Facing Sectarianism

Non-Sectarian Collective Action in Lebanese Society

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Cover page: One of the advertisements of Beirut Madinati during the campaign in 2016. It shows candidates together with citizens living in Beirut with the logo of Beirut Madinati and the text: 'We are going to vote on 8 May 2016'. An activist comments on the advertisement: "This is as well something that we were at all times doing, which will enhance this idea of multiplicity that was among us. We were at all times featuring figures, not only our candidates, but from all walks of life. Young, old, not emphasising their sectarian origins, but at the same time really insisting on this plurality. And I think this is what broke this sectarian taboo associated with usual traditional politics."[1]

[1] Author's interview with P10, communication coordinator and Collegiate Body, 25-04-2018

ABSTRACT

This thesis sheds light on how a non-sectarian movement manoeuvres in and aims to impact a field of sectarian politics in Lebanon. In particular, it examines the rise and decline of Beirut Madinati, a non-sectarian political movement that campaigned for the 2016 municipal elections, in a society where sectarian divides are entrenched in politics, the economy and social life. The thesis analyses the case through collective action from a strategic action field perspective, to allow for understanding in structuration and the dynamics of change and stability of a sectarian society.

Informed by qualitative research, the thesis contends that while Beirut Madinati strategically responded to the sectarian environment in order to reach out, sectarianism proved too dominant to effectively sustain collective action and change the status quo. Nevertheless, given the novel way in which Beirut Madinati engaged in collective action, the thesis underscores its long-term impact on the field of sectarian politics in Lebanon.

KEY WORDS

Non-Sectarian Collective Action, Sectarianism, Strategic Action Field, Divided Societies, Lebanon, Post-Conflict Society

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Abbreviations

CB – Collegiate Body

GA – General Assembly

ISC – Interim Steering Committee

LADE – Lebanese Association or Democratic Elections

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

PSP – Progressive Socialist Party

SC – Steering Committee

SMO – Social Movement Organisation

Introduction

Rooted in the government's failure to provide basic services and in a wave of protests that followed, a new, non-aligned political movement emerged in Lebanon in 2015. 'Beirut Madinati', Arabic for 'Beirut, my city', gave demands such as transparency and better waste management a new political platform (Chaaban, Haidar, Ismail, Khoury & Shidrawi, 2016). Led by activists that were not affiliated to any party, it pledged to improve the wellbeing of all those living and working in Beirut. It was dedicated to empowering citizens and to securing social justice, transparency, effective policy and cooperation.

Presenting itself as a valid alternative to the status quo, Beirut Madinati emerged amidst a political arena of sectarian divides. Sectarianism denotes a "socioeconomic and political power that produces and reproduces sectarian subjects and modes of political subjectification and mobilisation through a dispersed ensemble of institutional, clientelist and discursive practices" (Salloukh, Barakat, Al-Habbal, Khattab & Mikaelian, 2015, p.3). It is a highly pervasive system entrenched in politics, the economy, ideologies and social life. It reaches far into Lebanese society, dividing political parties, media outlets, sport clubs, and private educational institutions along socio-religious lines. Even public space and urban security reflects and perpetuates socio-political divides in Lebanon (Fawaz, Harb & Gharbieh, 2012). Rather than loyalty to the state, the system generates loyalties to the sectarian communities and political and religious elite, reproduced via network of clientelism and patronage: "The distorted incentive structure makes it difficult for most people to even think of viable alternatives to the political economy and ideological hegemony of the sectarian system" (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.3).

Within such a rigid, pervasive arena, Beirut Madinati campaigned in the 2016 municipal elections. Though it failed to gain seats in the city council because of the winner-takes-all system at the municipal level in Lebanon, it managed to mobilise people from across the sectarian spectrum (Cambanis, 2017, para.2). Launched just eight month prior to the elections, it surprised the political establishment with its large-scale popular support and winning more than 30% of the votes casted (Cambanis, 2017, para.3). It appeared to be a rather unique phenomenon in Lebanon: Beirut Madinati gained the largest portion of total votes of any opposition movement since 1998, while it was non-sectarian and not affiliated to any established party (Chaaban et al, 2016, p.8). As the difference between the winning and the second list of Beirut Madinati was small, it formed a serious opposition to the sectarian establishment.

Despite historic electoral results of Beirut Madinati, support and commitment slowly reduced after spring 2016. When the campaign was over, internal struggles on the desired future

path and external obstacles of sectarian society proved difficult to overcome. Today, it still is committed to developing a political alternative at the city level of Beirut (Harb, 2016, p.19). It works as an alternative political platform and a municipal watchdog, and is active in different neighbourhoods and organises local protests, yet, is also renegotiating its position and future path to sustain as a non-sectarian movement.

Nevertheless, the development of a peak in support in the early phase, and its relative decline after the elections, make an interesting case when taking the sectarian organisation of Lebanese society into account. Reaching out across sectarian confines as a new, non-sectarian political movement, and sustaining support against traditional sectarian politics, is difficult in a society entrenched with sectarian politics. The question that thus arises is how Beirut Madinati exactly manoeuvres in Beirut transcending sectarian confines and subsequently, what its possibilities are to impact the sectarian system. Therefore, from the complication follows the puzzle statement: How did Beirut Madinati engage in collective action to gain political influence beyond sectarian divides in Beirut, Lebanon between September 2015 and May 2018?

I approach this question through a lens of non-sectarian collective action. The meaning of collective action can best be understood through the concept of contentious politics, which involves "interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other actors' interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties" (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015, p.7). To account for holistic, dynamic interactions between structure and agency, I adopt a 'strategic action field' perspective of collective action (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). This perspective, in which social actors interact on the basis of a shared idea of a meso-level social order, enables me to understand change as well as stability of a field, in this case sectarian politics, related to the rise and decline of a social actor. It also enables to perceive sectarianism in Lebanon not as a given and fixed structure, but rather as a reproducing practice of governance (Salloukh et al., 2015).

The argument I make is that Beirut Madinati emergence reflects a broader field of political opposition in Lebanon that challenges sectarian politics. Beirut Madinati has been able to gain large support by engaging in innovative action and statically responding to the sectarian system, in response to the momentum of an escalating crisis and protests. Particularly the municipal level in Beirut; fostering an urban, inclusive identity; creating a niche; and making use of elite allies would appeal to a large, diverse consistency in 2016. It was thereby able to effectively disturb the social order of sectarian politics for a short period of time. At the same time, factors such as internal struggle and external obstacles that led to the decline of Beirut Madinati, demonstrate the continued dominance of sectarian politics and the settlement of the

field of sectarian politics. Nevertheless, due to its novel way of collective action, I argue that Beirut Madinati has impacted the political order of sectarianism, and shows potential for incremental change. Through qualitative research, I aim to tell the stories of dedicated activists, and how they manoeuvre in a highly sectarianized political environment, and interpret rising and declining periods of support for Beirut Madinati including the stories of hope and despair, pride and disillusionment, perseverance and resistance.

Following studies of Nagle (2016) and Touquet (2015), as well as the shared perceptions of many interviewees in this thesis, I use the term 'non-sectarian collective action' to refer to the case of Beirut Madinati. This is because the term 'cross-sectarian' implies that the boundaries of groups remain intact. Instead, participants see sectarian categorisation as totally irrelevant and/or are against its use in political organisation and social interactions. During the interviews, activists emphasise that they think and act in a non-sectarian political identity and stress the fluidity of the groups: "People from Beirut Madinati (…) are beyond any possible use of their sectarian identities within politics."[2] Others, particularly non-supports of Beirut Madinati, express how they would rather keep the sectarian affiliation to the private sphere, and differentiate between people and politicians in sectarian antagonism[3]. My choice to not use the term cross-sectarian thus aligns with Brubaker's (2004) idea of moving beyond groupism. He defines groupism as a common tendency to regard groups as fixed and primary actors of social conflict, and to treat them as "substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed" (p.35). This tendency, and to an extent the term cross-sectarian mobilisation, perpetuates the existence of sectarian groups. Non-sectarian collective action, then, allows us to conceptualise sectarian groups in Lebanon in "relational, processual, dynamic, eventful and disaggregated terms" (p.38).

