinati" made the mistake of following this model (Interview with Karim on April 18, 2018).

The Lebanese consensus democracy is centered around the conception that in a plural and divided society, political decisions should be reached through a process of deliberation that emphasizes consensus rather than opposition, and inclusion rather than exclusion (Majed 2012). As a deliberative model, consensus democracy ensures that decision-making is secured through a "communicatively generated power" (Habermas 1966: 29), where the political whole is maintained through different polities who define the whole through its parts (Mouffe 2000). Following this system, "Beirut Madinati" aimed to epitomize everything sectarianism had failed to implement, as well as prove that despite the movement's youth and lack of political experience, they could embody the transparent, accountable, and liberal democratic political process that sectarian politics has neglected since its inception.

However, to attempt a horizontal democracy in a notoriously undemocratic and de-politicizing system proved difficult. Although "Beirut Madinati"'s members had a common, generalizable interest to challenge sectarianism's ideology and hegemonic influence through political participation, they failed to reach a "consensus without exclusion" (Mouffe 2000: 17). To illustrate, Mouffe (2000) lays bare the unsustainability of the deliberative democratic system. Accordingly, she argues that "too much emphasis on consensus and the refusal of confrontation may lead to apathy and disaffection with political participation (p. 17). Hailing the impossibility of deliberative democracy in achieving its conceptual goals in the pragmatic political world, Mouffe acknowledges that "coming to terms with the constitutive nature of power implies relinquishing the ideal of a democratic society as the realization of a perfect

harmony or transparency" (p. 14). Instead, Mouffe advocates for "developing an approach which places the question of power and antagonism at its very center" (p. 13).

Therefore, what "Beirut Madinati" attempted as a formal liberal democratic structure in a system that only pretends to follow liberal democratic principles became a tumultuous practice characterized by a decision-making paralysis. Constituting a General Assembly of sixty members, a steering committee of seven core members, and an open platform for participatory decision-making, "Beirut Madinati" mimicked the Lebanese government's formal deliberative consensus model, upon which a two-third majority can pass a legislative decision, provided that the one-third obstructionist minority does not veto the decision[35]. For instance, when deliberating on whether or not to participate in the 2018 parliamentary elections as an independent, civil society list, one-third of the democratic body voted not to participate, which dictated that "Beirut Madinati"'s inability to run for parliamentary elections, despite "the people's" popular agreement for participation and the two-third majority's advocacy for participation[36]. In fact, most of my research partners anguished over the organization's implementation of democracy, and admitted that their utopian democratic ideals drove their resistance into stagnation:

> *Because of our focus on a consensual democratic model, we ended up like the Lebanese government, unable to make any decisions due to the obstructionist one-third* (Rana, Interviewed on April 20, 2018).

> *We implemented democracy wrong, in a country like Lebanon where real democracy is going to take at least 500 years to be actualized, our obsession with democracy slowed us down and disabled us* (Nada, Interviewed on April 17, 2018).

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[35] Interview with Nada on April 17, 2018.
[36] Interview with Salma on April 11, 2018.

I don't believe in democracy anymore. I'm sick of democracy—it is almost always un-democratic (Salma, Interviewed on April 11, 2018).

<u>"We Were Not Ready"</u>

Gramsci defines a "war of position" as resistance to domination with culture, rather than physical might, as its foundation (Gramsci 1971). Further, Cox (1983) explains how this "war of position" is a process that "slowly builds up the strength of the social foundations" of an alternative to hegemonic structures by "creating alternative institutions within an existing society" (p. 165). For "Beirut Madinati," as an organization representative of a counter-sectarian alternative on the level of civil society, this "war of position" was not powerful enough to sustain the creation of these alternative institutions and challenge sectarian hegemony. Every research partner I interviewed reiterated that the lack of "effective organization and centralized leadership[37]" were the primary weaknesses of the movement. Due to the imminent urgency with which elections day was approaching, the volunteers followed the rule "we decide now, and find out later[38]."