Initially, I was inspired by Milan's (2016) term of 'collective action beyond ethnicity', as the term implies that "social actors deliberately supersede ethno-national antagonism, activating identities alternative to the dominant ethnonational one" (p.21), which would reflect Beirut Madinati's case well. Yet, with using 'beyond' she refers to very concrete day-to-day terms of beyond-sectarian practices, while Beirut Madinati clearly shows transcending political sectarian divides as a clear ideal or norm as well (Milan, 2016, p.21). Thus, by using the term non-sectarian', I aim to do justice to social actors that ideologically intent to build a new, civic identity away from sectarian identity, and who strategically work to erase sectarian antagonism by including individuals from all groups. Important to note is term does not mean 'anti-sectarian', as identification with a sectarian community can still be important for individuals, but they are

[2] Author's interview with P10, communication coordinator CB, 26-04-2018
[3] Author's interviews with P29, supporter Amal Movement, 19-04-2018; and P30, political figure Hezbollah, 19-04-2018

rather against the institutionalised and politicised form of sectarianism. This point can also be illustrated by a small joke that a participant told[4]: If you would ask someone about his/her religion, the answer would be "I am atheist." In Lebanon, people then ask: "What kind of atheist are you?" to which the answer is "I am Christian atheist, or Muslim atheist." It shows a strong identification with a cultural aspect of religion, which is related to the community rather than to one's personal religious beliefs or political ideologies.

Finally, while a vast body of literature studies collective action, far less attention has been placed on collective action on post-conflict societies (Earle, 2011, p.4). While several scholars have made useful contributions to collective action in sectarian and ethnically divided societies in particular, these remain relatively few (Milan, 2016). Within these, while research focussed on collective action along ethnic lines, particularly less attention has been given to movements that *transcend* divides. Empirically, the thesis adds to the knowledge on civil society and sectarianism in Lebanon, and to knowledge on avenues that have potential to alter violent facets within the sectarian system. Sectarianism's "distorted incentive structure devalues merit as a prerequisite for personal success and for access to public or private institutions, while the absence of rule of law and accountability allows innumerable forms of criminality (…) to pass with impunity" (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.7). Similarly, it hinders any peaceful reconciliation and cooperation in Lebanon, as sectarian ties can generate further hostilities and renewed conflict, particularly in a tenuous region with refugee influxes and antagonistic international alliances that surrounds Lebanon.

The thesis starts with the analytical frame and a review of the literature. I explain the analytical framework of collective action from a strategic action field perspective, and from a literature review, I show the gap in academic knowledge that it aims to fill. In chapter 2, I explain how I conducted my research and thereby elaborate on the research design, the data collection techniques, and challenges I faced during the approach.

In line with the emergence, electoral participation and decline of Beirut Madinati, I have structured the next chapters as follows: In chapter 3, I give a historical background and show how Beirut Madinati is an expression of a larger field of political opposition in Lebanon. In chapter 4, I analyse how Beirut Madinati aimed to reach out across sectarian groups, while avoiding being subsumed by sectarian politics itself. In chapter 5, I analyse the decline of Beirut Madinati, following from internal and external constraints. Finally, in chapter 6, by tapping into empirical data and theoretical studies, I analyse and reflect on the impact of Beirut Madinati, and its prospects as a movement that aims to break the sectarian mould. In the conclusion I synthesise the findings and provide suggestions for further investigation into this topic.

[4] Author's interview with P13, delegates coordinator, GA-member, 08-05-2018

Chapter 1
Analytical Framework and Literature Review

In this first chapter, I provide the analytical frame of collective action, and explain the perspective of a strategic action field that I adopt and that enables me to make sense of the case of Beirut Madinati. The frame provides indicators for the operationalisation of the research question as well. I then review the relevant empirical sources that have applied this analytical frame in similar settings, yet that have left a gap informing the focus of this thesis.

1.1 Collective action from a strategic field perspective

Why and how people collectively engage in action has intrigued social scientists for years. Early collective behaviour approaches described collective action in terms of unorganised frustration, violent impulses and resulting from large structural alterations such as modernisation (Walder, 2009, p.397). In the 1960s and 1970s, contemporary social movement theory emerged in response to this account of grievances and impulses. Three dominant approaches developed, departing from different ontological stances and underscoring different features in mobilisation.

Distancing itself from the irrational and unorganised social actor, recourse mobilisation focusses on rational behaviour, organisational capacities and recourses of movements. It emerged in response to Olsen's sociological collective action problem[5], which holds that few individuals will bear the costs to join social movements, because the benefits that they may reap are collective rather than individual (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2009, p.268). Therefore, explaining collective action requires a focus on incentives, career benefits, resources and organisational structures (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p.1216). For example, Kriesi (1996) shows the organisational dynamics adopted by social movements and illustrates different ways in which they develop; both their internal and external structuration, and their goals and strategies. Likewise, Diani (2004) argues that networks are vital for individual participation and activists' resource mobilisation efforts.

Countering the individualist ontological stance of recourse mobilisation, the political opportunity approach perceives political structures as primary factor that allow for, or constrain, mobilisation (Walder, 2009, p.396; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2009, p.266). It thereby departs from a structural ontological stance: The claims activists make, the supporters they mobilise, the tactics they adopt and the success they have primarily depend on the structural context. Tarrow (2011) defines political opportunities as "consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent –

[5] For more discussion on the collective action problem, see Walder (2009, p.399).

dimensions of the political environment or of change in that environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting expectations for success or failure" (p.32). Thus, political opportunity scholars investigate cycles of protest, explaining why a movement develops in a certain way, time and place (Tilly, 1995; McAdam, 1982).

A limitation of both approaches is that they underestimate – or simply ignore – ideology, values and commitment, and disregard the role of culture and meaning in their analyses (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2009, p.269). The third approach, framing processes, follows from precisely this limitation. Scholars such as Benford and Snow (2000) and Johnston and Klandermans (1995) argue that the other two perspectives have not satisfactory addressed the gap between objective preconditions and subjective purposes, nor the struggle over meaning making. This more cultural perspective does not only view social movements as carrying ideologies, but they are also "actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders and observers" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p.613). Benford & Snow (2000) define collective action frames as "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization" (p.614). Different types of frames give meaning with the formulation of problems, solutions and motivations.

In contrast to three separate traditions, that developed on competing footings and in different times, a cohesive approach with interacting components has increasingly become the consensus. For instance, resource mobilisation has been critiqued for its rather static, economic focus, as it is rooted in rational choice theory; and Jasper and Goodwin (2012, p.19) criticise political opportunity structures for simply 'finding' the actions of activists by 'reading' the context and thus neglecting the agency of multiple actors and their potential impact on political structures. Thus, rather than being incompatible, scholars as McAdam, McCarthy & Zald (1996), King (2007), and Jasper and Goodwin (2012) argue that political opportunity, resource mobilisation and framing processes interrelate and together provide a holistic understanding of collective action.

Allowing for dynamic interactions between structural changes and strategic action and of different actors, this thesis orients collective action towards the concept of 'strategic action field'. Building on collective action theory, institutional theory, and scholars as Pierre Bourdieu, Fligstein and McAdam (2012) conceptualise a strategic action field as a "constructed mesolevel social order in which actors (who can be individual or collective) are attuned to and interact with one another on the basis of shared (which is not to say consensual) understandings about the purposes of the field, relationships to others in the field (including who has power and why), and

the rules governing legitimate action in the field" (p.9). Each field is constructed through a common understanding of what is at stake in the field. Social actors compete and cooperate for power, plan actions, and negotiate strategies while they make sense of interactions, take their surrounding into account and sustain or alter order.

All collective actors are strategic action fields in themselves. Thus, in this view, social life consists of a myriad of overlapping and embedded fields that are related through various types of ties between them. Fligstein and McAdam (2012) see fields composed of incumbents, challengers and, often, governance units. Incumbents are those actors that have disproportionate influence in the organisation of a field, and whose interest and views reflect the prevailing reflected. Challengers wield little influence and are expected to "often grudgingly" conform to the dominant social structure, while awaiting chances to challenge the structure of the field (p.13). Governance units who supervise the compliance and smooth functioning in a field.

A field is labelled stable when actors are able to reproduce it over a longer period of time, generally through "the imposition of hierarchical power by a single dominant group", or through cooperation among actors that "is generally rooted in a combination of shared interests and a common collective identity" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p.14-15). Yet, through interaction of components of collective action, fields can transform: Following the interdependence of fields, a change in one field forms constraints or opportunities in other fields. Organisational resources are key for mobilising and sustaining action, while collective action frames enable individuals to attribute opportunities and constraints, construct identity and motivation, and interpret what other social actors are doing. Although incumbents enjoy the dominant position and are able to reproduce the stability of a field of a long period of time, in rare instances, "oppositional logics may carry the day as challengers successfully sustain mobilization and slowly begin to institutionalize new practices and rules" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p.22).

Fligstein and McAdam (2012) are of the opinion that strategic action fields are fundamental components of collective action in society. Allowing for structure and agency, and acknowledging the multitude of players in collective action, the concept of field is analytically useful because it clarifies the way social actors have potential to challenge and refurbish a social order; in this case, ruptures in the dominant sectarian settlement. Thereby, the concepts of incumbents and challengers help perceive sectarianism in Lebanon not as a given structure, but rather as a reproducing practice of governance (Salloukh et al., 2015; Kingson, 2013). Finally, it also helps to understand Beirut Madinati's emergence, electoral participation, and period of decline.

Thus, I adopt the analytical frame of non-sectarian collective action, from a social field perspective, including the concepts of strategic action field, incumbents and challengers. I further operationalize the analytical frame in the several indicators. First, for the analysis of political opportunity structures, these are: The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system; the stability of a broad set of elite alignments; the presence or absence of elite allies; and the state's capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam, 1996, p.27). Second, I operationalise the organisational dynamics with indicators of Kriesi (1996, p.154-156), which are internal structuration, external structuration and goal orientations and action repertoires. Third, Benford and Snow (2000) identify three core tasks of framing: Diagnostic framing, or problem identification; prognostic framing, or articulation of solutions; and motivational framing, the rationale for action. Linked to motivational framing is collective identity, which Melucci (1995) conceptualises as "the processes through which a collective becomes a collective" (p.43). He argues that collective identity is constructed through activists' interactions and framing of certain cultural aspects. This concept brings particular interesting background information, as it directly relates to transcending boundaries. Therefore, these four indicators I use for the operationalisation of the framing component of collective action.

1.2 Collective action in divided societies

Although a vast body of literature studies collective action, to date, little attention has been placed on the issue of mobilisation in relation to situations of fragile states, including divided, post-war societies (Milan, 2016; Earle, 2011). A review shows that there is "limited material in the public domain that addresses the issue of social movements with respect to state fragility specifically" (Earle, 2011, p.4). More specifically, most studies that address divided societies focus on mobilisation along the dominant groups in society (For example: Smithley, 2002; Beinin & Vairel, 2013). However, social movement research has only paid minor attention to how movements in divided societies particularly *transcend* divides (Bosi & De Fazio, 2017), and thus to dynamics in the group that falls outside the dominant social categories within societies as Lebanon (Nagle, 2016).

Making important contributions to understanding collective action transcending divides, a first set of scholars have addressed *the way* of engagement in collective action. First, it includes examination of how a divided society constrains, more than enables, non-sectarian mobilisation. Nagle (2016) examines the consequences of the confessionalist political system on one-issue movements such as the LGTB in Northern-Ireland and Lebanon. By showing a difference between corporate (Lebanon) and liberal (Northern Ireland) consociations, he shows how liberal

forms provide more opportunities for different identity groups. On a whole, he argues that power sharing is "deleterious" for social groups, for example because they are portrayed as threat to the ethnic community and their rights are used in ethnonational contestation (p.185). Nagle's view is shared by Cera Murtagh (2016). By using the 2013-2014 protests in Bosnia as case study, Murtagh analyses how the movement navigated in a highly ethnicised political environment. In one part of her analysis, she shows that political parties and authorities used manipulation and delegitimation to break the activism, and that all three blocs (Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs) spread the "ethnonational spin" portraying mobilisation as a threat against each group's autonomy (p.159). Nagle (2016, p.27) also argues that because institutions are divided in mistrust, there is a fierce distributive conflict over public goods. This is on the one hand a constraint, as it places people against each other. Yet on the other hand it may create space for cross-sectarian collective action, since it may be felt as a collective mistrust in politics.

An important contribution to the issue of framing is from Heleen Touquet (2015), who analyses the Sarajevo protests of 2008. She argues that activists were able to mobilise the local population by employing collective identity frames that avoided a reference to ethnicity. An 'apolitical' frame displayed the omnipresent mistrust in politics, and also a frame of local identity and Sarajevo citizenship was adopted. The frame referred to the cultural, urban environment of Sarajevo, as distinct from rural areas, and to 'old' shared values of tolerance among Sarajevo inhabitants. In these ways, both frames "ultimately resurrected other social cleavages instead of ethnic ones" (Touquet, 2015, p.406). Similar frames are found in other studies. As stated, Murtagh (2016, p.150) examines how the 2013-2014 plenums movement in Bosnia used frames and political engagement strategies in a highly ethicised context. Similar to Touquet, she illustrates how the activists adopted frames of shared mistrust in politics, local identity and civic solidarity. For example, protests chants included reference to 'us', meaning every Bosnian citizen, and 'them', meaning the entire political elite. Thus, Murtagh (2016) and also Milan (2016) highlight that the frames all refer to social divisions rather than ethnic ones. Yet, they additionally demonstrate that shared feeling of injustice were widespread. The injustice frame, which is often present in movements (Benford & Snow, 2000, p.616), largely resulted from a governmental deadlock and a failure to provide for social security.

Furthermore, Milan (2016), Murtagh (2016) and Belyeava (2017) touch upon the role of networks, forms and strategies in enabling mobilisation beyond ethnicity. By adopting a comparative approach, Milan (2016) explores how the territorial and social scope of contention varied across three waves of cross-sectarian mobilisation in Bosnia. She argues that network ties between activists in the first 2012 wave had a "beyond ethnic" dimension and contributed to

cross-sectarian re-mobilisation (p.210). Yet, the activists refused to form a network with other actors as they aimed to remain 'apolitical', and thereby failed to build broad-based alliances. Her point relates to findings of Murtagh (2016), who similarly shows that the movement refrained from forming a party and alliances. This decision was informed partly by the deep mistrust in political parties and an unwillingness to be associated with those lacking accountability. By focussing on the success of plenums, Nina Belyeava (2017) gives a slightly different view. She poses a question in terms of social movement outcomes, and her evidence also provides insights into non-ethnic movements. Namely, she argues that the plenums as intercommunal platforms were crucial for shaping cross-ethnic identities: They were a "very important beginning of the societal transformation, including discovery of the power of cross-ethnic mobilization and building new post-ethnic identity" (Belyeava, 2017, p.119). Thus, by creating a space where people could interact, the movement mobilised people from different groups.

The above studies provide important insights into non-sectarian collective action, focussing on structural constraints, action repertoires, frames, networks and the strategy of plenums. However, they all leave many questions within internal organisational dynamics largely unanswered. Milan (2016) and Murtagh (2016) touch upon the informal network among activists and with authorities. Yet, although highly relevant, networks relate to the external structuration of a movement, which leaves out the internal structuration of organisational dynamics. How, then, does internal structuration as leadership, formal membership and flows of finances enable cross-sectarian mobilisation in divided societies? To summarise the gap, Nagle (2016) similarly states that: "The organizational aspects of nonsectarian mobilization need further examination. In short, this area of analysis examines the way that movement leaders and participants are able to build and sustain movements that contain members from a wide section of the divided society" (p.186). Therefore, by including membership, leadership and finances, this thesis aims to partly address the gap of internal structuration of organisational dynamics.

Furthermore, in contrast to the question Touquet (2015), Milan (2016) and Murtagh (2016) pose on *how* a movement engages in non-sectarian collective action, other scholars have examined its potential *impact*. Scholars focus on a movement's outcome for changing identities and political institutions, or on its function in peacebuilding. Empirical discussion centres around the level of success of the 2013-2014 protests in Bosnia, in which plenums developed, a bottom-up platform for dialogue. Asim Mujkić (2016) approaches the topic in a philosophical deliberation describing the nationalistic, capitalist and undemocratic nature of Bosnia's divided society. He focusses on the gap between the elite and the people as a result of capitalist power structures: "Two decades long entrenched alienation of ethno-nationalist oligarchies has become

so wide that there is now an unbridgeable gap between them and their citizens" (p.226). The protests showed solidarity and civic features beyond ethno-nationalism, and although they were not able to make any direct difference, Mujkić believes that the solidary and democratic nature affects long-term consciousness. In contrast, in reflections on the same protests, Bieber (2013) is more sceptical and argues that efforts against the status quo "have largely failed, because they have been unable to build a genuine cross-ethnic constituency, or the country agenda, that would make it difficult for existing elites to dismiss or ignore them" (p.38). In contrast to Bieber, Nagle (2016, p.23) shows how non-sectarian movements can have a much more subtle impact as side-effect. By examining non-sectarian movements in Lebanon and Northern Ireland, he shows that the different activities that movements engage in, such as protecting shared public spaces (urban reconstruction projects) and fighting impunity (victim's group), can destabilise political institutions and ethnic privatisation (p.185). They thereby contribute to peacebuilding and create a more interethnic outcome.