Similarly, according to one of the crowd-funding organizers at "Beirut Madinati," there were no delegations within the organization's hierarchy, and anyone who was able to make decisions authoritatively was assigned to do so. This division of labor was necessary for the movement to reach its deadlines, especially as a politically inexperienced organization that was comprised primarily of activists and professionals who lacked exposure to the complex Lebanese political electoral realm. With five months to organize an entire electoral campaign,

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[37] Interview with Karim on April 18, 2018.
[38] Interview with Rana on April 20, 2018.

announce a list of candidates, and garner the sufficient voter support, "Beirut Madinati" was chasing its own tail.

According to my informants, in choosing their list of candidates, the founding members of "Beirut Madinati" utilized their immediate social networks, word-of-mouth, and a basic internet search for viable candidates, who not only had a clean record and a stellar reputation, but who also met sectarian guidelines. Therefore, "Beirut Madinati" had to choose its candidates strategically, by assigning Sunni candidates to Sunni voter demographics, Maronite Christians to Christian-dominated areas, and although their list was intentionally equally divided along gender lines, half of the candidates being men and the other half women, these gender discrepancies had to align with sect and demography. Hence, even if listing a Sunni woman prospect were more qualified than her male Sunni counterpart, the reality dictated that the demographic population is more likely to support a male candidate[39].

Furthermore, with "Beirut Madinati"'s growing popularity and its tangible threat to hegemonic ideology, sectarian leaders began to take notice and attempted to make negotiations with the movement's founders. As my respondents recounted, in one instance, a powerful Druz leader in Mount Lebanon invited "Beirut Madinati" for a meeting in his residence. Without consulting the entire organization or the public, some members accepted this invitation, which was exposed by the media as a "back deal sectarian alliance[40]" that "Beirut Madinati" was conducting away from the public eye. This instance is illustrative of sectarianism's non-coercive techniques of surveillance, whereby civil society initiatives are only acceptable if they are in collaboration with sectarian benefits and calculations. The invitations extended to "Beirut Madinati" from sectarian elites is an attempt to reincorporate Lebanese civil society as a sectarian cooperative, in the name of liberal democracy's ideal and associational preservation.

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[39] Interview with Salma on April 11, 2018.
[40] Interview with Nada on April 17, 2018.

These miscalculations, combined with intensive time-constraints and organizational faults, weakened "Beirut Madinati"'s credibility, harmony and position; as Nada articulates:

We created Beirut Madinati as a municipal electoral campaign, we didn't think we would get that much support, but now we lost the elections, and we have 32,000 voters waiting for us to deliver, asking what's next. We were not ready.

Counter-hegemonic Paralysis: Instances of Consuming Sectarian Economy

An important but largely neglected facet of resistance is the paradigm of economic consumption that is inherent in any counter-hegemonic movement's operation. By economic consumption, I mean not only the origin of the material and capital flows that counter-hegemonic movements depend on for their operation, but also their pragmatic expenditures, ranging from costs associated with political campaigns, to rental of office spaces, utility bills, employee salaries, and a myriad of other services that are necessary for a movement's operation. In the case of "Beirut Madinati," the mere existence of a counter-hegemonic movement that is aiming to resist sectarianism through political participation requires the economic consumption of sectarian space, and the subsequent, albeit indirect, economic contribution to sectarian representatives, who own these spaces. By examining "Beirut Madinati"'s relationship to sectarian economy, especially in light of their self-proclaimed ideological resistance to sectarianism, my aim is to shed light on unforeseen complexities inherent in a counter-hegemonic resistance which emerges from and operates within a hegemonic system of domination, and their subsequent effect on the fate and meaning of resistance.