These studies provide important insights, since they shed light on the significance and impact of social movements. However, Beirut Madinati is different than the social movements Meier (2015), Bieber (2013), Milan (2016), Murtagh (2016) and Nagle (2016) examined, since it *did* aim to enter the political level. It participated in the 2016 municipal campaigns and will most likely do so again in the next elections in 2022. This would suggest that political mistrust and 'apolitical' frames would apply differently or not at all. How, then, does Beirut Madinati articulate the problem around which it mobilises in order to transcend traditional sectarian divides? Moreover, Murtagh (2016) shows that refraining from party formation was a strategy in light of constraining governmental manipulation. Yet, how did Beirut Madinati perceive the constraining sectarian structure in Lebanon and why did it then adopt the strategy to run for elections? How did this develop after the elections? Thus, while cohesively incorporating different components of collective action in a strategic action field perspective, and specifically focussing on remaining questions from the literature, I aim to provide an answer to how Beirut Madinati engaged in non-sectarian collective action to gain political influence in Lebanon.

Chapter 2
Methodology

From having drafted the analytical context of the thesis in the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter is to explain the method of the research. I outline and clarify the steps that are taken to address the research question. I first provide the research strategy that includes the epistemological and ontological nature of the research question; and the setting of the research. I then elaborate on the data collection techniques and the sampling method used, ending with a discussion on the challenges and pitfalls of my approach.

2.1 Research Strategy and setting

Because the research puzzle is about *understanding* non-sectarian collective action, the epistemological nature is interpretivist, assuming that meaning is context-dependent, culturally-specific and unpredictable (Tuli, 2010, p.99-101). In other words, collective action in the case of Beirut Madinati can best be understood from *within* the social rules, via perceptions of informants, rather than that it can be explained by causal laws from *without*. This is because the action of non-sectarian mobilisation derives its meaning from shared rules and ideas in social life. Furthermore, the research is structurationist in terms of ontology. This stance assumes the interaction between agency and structure. The field perspective of collective action is holistic as it takes into account the interaction between agency of individuals and social groups on the one hand, and structures on the other. In light of the above epistemological and ontological stances, a small-N, qualitative research strategy is most effective for my research. It allows for subjective and open answers, and for a comprehensive understanding the perceptions of the participants, including particularities and specificities of individuals cases.

I have set the research in Beirut, Lebanon, as Beirut Madinati has been active in this city. Moreover, the restrictive nature of the highly divided environment of Lebanon for mobilisation gives insights in the dynamic interplay of non-sectarian collective action. Indeed, as Murtagh (2016) underscores, "the space for civic mobilizations is, by definition, limited in a deeply divided society" (p.149). The time frame is from the movement's emergence in September 2015 to May 2018, with a period of three and a half months field research (February-May 2018).

2.2 Data collection techniques

By way of qualitative research strategy, I used three different techniques to collect data. By using three different techniques, and thus relying on different sources and groups of people, I aimed to

triangulate the data for the purpose increased validation of the research and to gain deeper understanding into the phenomenon (Flick, 2004, p.178). The techniques I used are in-depth interviews in combination with participant observation and limited document resources.

2.2.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews was the principal data collection technique, as they generate a detailed personal perspective (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.60). Interviews allow for understanding and clarification of personal motivations, decisions, impact and outcomes, and the way of speaking contributed to understanding as well. The conducted semi-structured and open-ended interviews, based on a topic list. It allowed interviewees to elaborate on what they found most important and to add information where necessary, yet at the same time it ensured that certain questions were answered.

I selected participants via non-probability sampling. This means that the units were purposefully, rather than randomly, selected in line with salient features of the puzzle (Curtis & Curtis, 2011, p.36). In the case at hand, the feature was the type of connection to Beirut Madinati, to ensure the relevance of the sample. It was thus member-identified, because the individuals connected to or purposely not connected to Beirut Madinati were sampled for the research. The sample technique was snowball sampling, which was fruitful because activists were part of a network in the movement. They particularly knew who was best familiar with or responsible for formal aspects of the social movement organisation, and who I should talk to for different views. I started with two contacts I had prior to the research. Additionally, I used convenience sampling select individuals who are critical towards Beirut Madinati, or supportive of another political movement, after which I combined it with snowball sampling.

In total, I conducted 34 interviews, with three different participant groups: 1) very active supporters and organisers; 2) mere sympathisers; and 3) people disengaged of politics, and people active in or supporting other political parties including Amal Movement, Hezbollah, Lebanese Forces, the Free Patriotic Movement and the People's Movement. Of those 34 interviewees, 18 are in the first group, 6 in the second, and 10 in the third group. I made this choice to hear different existing opinions towards the movement, in order to be able to draw a more nuanced and critical picture and to gain an overall understanding of the situation. The difference between the groups is the following: participants that I allocated to group 1), were either the initiators of the movement; being active from early stages in 2015; or individuals who had worked intensively in the movement, for example as coordinator or campaigner on the streets. The second group includes participants that ideologically support Beirut Madinati or voted for it in 2016, but that

have not been active in a role during or after the campaign. The third group includes those people that are critical towards Beirut Madinati, because they are disengaged of politics, or support another political movement. In appendix A I have included a general profile description per participant.

The profile of the groups, besides their type of connection to Beirut Madinati, was the following: The age range was diverse in all groups, with both young activists, often being students or young professionals, and older activists working for NGOs, universities, in politics, in urban planning, in local governance, engineering, or as company owner. In all groups, the majority's highest level of education was university. All participants were living in the urban region of Beirut, or just outside, yet for some their origin was outside Beirut. It followed from the interviews that participants were affiliated to different sectarian groups, yet it was different for each individual to what extent they identified themselves through this community. Regarding gender, 13 participants were female, and 21 were male. In the three groups, the division for female-male was respectively: nine-nine, three-three, and one-nine, which I further discuss in terms of positionality in the section below.

Although participants were in some cases well-known activists or politicians, and although many indicated that they would not mind having their names in the research, I decided to not disclose the full personal details of the participants. I recognise that full anonymity and confidentiality reduces transparency of the research. Yet, I made this choice based on the protection of the participants, being aware that a country's security situation can change over time, as well as to ensure confidentiality in the small community around Beirut Madinati (Lewis, 2003, p.67). Instead of their names, I refer to participants as 'P' plus an assigned number of the interviewee.

All interviews were conducted in English and took place in Beirut. The interviews were recorded with explicit permission of the interviewee. In five cases, the interviewee desired to talk without audio recorder, indicating it either at the beginning or during the interview, after which the audio recorder was switched off. Key notes were made during all interviews. The tapes were fully transcribed, and systematically coded based on the foundation structure of the three components of collective action. Recurring themes, ideas, sub-themes and sub-ideas were grouped, analysed and synthesised under this structure.

2.2.2 Participant observation and document research

The second data collection technique used was participant observation. I made use of political ethnography to experience events and interactions, as similar as possible to how members of the

group might experience events and interactions (Curtis & Curtis, 2011, p.88). I thereby aimed to gain extra insight into the background and natural setting of Beirut Madinati, and into how politics is performed and experienced. Such understandings are not accessible by interviews alone, as participant observation allows for understanding events as they occur. Political ethnography, specifically, is well-equipped to capture "the practice of politics (strategic choices) and the signification of these practices (culture/meaning-making)" (Joseph & Auyero, 2007, p.3). The observations brought insights into the everyday experience of politics, which is particularly interesting in the light of interviewees' account on redefining 'politics' in Beirut Madinati's mobilisation, and how it challenged the traditional and sectarian political hegemony. Moreover, the confusion, emotions and uncertainties that are inherent in political action (Joseph & Auyero, 2007, p.3), were observable in the events as well. Also the meaning of location of the events, and the link of the observations with the notions of locality and inclusivity that was reported in the interviews, contributed to a holistic understanding.