According to the movement's crowd funding manager, "Beirut Madinati"'s fundraising campaign relied on independent donations, while their financial record is open to the public on "Beirut Madinati"'s website. Rana recalls the decisive turning point the organization's crowd funding took as the moment they announced their list of candidates: "the crowdfunding didn't

pick up until there were faces behind the campaign. When people knew who the candidates were and when this was publicized on social and national media, the campaign exploded. There were a lot of late adopters. If you want to crowdfund and raise money, people want to know who is behind it[41]." To ensure that donors remained independent from the campaign's financial decision-making processes, and hence did not have the power to determine where their money is directed, "Beirut Madinati" established an individual contribution maximum of $50,000. While donors had the option to remain anonymous, my respondents confirmed that most of the donations originated from expatriates and the Lebanese diaspora. Moreover, there was a concerted effort among the financial organizers to spend the entire fundraised sum by elections day, since the crowd funding program announced that all contributions will be directed toward the electoral campaign's expenditures, and which posed an ethical dilemma for "Beirut Madinati":

> *Since we asked for money to spend only on the campaign, we had to spend it—when people give their money, that means you have their trust. Personally speaking, it was immature because we could have strategized and tried to have something to safe-guard us for after the elections, so we can do a few projects […], so we ended making many stupid decisions about how to spend the money[42].*

Following these fundraising criteria, it became clear that "Beirut Madinati" was aware of their requisite to remain financially independent from sectarian economy. However, the disbursement of the $400,000 that the organization's electoral campaign harvested proved more complicated, as their goal of a "complete separation" from sectarian economy was both unsustainable beyond the electoral campaign and unable to account for the reality of counter-hegemonic resistance in Beirut. For instance, the movement's daily costs of operation, including rent of office spaces, electricity, water and telephone costs, contributed directly to sectarian

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[41] Interview with Rana on April 20, 2018.
[42] Interview with Rana on April 20, 2018.

economy. More specifically, as told by Rana, "Beirut Madinati" spent $100,000, a hefty portion of its budget, toward purchasing phone cards, sponsored by two major telecommunications corporations, Alfa and MTC Touch. These phone cards were necessary to enable volunteers to contact potential voters and were the pre-requisite for launching the call center upon which the expansion of their electoral campaign relied. Interestingly, in Lebanon, the telecom industry generates the government's second largest revenue after taxes, amounting to an annual average of $1.43 billion (Bitar 2017). These two corporations, Alfa and MTC Touch, are directly owned, operated, and sponsored by sectarian politicians, themselves entrepreneurs, who have contracted two private international companies, Zain and Orascom, for managing the national market (Naddaf 2013). Despite its apparent insignificance, this expenditure is a direct contribution to the profitability of neoliberal sectarian economy.

Moreover, directly following the electoral campaign, "Beirut Madinati"'s budget still held an unspent sum of $50,000, which was used to rent an office space in Hamra, one of the more prestigious streets in Beirut, at a cost of $2,000 per month. Not only is this space ill-suited to host "Beirut Madinati"'s open discussion meetings[43], but its rent and utilities' costs are government sponsored, which again distributes a considerable capital flow toward sustaining a sectarian economy. Another major expenditure my respondents reported was directed toward the licensing and payment of delegates. The cost of licensing these delegates is paid directly to the Ministry of Interior—a disreputably sectarian institution often manipulated by the political and financial interests of sectarian politicians[44]. According to Rana, "Beirut Madinati" budgeted $30,000 for delegates, which was meant to secure 300 delegates at a rate of $100 each. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, a major portion of these delegates were sent by the Sunni leader Saad Al-Hariri, to the oblivion of "Beirut Madinati," which serves as another indirect contribution to sectarian political economy.

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[43] Interview with Nada on April 17, 2018.
[44] Interview with Salma on April 11, 2018.