I looked at several dimensions in the observations, and structured field notes under these dimensions: the time and physical location; the objects in the environment; the actors and people involved; action and behaviour, including the emotions expressed by actors; and activities and goals of the event. I was invited to two different public events; one neighbourhood dialogue, and one public gathering for the statement of Beirut Madinati's political standpoint (see Appendix A). I made field notes during the events, hand-written and on mobile phone, which I complemented with reflective notes after the event. As the events were in Arabic, language was a significant limitation, that I further elaborate on below.

The third and last data collection technique was the analysis of secondary document recourses, and is regarded as an addition to interviews. This technique invites us to triangulate the data and to find background information on the interviewees' accounts, and to understand the details of structuration in the organisation. The documents include: the organisation's bylaws, texts from Beirut Madinati's website, political programs, social media pages (particularly Facebook), announcements for public gatherings and protests, newspapers and reports, releases in the media or on social media in which Beirut Madinati expresses its view on a situation (e.g. parliamentary elections). The documents were selected based on the level of relevance regarding the internal structuration of the movement, the necessity to triangulate the data, and on interviewees' opinion or recommendation. Almost all relevant documents were in both English and Arabic, so language did not form a major barrier.

2.3 Challenges and limitations

The method to address the research questions had several challenges and limitations. The first and most important one was the language barrier, as I have insufficient understanding of Arabic for conducting research. It is therefore that I chose interviews as my primary data collection technique, and participant observation and document research as complementary (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.57). Because education in Lebanon is multilinguistic (English, French, Arabic), the participant's English language skills were highly sufficient and for none of the interviewees I needed a translator. Yet, the events of participation were entirely in Arabic, which was a limitation as I was unable to grasp valuable information and spoken interaction in the speech. To overcome this language barrier as much as possible, I made use of the help of an interviewee who translated parts of what was said during event 2. I also analysed videos of the two events that were posted on Beirut Madinati's Facebook page, with the help of a translator: one young professional working for an NGO in Beirut; and one was a student from Syria living in the Netherlands, both native speakers in Levantine Arabic. I also asked them for the bylaws and several short Arabic sentences. Furthermore, during the events I tried as much as possible to focus on extra-linguistic factors, or that what is unspoken, performative or a structuring element. These are for example the actions of the moderator, physical group interactions and the meaning of location of the event.

Furthermore, although the groups are diverse, not all relevant sub-groups were included in the research population. First, the population did not include individuals working at the *municipal* political level, which would have had added value because municipal civil servants or politicians would have had an insider perspective from the municipal institution. Nevertheless, I was able to interview a politician and political candidates from the parliament-level, and candidates running for the municipal council. Also, media elite would have been interesting for the results, as they contributed to Beirut Madinati's effective mobilisation in 2016. Last, the profile of the participants is limited to individuals with university-level education, mainly resulting from the middle-class nature of Beirut Madinati, and my conscious decision to replicate this in the non-supporters group. Yet, it might have influenced the data, as sectarianism has a class dimension.

Furthermore, I was limited in the events I planned to visit, because parliamentary elections were held in Lebanon on 6 May 2018. Although former members of Beirut Madinati ran for parliament, Beirut Madinati itself decided not to. It meant that Beirut Madinati was less active during the campaigning months prior to the parliamentary elections, because of a dominant presence of the political parties running for parliament. Therefore, less events were

scheduled, and outreach was reduced. Nevertheless, the parliamentary elections also influenced the dynamics within Beirut Madinati, fostering interesting insights into the period after the municipal elections.

Also the complex voting system in Lebanon created a challenge for my research. In Lebanon, a citizen's right to vote is based on the location of his or her ancestor's registration. This means that although this person can live for generations in Beirut, he or she is not able to vote for the city council or regional candidate because the registration number corresponds to a different part of the country. Because I noticed that people were active in Beirut Madinati disregarding their location of registration, I decided to also include people who were not registered in Beirut. This decision was also based on Beirut Madinati's claim that it supports all people living in Beirut, and not only those registered. Nevertheless, I ensured to have Beirut voters being represented in the research population as well.

A final reflection on positionality sheds light on how the relation of my position towards participants and the environment may have influenced the research process. Particularly my white, western-European background, age and class have determined positionality. My white appearance and insufficient understanding of Arabic placed me outside the community of study, as it was noticeable that I was not 'one of them'. Additionally, I particularly lacked understanding of the perception of non-Beirut Madinati supporters, the third group. This is because my middle-class background, political ideology, gender and young age cohered more with the sub-community of Beirut Madinati's activists than with supporters of traditional political parties. I shared a similar academic, progressive and ideological background with the former group, and also my gender aligned more with the activists in the first and second group, having only one female participant in the last group. In this last regard, I am aware that my views as a young woman from the Netherlands may be differently shared by many in Lebanon, and that my cultural background and being a women might have affected in engagements in the interviews. These factors may have influenced the findings by prompting genuine ideologies of the third group in particular. Yet, I have aimed to limit this bias by being aware and critical of this positionality from the early phase of research.

Chapter 3
A Non-Sectarian Political Opposition Field

The aim of this chapter is twofold: By drawing on theoretical studies and reports, I provide the historical background of Beirut Madinati including the opportunities that led to its emergence. Further, by drawing on empirical data, I demonstrate that Beirut Madinati can be conceived of as an expression of a political opposition field that is embedded in a larger field of sectarian politics.

From broad to narrow, I first briefly describe the origins and reproduction of the broader field of sectarian politics, in which political and socioeconomic elite are the dominant social actors that sustain the sectarian social order, together with socio-political processes in related fields. I then discuss the development of an embedded political opposition field that gave rise to Beirut Madinati's emergence.

3.1 The stable field of sectarian politics in post-war Lebanon

Sectarian divisions in Lebanon are a fairly recent construct. They are rooted in the development of the nation-state under influence of European and regional powers, in the early modern age. In the 1840s, Ottoman and European rule established an institutionalised power-sharing arrangement between Druze and Maronite communities (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.13). Since then, power-sharing arrangements and subsequent divides have been reconstructed and deepened through French colonial rule, increased plurality with the enlargement of Lebanon's boundaries, and a 'National Pact' between the Muslim and Christian elite after independence in 1943 (Kingston, 2013, p.41).

The current framework of confessionalism, in which political power is proportionally distributed among the eighteen official sectarian groups, is built on the Ta'if peace agreement that ended the civil war in 1989 (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.22). While the civil war was multifaceted, it intensified existing divides along sectarian lines, following serious human rights violations including rape, torture and enforced disappearance and over 140,000 deaths (Smaira, 2014, p.1). The war also divided Lebanon in more separate, ethnically homogeneous spaces, enabling sectarian power enforcement over small, local areas (Nagle, 2016, p.33). The Ta'if accord reinforced rather than ended the sectarian order that reflected the pre-war period, and sectarian communities became the pillars of Lebanese political system through institutional power sharing (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.20). It includes a council of ministers with an equal representation of Christians and Muslims and a further allocation of seats for all 18 official sects; a mutual sectarian veto; and a 'troika' whereby decision-making became to rely on agreement of the three largest

groups – the Maronite president, the Sunni prime minster and the Shia speaker of parliament. Former militias thereby institutionalised into sectarian-based political parties.

Yet, a crucial factor underlying today's sectarian divisions is the role of the elite: Sectarianism is reproduced at a meso-level, rather than only via a confessionalist system at the macro-level (Salloukh et al., 2015; Kingston, 2013). Since the end of the civil war, the political and economic elite have dominated today's field of sectarian politics as *incumbents*. While post-war laissez-fair politics enabled high initial growth rates and reconstruction, it also played opportunities for wealth accumulation into the hands of the most powerful post-war elite, leading to large-scale corruption (Kingston, 2013, p.57). Moreover, linked to powerful oligarchies, the elite began to compete for control over state departments. By successfully using the state's role and recourses for private gains, they have worked "against" the state, rather than "with" the state (p.57). It has resulted in large clientelist networks and citizen's dependency on elite leaders along sectarian lines. Gay (1990) conceptualises clientelism as "the distribution of resources (or promise of) by political office holders or political candidates in exchange for political support, primarily – but not exclusively – in the form of the vote" (p.648). The neglect of reform in the public sector and socio-economic deprivation following the large-scale corruption, further enabled clientelism to thrive. Thus, much in line with the definition of incumbents, "the multilevel networking of political elites, who in their efforts to preserve their own factionalized bases of power, have contributed to the reinforcement of sectarianism" (Kingston, 2013, p.52).