These illustrations are only a narrow account of the political economic, ideological, and coercive roadblocks that confront counter-hegemonic resistance in the sectarian space of Beirut. In part, even for movements with exemplary ideological programs such as "Beirut Madinati," their struggle to exist outside of the hegemonic neoliberal sectarian economy from which they operate and which they inevitably consume, albeit at varying symbolic and tangible costs, led to their counter-hegemonic paralysis. Further, even when "Beirut Madinati" consented to formal sectarian rules and attempted to operate through sectarianism's game, their implementation of a formal liberal democracy in a system that pretends to uphold liberal democratic values was detrimental to their resistance. Through their effort to correct sectarian abuses of democratic values and serve as an example of "true" liberal democracy, "Beirut Madinati" found themselves unable to keep up with sectarianism's informal, and often-violent institutions of deceptive quasi-political practice.

From Resistance to a Lech for Power

So, where is "Beirut Madinati" now? After their marginal loss in the 2016 municipal elections and their significant success in introducing "hope" (Louthan 2017) for the possibility of a viable alternative to sectarianism, the once harmonious composition of the civil society movement "Beirut Madinati," adopting trust, transparency, and tolerant collaboration as its vital pillars, grew disintegrated by internal hierarchies and a hunger for power. According to my informants, the aftermath of the campaign spun the members of "Beirut Madinati" into muddles of betrayal, in-fighting, and apathy. While some founding members advocated for the publication of a reflexive report entitled "Lessons Learned," to account for the mistakes each member committed, others refused to expose themselves and be self-critical, therefore defying one of the building blocks of the movement—transparency.[45] In addition, the same members

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[45] Interview with Nada on April 17, 2018.

who formed the "obstructionist one-third" that vetoed "Beirut Madinati"'s ability to run for the 2018 parliamentary elections, joined other parliamentary lists, including major sectarian ones, as candidates independent of "Beirut Madinati"'s civil society agenda. According to Nada, who remains loyal to "Beirut Madinati" and its neighborhood projects, this was the most shocking disappointment, one that broke apart the movement's solidarity and drained its members to the point of surrender:

> *The [candidates] who detached from us and are running now for parliamentary elections on sectarian lists are giving us a bad name, because they are breaking our core principles: transparency, collaboration, and accepting the other. Personally, I would rather be deceived by professional thieves and corrupt politicians than back-stabbing amateurs.*

Despite these betrayals, "Beirut Madinati" remains determined to redefine itself and plans to run for the next municipal elections in 2022, but as my interviewees put forward, a series of restorations are due before the movement can re-establish its reputation as a counter-sectarian entity:

> *It is really difficult for me to say that "Beirut Madinati" turned out to be just another sectarian party, because I know people who have genuinely dedicated their lives and hearts to this, but at the same time, everyone who cared was stepped on by people who wanted power, and wanted to achieve this power through sectarianism, and compromised our entire ideology by joining forces with lists […] that promote privatization and capitalist accumulation above all else, including the people's voice* (Follow-up interview with Salma on April 15, 2018).

> *We started with a concept, but now we haven't shown any accomplishments for our concept, so we need to […] implement our targets and show evidence for our*

accomplishments. If we want to continue, we need to have an organized trajectory. "Beirut Madinati" needs to redefine itself and what it wants to be, because it was merely a campaign and now we don't have a specific mission (Follow-up interview with Rana on April 22, 2018).

This de-mobilization of "Beirut Madinati"'s oppositional resistance is a result of its encounter with the de-politicization of space that sectarianism ensures through its coercive and non-coercive apparatuses. The movement's loss in the municipal elections was a major disappointment for its members and supporters, for whom the inadmissibility of resistance under sectarianism bourgeoned once again, despite their best efforts. For some, this realization instigated the urge to detach from a disenchanted civil society and join political sectarian fronts, while for others, the battle for an alternative to sectarianism's hegemony continues.

Yet, according to Mouffe (2000), since any political order is the expression of a hegemony, "political practice cannot be envisaged in simply representing the interests of pre-constituted identities, but in constituting those identities themselves in a precarious and always vulnerable terrain" (p.14) Consequently, power should not be conceived as an external relation taking place between pre-constituted identities, but rather as constituting the identities themselves. Therefore, for members of "Beirut Madinati" to heal their dissonances and re-emerge triumphant, they must revisit this question of power pragmatically and find avenues to resolve their disagreements publicly, instead of cherishing an idealistic yet unattainable unison.

Conclusion

<u>"We Can Never Do Anything"</u>

This thesis engaged the ethnographic case of the counter-sectarian movement "Beirut Madinati" to illustrate the impermissibility of resistance under political sectarianism's hegemonic control in Beirut. Through its inevitable consumption of sectarian space, political economy, and formal doctrines, combined with its inability to access sectarian sites of hegemony, "Beirut Madinati" was unable to materialize its conceptual alternative to sectarianism. In the preceding chapters, I have demonstrated the ways in which sectarianism's hegemony produces an intensifying de-politicization through a historically reproduced clientelism, a neoliberal hegemonic privatization, and a total surveillance over everyday life in Beirut. This, in turn, de-mobilizes non-sectarian opposition, leading to the impermissibility of resistance and the impossibility of political practice under sectarianism.

In contribution, I conclude that the counter-hegemonic path to resisting neoliberal sectarianism is roadblocked with coercive and non-coercive punitive sectarian mechanisms that not only cripple the possibility of resistance, but also reproduce sectarian modes of subjectivation and hegemonic control. The instance of resistance laid out in this research, then, nudges sectarianism into awareness of itself, reminds it that it must participate in continuous battles in order to secure its hegemonic position, and hence works to strengthen sectarianism, both ideologically and economically. What remains of "Beirut Madinati"'s resistance is its steady chipping away at the concrete edifice of sectarian hegemony, revealing sectarianism's fraying edges, and awakening a tired public to the necessity of contestation, of continuing to rattle sectarianism's barricades until they crumble over the heads of their makers, once and for all.

Yet, a more comprehensive account of hegemony and counter-hegemony in Beirut must include an analysis of the agents of resistance, themselves sectarian subjects, whose subjectivities and modes of social provisioning (Narotzky 2005) are entrenched in political as well as socioeconomic sectarian systems of power and domination. Regrettably, due to the limited range of this work, this topic would be more sufficiently elaborated in future research. Further, this thesis does not venture into the discourse around statehood and its geopolitical implications in Lebanon. Correspondingly, a question worth asking for future intellectual endeavors would be: Who is the Lebanese state? What shifts transpire around the conception of statehood within a geopolitical reality that dictates the power and resistance manoeuvrings in modern Lebanon?

In ethnographic elaboration, future research may also expand on the scale of resistance through political participation to include the site of parliamentary elections in Lebanon, especially in light of their momentous national implications and their dominance in shifting the reach of sectarianism's hegemony. Echoing my research partner, Salma, in her concluding remarks:

> *We're on the right path of resistance, but we can never do anything. We are a tiny fraction of civil society attempting to resist in the tiny scope of municipal elections in a tiny country. Power is so much bigger than us, the geopolitical reality always puts things in perspective[46].*

In light of these considerations, I return to my original question: What, then, does it mean to resist? If this research has constituted any revelations, my hope is that they exposed the necessity to complicate the binaries of agency and resistance, ideology and opposition, freedom and domination. Henceforward, we need to consider the discourse around resistance outside of its conceptual realm and extend the theorization of counter-hegemonic success to

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[46] Follow-up interview with Salma on April 15, 2018.

include its pragmatic materialization in its situated spatial contexts. We also need to consider the material and political economic bases for resistance, whether within individual acts or social movements, to achieve a more nuanced recipe for the realization of contesting hegemony. Finally, we must examine hegemonic relations within and beyond their regional borders and spheres of influence, to account for geopolitical histories and power-relations in dictating the fate of local resistance fields.

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Title of Study:

"Toeing the Sectarian Line": Negotiations between the Spatial, Economic, and Ideological Consumption and Production of Counter-hegemonic Resistance for "Beirut Madinati."