In addition to these elite sustaining the social order of the field, there is a "host of other overlapping strategic action fields served to buttress the system as well" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p.119). In this case, clientelist networks have been institutionalised since the war, resulting in a myriad of interdependent fields that reproduce sectarian ideologies and the sectarian system. Among such institutions are the educational institutions, sports clubs, publishing houses, the media system, public spaces, associational life and scouts, and charity associations (Kingston, 2013, p.60; Nagle, 2016, p.12). The audio-visual media landscape of Lebanon is illustrative: Despite the regulation that legal entities or persons cannot own more than 10% of TV companies' shares, in reality, individuals linked to political parties own almost all shares (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.136). They are also in the position to provide licenses for new companies, and are primary funders of media companies. It significantly sustains sectarian narrative and rhetoric. Elite who own or control media outlets can consequently be viewed as allies of the incumbents of the field of sectarian politics. Thus, from this broader field of sectarian politics in Lebanon, that is reproduced by incumbent political elite and institutionalised clientelist practices, Beirut Madinati emerged, reflecting a non-sectarian community.

3.2 An embedded field of political opposition

It is difficult to interpret the rise of Beirut Madinati without looking at civil society actors and initiatives that preceded it. Namely, within the larger field of sectarian politics, an oppositional field exists that challenges the sectarian social order that the dominant incumbents try to sustain. This political opposition forms a fluid field in itself, as a variety of social actors (primarily NGOs, civil society organisations, non-aligned institutions, or service groups) cooperate based on a shared mesolevel order and understanding of a civic, non-sectarian state. As the non-dominant group in society, it has recurrently challenged the incumbents of the interdependent field of sectarian politics, and contributed to the momentum of Beirut Madinati to emerge.

A small number of advocacy associations and civil movements evolved in the aftermath of the war, distinct from the large post-war donor community and developing sectarian associational life. Their main objective regarded a renewed meaning of citizenship and "moving away from one mediated by the increasingly entrenched structures of confessionalism and clientelism toward one grounded in Lebanon's republican constitutional principles" (Kingston, 2013, p.71). While making use of professional legal experts, and insisting on strong internal democratic and independent governance, these social actors intended to clarify the elucidate the boundaries between the civil, the communal and the political realm. In fact, by being concerned with electoral laws, and political and associational rights, they lay the foundation for the more vibrant civil sector today, such as the Lebanese Association or Democratic Elections (LADE) that has been actively involved in monitoring elections and political education[6].

In addition to values of a non-sectarian political identity, the social actors of this field have been relatively homogeneous, implying a relative consensus on the non-sectarian political order of the larger field. Regarding identity and background, the activists have been mostly middle to upper-middle class; students, young professionals and academics; "interconfessional in nature", with the core of activism strongly based in Beirut (Kingston, 2013, p.72).

A first important movement arose in 1997, called the 'Gathering for the Holding of Municipal Elections', in response to the decision of the parliament to postpone municipal elections for a year (Kingston, 2013, p.73). LADE was a prime initiating social actor, and as no elections had taken place since before the war in 1963, it perceived holding elections as crucial for democratic development in Lebanon. Factional debates about the timing of the elections among the post-war elite appeared to be an opportunity for LADE, while the Ministry of Interior – responsible for elections – and fear and uncertainty under Syrian coercive presence demonstrated

[6] Other such associations are: the Lebanese Association for Human Rights (ALDHOM); the Movement for Human-Rights-Civil Rights (MDH) involved in human rights education; the Association for the Defence of Rights and Liberties (ADDL) focussing on legal activism (Kingston, 2013, p.259).

a highly constraining environment. The main effect of the gathering is that is that it recreated a civic space relatively free from sectarian influences after the war, and thereby sparked new activism and campaigns (Kingston, 2013, p.74).

Following the Arab spring, a significant mobilisation occurred in 2011 with the main goal and slogan: 'The people want the fall of the sectarian regime" (*Ash-sha'b yurīd isqāṭ an-niẓām*) (Meier, 2015, p.4). The movement radically desired a secular state, and targeted among other reform of the electoral law and the civil status laws, as religious marriage has since the 1960s been the only legal option in Lebanon. While coming from a young and middle-class background, it built on expertise, skills and support from a variety of groups and NGOs "stemming from militant groups of the 1990s that all sustained an ideal of secular society for Lebanon" (Meier, 2015, p.6).

A major protest wave erupted in August 2015, being the most massive mobilisation transcending sectarian lines since the end of the civil war (Harb, 2016, p.16). It came as a response to extreme presence of garbage in the streets during summer heat, resulting from a closure of a landfill and no adequate solutions. Starting small as a hashtag by the group 'You Stink', soon, thousands of people participated in the streets. Demands broadened to issues of unemployment, socioeconomic grievances, and politician's private use of public services and sectarian leaders (Kerbage, 2017, p.5). They organised into several small coalitions, including 'You Stink', 'We Want Accountability', 'On the Streets' and 'Square News With', requesting the resignation of the Minister of Environment and a solid waste management plan (Harb, 2016, p.16). On August 29, they mobilised in downtown Bierut, gathering over 100,000 people across the sectarian spectrum. With a force reaction from the authorities, the protests turned into riots and clashes.

Yet, the coalition started disagreeing on forms of action, and the movement lost further momentum after an interim-agreement with the waste disposal company. Despite no direct effects, the movement was a significant trigger for Beirut Madinati (Harb, 2016, p.17). The movement had mobilised thousands of people from different sectarian groups, and displayed a multitude of independent groups of activists dissatisfied with the sectarian system that continued to impede public services. Although many people had been on the streets, Kerbage (2017) argues that of those citizens, many "protested against their leaders and sectarian parties in August 2015, but were not necessarily liberated from their ties. They took to the streets, cheered against them and demanded their ousting, however, they quickly returned to them" (p.23).

3.3 Beirut Madinati

Following the garbage crisis and mass mobilisation, Beirut Madinati emerged as a group of activists that met in September 2015 to discuss future steps. The group decided to organise a campaign to run for the municipal elections on 6 May 2016. A social movement campaign refers to a "sustained challenge to power holders, in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders, by means of concerted public displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment, using such means as public meetings, demonstrations, petitions, and press releases" (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, 148).

Based on similar overarching goals of a non-sectarian political identity and an end to clientelist practices, the participant's accounts of the emergence of Beirut Madinati shows how it is part of a field of political opposition. First, reflecting the community of political opposition, Beirut Madinati upholds civic rather than sectarian values and identity. An activists argues: "Basically, the core principles that Beirut Madinati upholds is the idea of a civil state, meaning that the state does not deal with its citizens on the basis of their sectarian belonging."[7] Nearly all activists and sympathisers indicate that Beirut Madinati's aim to transcend sectarian divides, and its non-sectarian idea of citizenship, formed a collective identity and an important motivation for action.[8] This aligns with the perception of participants who are critical towards Beirut Madinati, and who are resolute by saying that Lebanon really cannot have a secular system yet[9], criticising it for its Beirut bubble. Similarly, the nature of Beirut Madinati is primarily middle-class, academia, and consisting of civil society actors, academia, and experts working on city and civic rights issues.

Moreover, the opposition field is reflected by a common thread in all interviews that people's sectarian identity did not play any role within Beirut Madinati. Activists unanimously argue that it was never an issue: It was never been used as criterion, in terms of leadership, membership or other office procedures, and it was not even informally and personally discussed. "We never recruited, as actors we never looked at each other through this frame. A lot of people we did not know, I still don't know what their religion is."[10] Only when discussing strategies it came to the fore, such as with the selection of the candidates when the organisers aimed to have a balanced list. Two personal stories demonstrate this statement:

> And I remember very well, we [the candidates] sat all together, and then guys, [the head of the list] has to be a Sunni right? And the question was, who is Sunni? We didn't know,

[7] Author's interview with P14, 15-05-2018
[8] Author's interviews with P13, 08-05-2018; P21, 26-04-2018 and P13, 08-05-2018
[9] Author's interviews with P28, 10-04-2018, and P24, 25-05-2018
[10] Author's interview with P8, 19-04-2018

> so we never look at each other as Sunni or Shia. So these, all those who are Sunni raise your hand.[11]
>
> What is very common in Lebanon, what you automatically register in your head is their accent, their name, their family name and where they are from. Because this allows you to position them, to understand what sect they are from, what their political preferences [are] and how do you deal with them. But I think for many people, not all of them, but for many that are in Beirut Madinati, they actually overcame this process.[12]

The activists may feel personal belonging to a sectarian group, but it is not part of their perception of how the public should be organised. They identify themselves politically in non-sectarian terms, and rather feel a civic consciousness and identity connected to the Lebanese state. They have "a set of values that allow us to work in politics together, which is that we are all secular, we all believe in gender equality, we are all independent from the current political class, we are not racist."[13] It is this identity that shows Beirut Madinati as an expression of a political field of opposition.

Also, the activists of Beirut Madinati had in many cases been active in prior movements and initiatives already, feeling the necessity and ready to go a step further. Activists felt that after years of protesting, and after thousands of people had gathered following the garbage crisis, they still saw very little change[14]. They therefore perceived electoral participation as a necessary step and natural development, going from the demand to the supply side: Activists wanted to actually reach a place with power to be able to change something, and to pursue the goal in a different way as to finally yield results: "So far you have adapted [to the country's situation]. And suddenly the waste crisis comes. And actually you cannot solve the waste crisis on your own. (…) We realised that we cannot go on without a public, you need a custodian of the public."[15] In addition to a feeling of taking control, activists felt prepared after learning from years of activism: "So in terms of our maturity, we became really ready to face the regime. We build our capacity, we build our outreach, we have the skills; we said: Why not."[16]

By stepping into the political arena, Beirut Madinati emerged as an innovative form of action within the existing political opposition field. The novelty is underlined by an activist who

[11] Author's interview with P18, 22-02-2018
[12] Author's interview with P14, 15-05-2018
[13] Author's interview with P2, 27-03-2018
[14] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018 and P7, 17-04-2018
[15] Author's interview with P8, 19-04-2018
[16] Author's interviews with P13, 08-05-2018

had been active for years, and became motivated by seeing Beirut Madinati as a change in action repertoire: "This weekend, I got an invitation to go to another demonstration, to a meeting to mobilise for a civic rights campaign. I was like seriously, again? That was what I have done 10 years ago."[17] Beirut Madinati's novel move, for the first time significantly opening the municipality as an arena of competition, triggered interest and motivation.

For instance, many activists and sympathisers mention how they finally identify with a political space again[18]. After being absent in the political arena, by not being active or by not voting, they finally found a political space that resembled them in values and non-sectarian practices.[19] An activists remembers that: "No one cared about religion, or origins, or language. That is amazing, that is the first time I felt like we were working for a common interest."[20] Similarly, participants argue that increased mobilisation in the political opposition field *in itself* enabled the emergence of Beirut Madinati, as people from different sectarian groups came to see that there was a significant group of people who felt the necessity of change and who needed representation at some political level.[21] The existence of a group of like-minded people enhanced believe and thereby mobilisation: "But hope is there when they feel, first of all, that they can agglomerate with other people, that they are not alone."[22]

3.4 Conclusions

It can be concluded that embedded in a larger field of sectarian politics, another community exists; a field of political opposition, that does not identify through dominant sectarian terms, but rather upholds a non-sectarian claim for political society. Beirut Madinati came as a reflection of this field, following from participants' account of it sharing a similar non-sectarian, young, academic, expert, middle-class identity. Moreover, Beirut Madinati developed from this field, as participants state that they felt ready for a next step, as well as the necessity.

[17] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018
[18] Author's interviews with P3, 05-04-2018, and P5, 11-04-2018 and P21, 26-04-2018
[19] Author's interview with P19, 03-04-2018
[20] Author's interview with P12, 03-05-2018
[21] Author's interviews with P11, 26-04-2018 and P3, 05-04-2018
[22] Author's interview with P9, 21-04-2018

Chapter 4
A Challenge to the Sectarian Social Order

While in last chapter I focussed on the structural developments and attributions of the opportunity structures that led to the emerge of Beirut Madinati, in this chapter I analyse how Beirut Madinati engaged in collective action to reach out across sectarian confines, challenging the incumbents of the sectarian social order. Several facets underpinned the non-sectarian approach of Beirut Madinati in its rise prior to the elections, that I have structured under four themes: Running for the municipal elections as novel, inclusive move and responding to the sectarian dynamics of public space; deploying frames of inclusiveness and an alternative, urban identity; avoiding being subsumed by sectarian dynamics; and by remaining independent, but getting support of socioeconomic elite.

4.1 The municipality of Beirut and local adaptions

A first facet of Beirut Madinati's engagement in non-sectarian collective action as its local dynamic. Not only did activists perceive the municipal elections as an opportunity to include everyone because of the local dimension, but they also adopted tactics based on the awareness of the sectarian dynamics of public space in Beirut.

4.1.1 The municipal level of Beirut

In response to the garbage crisis and mass protests in 2015, activists perceived participating in the municipal elections as a promising strategy to make a change[23]. With the step of electoral participation after the 'square had become empty', Beirut Madinati transcended sectarian confines in several ways.

As a start, participants explain that people in Lebanon take more risk at the municipal level than the national level, and thus more easily support a non-traditional, non-sectarian alternative[24]. A protest vote at the municipal election against the elite and the establishment makes a statement, yet it is not too risky in that it would result in losing services or harming one's feeling of loyalty to a community. People consider the issues that fall under the municipal mandate as less important and care less about who is in power. A young activists for example explains: "When you talk about arms, weapons, refugees, these are topics that scare people usually, and they directly go back and hide in their parties. In the municipality they don't have

[23] Author's interview with P8, 19-04-2018
[24] Author's interview with P2, 27-03-2018, and P18, 22-02-2018

this. They just want someone who can work."[25] Additionally, sectarian tensions in themselves are less mobilised by the political elite during municipal elections.[26] Both activists who were in favour of running for parliamentary elections and those who were against, argue that there is more space for a non-sectarian movement at the municipal level. Additionally, participants argue that the democratic structure of the municipal level enabled inclusive mobilisation[27]. Beirut is not divided in two separate electoral districts at the municipal level, a Christian-dominated East Beirut and a Muslim-dominated West Beirut, in contrast to the parliament level. This enabled a more inclusive campaign because activists could refer to Beirut as a cohesive, inclusive city.

Furthermore, activists argue that the municipality was a good strategy as streets have their limits to reach out. The civil war and periods of violence have made that people are critical to street protests, afraid for escalation into severe violence. An activists explains that people are sensitive to order, having the perception that demonstrators lead to instability of the country[28]. Instead, elections are a more peaceful fight.[29] Moreover, winning the elections became a very concrete and clear goal, which enabled effective mobilisation rather than being endlessly on the streets: "It is easier to mobilise people in an election in my opinion, than getting them to demonstrate for two months."[30] Having Beirut Madinati in the city council of Beirut, and thus getting 100,000 votes corresponding to 20% of the usual turnout, was a concrete, clear goal at a set point in time. In this regard, an activists recounts:

> The goal wasn't to stop people to be sectarian, the goal wasn't to convince people to accept gay rights, although we have these values, that wasn't the goal at the time. The goal at the time was: We want a new municipal council for Beirut, and we want people to come and vote on May 8. For Beirut Madinati.[31]

What this means is that rather than complex and abstract goals, and an overarching aim for a civic-state, the campaign for the municipality was comprehensible, providing clear tactics on how to achieve it for activists and supporters.

Furthermore, while creating the candidate list for the elections, activists negotiated their position within the sectarian environment they were manoeuvring in. As informal tradition prescribes, the 24 seats in the city council are equally divided between Christian and Muslims

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[25] Author's interview with P18, 22-02-2018
[26] Author's interview with P7, 17-04-2018
[27] Author's interviews with P2, 27-03-2018, P3, 05-04-2018, *add: document research*
[28] Author's interview with P5, 11-04-2018
[29] Author's interview with P2, 27-03-2018
[30] Author's interview with P2, 27-03-2018
[31] Author's interview with P7, 17-04-2018

(Abu-Rish, 2016). Similarly, the head of the council is traditionally Sunni Muslim, and the second on the list Christian-Orthodox. Yet, there is no legal quota of confessional seats allocation, as is the case in the national parliament[32]. It was thus for Beirut Madinati to decide whether it would follow a sectarian distribution of candidates for the city council, or to form a very different electoral list.