Purpose and General Description of the Study

My name is Rasha Younes and I am a master's student at Central European University, writing my thesis in the Sociology and Social Anthropology Department. I will be interviewing a number of participants based on their affiliation with and knowledge about the movement "Beirut Madinati." The project will last until June 13, 2018.

Participation

Your participation involves one in-person interview, and a possible follow-up either in person or by telephone, depending on your availability and comfort. The interview will last for one hour and may be extended if needed.

Confidentiality

I will be asking you a few questions related to my research on the movement "Beirut Madinati." Please be reminded that you can stop the interview, skip a question or more, and/or decide to discontinue the entire participation process at any time. With your permission, I will be recording this interview using a voice-recorder and taking notes manually as we are speaking. I will type these notes on a computer after the interview and keep them on a password protected file on a flash drive that I will store in a locked space. You have the option to select what you want me to include or not include from our conversation. I will give you a pseudonym instead of using your real name, and never refer to you by your real name in my notes or my written research. I will also be careful to destroy and permanently delete written material as well as emails and contact information following the completion of this project in June 2018. I will

share my contact information with you, so feel free to contact me at any time regarding your participation in my project. At the end of the interview, I will ask you if there are any portions of the interview you want to be "off the record". I will then remove them from my notes.

Risks of participating in the study

The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those experienced in everyday life.

Benefits to participants or others

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. However, you may find it interesting to talk about the issues addressed in the research and it may be beneficial to the field and to future clients or individuals who have experienced similar interests.

Compensation

The will be no compensation for participating in this research.

Deception

There is no deception used in this study.

Voluntary participation

Your participation is completely voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to answer. If you choose not to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of any benefits for not participating.

Questions about the research and rights of research participants

If you should have any questions about the research, please feel free to call or email the Principal Investigator, Rasha Younes, (Younes_racha@student.ceu.edu; +36709499553).

I am 18 or older: Yes _____   No_____

I have read this consent form or it has been read to me: Yes_____   No_____

I have had all of my questions about the study answered to my satisfaction. Yes____   No

I have been given a copy of this consent form.   Yes_____   No_____

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I agree to participate in this research. Yes_____ No_____

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____Date: _____

Interviewer Name (please print) _____

Signature_____ Date:_____

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about what was happening in 2016 around the municipal elections.

2. Can you describe what you were doing at the time of the municipal elections?

3. Which factors, in your opinion, led to the emergence of "Beirut Madinati?"

4. How did you get involved with "Beirut Madinati?" Can you tell me about your involvement from the beginning until the present?

5. How would you define sectarianism?

6. Tell me about your personal experience with sectarianism in Lebanon.

7. How would you describe "Beirut Madinati" to someone who has not heard of it?

8. Who does "Beirut Madinati" represent?

9. Where does "Beirut Madinati" operate, and how did you choose that space?

10. How, in your opinion, is "Beirut Madinati" resisting sectarianism?

11. What distinguishes "Beirut Madinati" from other counter-sectarian movements and entities that have emerged since 2015?

12. Describe a day of work at "Beirut Madinati."

13. Tell me about the sources of funding and capital flow for "Beirut Madinati?" In other words, where does the money come from?

14. What are the main expenses for "Beirut Madinati"'s operation, from the electoral campaign to daily expenditure?

15. What have been the obstacles or challenges that "Beirut Madinati" has encountered? How have you dealt with these challenges?

16. Have there been compromises that "Beirut Madinati" had to make to its sectarian counterparts? If so, what are these compromises?

17. Have you encountered any conflict from within the organization, between its members and organizers? If so, can you elaborate on these conflicts?

18. How have the vision, mission, and objectives of "Beirut Madinati" evolved or changed since its inception?

19. In which ways do you think that "Beirut Madinati" failed? What would you do differently if you were given the chance to start over?

20. Is there anything you would like to add or discuss?

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