It decided to follow the custom, with the idea to not disrupt the system too much. Activists believed that conforming to the custom, rather than disturbing it, was necessary if they wanted to win the election[33]. Similarly, Beirut Madinati also included people from different important families that have a certain presence in Beirut's different communities, thus having family names that would appeal to different constituents[34]. "We believe that, if you want to take the game to another court, you have also to respect the identity of this setting."[35] Nonetheless, Beirut Madinati did not emphasise the sectarian distribution, and never stressed the sectarian identity of a candidate[36]. Rather, when a document about this division leaked, activist tried to take it back as soon as possible, to keep the focus away from the sectarian identity of the candidates. Some activists had preferred to disturb the list: "For me it would have been good to disrupt the practice, just with one. But distract the practice, don't respect it. It became very difficult to do that."[37] All understood the sensitivity of disrupting it, as the Sunni population is the majority in Beirut and the Orthodox are the largest Christian community, corresponding with the position on the electoral list and in the city council. They believed that disrupting the distribution might be used against them, and they did not aim to seek more confrontation than necessary.

Finally, the location of Beirut had been a strategic choice that transcended divides. In the early phase of September 2015, the initiators discussed among themselves the location to start the mobilisation. Whereas people thought about all of Lebanon, as it was seen more ambitious, Beirut became the focal point. Many activists say how the environment of Beirut indeed enhances non-sectarian mobilisation, because of an already existing network of active people who have some experience in politics. Having the exact same campaign somewhere else would be "useless", and much more work would be needed.[38] Beirut is also a relatively mixed city, with more openness and interconnectedness, despite segregated neighbourhoods.[39] In a reaction to the

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[32] This confessionalist feature distributes a fixed number of deputies to the major sectarian communities, and ensuring 64 seats to Christianity-related groups and 64 seats groups related to Druze and Islam (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.22)
[33] Author's interview with P3, 05-04-2018
[34] Author's interviews with P7, 17-04-2018 and P16, 18-05-2018
[35] Author's interview with P5, 11-04-2018
[36] Author's interview with P9, 21-04-2018
[37] Author's interview with P8, 19-04-2018
[38] Author's interview with P7, 17-04-2018
[39] Author's interviews with P12, 03-05-2018 and P13, 08-05-2018

government's appeal to 'the real Beirutis', an activist states: "Beirut is the capital city, people forget that. (…) So to imagine that the landscape of Beirut voters is just a small group of closed-minded I think is a misreading, it is a prejudiced reading of who the Beirutis really are".[40]

4.1.2 Locality and sectarianism: Events and neighbourhoods

Activists were mindful of the link between location and sectarian identity, and the segregated nature of the city in which neighbourhoods relatively are divided along sectarian lines. Beirut Madinati adapted its strategies towards it in order to reach out to all groups. An important strategy has been neighbourhood gatherings and public discussions. These were not only rare phenomena, but also aimed to bring people together and to be inclusive. It aimed to create a public space where people from different sectarian groups can interact and find common grounds. Similar awareness was reflecting in fundraising activities: activists would go to bars and promote Beirut Madinati with drinks in Achrafieh, a progressive, relatively wealthy and Christian-dominated neighbourhood, while it would not do the same in Muslim neighbourhoods, as "it is unethical to do the same in Tariq El Jdideh, in Mazra'a. (…) We don't want to confront [anyone]."[41]

Beirut Madinati aimed to be really on the ground in all different neighbourhoods, instead of being only present in Christian or Muslim dominated neighbourhoods. Despite not being welcome in all neighbourhoods with a strong sectarian environment, its strategies aimed to include all different parts of the city[42]. Moreover, being aware that some neighbourhoods are more mixed and less traditional, activists of Beirut Madinati have specifically targeted these areas. Currently, there are for example two neighbourhood working groups in the Mar Michael and Zoqaq el-Blatt. These are relatively mixed neighbourhoods with a relatively young population that tend to have had more interactions with different sectarian groups, and are thus more likely be inspired. The working groups are specifically working across sect on twelve different sectors, enabling non-sectarian mobilisation.[43]

Furthermore, activists on the ground explained how during the campaign they worked with the electoral registration list to specifically target those families that are more likely to support Beirut Madinati.[44] For instance, although this was not coordinated across the organisation, a neighbourhood coordinator strategically instructed her team to invest the energy

[40] Authors interview with P8, 19-04-2018
[41] Author's interview with P5, 11-04-2018
[42] Author's interview with P22, 24-05-2018
[43] Author's interview with P11, 26-04-2018
[44] Author's interviews with P12, 03-05-2018

and time in those families (registered by number) that are not too small, and not strongly affiliated to any party:

> So basically I tried to look at the known family, and their affiliations, and I avoid the affiliations that are usually known to be strongly Hariri. You don't know their affiliations, publically, you know because it is contextualised. The municipal head rights now is Aetene family. (…) I would say to my team, and try to find someone from Rizi, with this registration number. Let's try to recruit them to the team, and make them part of our team. So that they can recruit all of their family to come and vote.[45]

4.2 Frames of inclusiveness

Connected to the municipal level, Beirut Madinati adopted different frames to which people from different sectarian groups could relate. These the focus on development issues, and an inclusive urban identity.

4.2.1 Creating a niche: "We didn't go into their fights"

By formulating a thirty-page program that listed proposals for green spaces, waste management and transparency[46], Beirut Madinati interacted with the system with a discourse on development issues, rather than political ones. Participants make a distinction between 'development issues', such as green spaces, pavement and waste management, and 'political issues', that include among others Hezbollah, the Syrian regime, Palestinian and Syrian refugees and relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran, civil rights issues and secularism. Although participants recognise that every discussion is political, the latter issues are perceived as more threatening to people, and more related to antagonism and sectarianism[47]. "So we avoided those, and this way we also avoided all the sectarian clashes that are happening at the political level."[48]

A development discourse was the result of many activists' expertise on urban development and the municipal level, but also consciously adopted to not go into highly controversial topics, and to be able to have a discourse that everyone could similarly relate to[49]. An activist underlines how it brought people together: "What got us together is the fact that we were not talking politics. We were talking only projects and how we can dream of a better

[45] Author's interview with P7, 17-04-2018

[46] Municipal program, 2015, p.27

[47] Author's interviews with P1, 22-03-2018 and P7, 17-04-2018

[48] Author's interview with P6, 17-04-2018

[49] Author's interviews with P8, 19-04-201

Beirut."[50] At the time in 2016, leaving controversial, political issues out was not very problematic. It did not impact the relevance of the political project of Beirut Madinati during the campaign, because all participants clearly differentiate between the municipal and the national level. As political issues are not in the mandate and jurisdiction of the municipality, there was less at stake and it is not perceived necessary to answer all political issues to be in the municipality[51]. One strong supporter of a Christian sectarian party indeed says that he did not disagree with Beirut Madinati's technical focus at the municipality level, despite that he still trusted in that his own political party could do the same.[52] Additionally, having a development approach was effective because thereby Beirut Madinati did not go on the ground where most political debates were fought, but instead took the opponents to another ground, with the advantage of choosing the battle of development issues[53].

Indeed, a tactic to challenge the system through collective action is "to try and find a niche in the strategic action field where incumbents will not go because it is not worth their while. This allows challengers to not directly confront incumbents but instead work toward complementarities" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p.98). It is in such terms that participants describe the development discourse of Beirut Madinati: While responding to the restrictive field of sectarian politics to reach out as much as possible, Beirut Madinati created a 'niche' by targeting development concerns in Beirut, which had been rarely discussed by established parties. It thereby kept its standpoints on secularism and 'political' issues rather implicit, to not confront potential constituency too much. Nevertheless, leaving such issues out, and more broadly not having been able to discuss political worldviews and goal orientation of Beirut Madinati, became a significant pitfall after the elections.

4.2.2 Urban identity: "Even the logo is a heart"

Furthermore, by framing its actions in terms of inclusiveness and an urban identity, participants state that Beirut Madinati was able to appeal to people from different sectarian groups. Reflected in all interviews, an injustice component has been a primary frame for collective action. It framed the problem and solutions around the lack of state services, particularly the most basic ones, and to a lesser extent the sectarian system in itself. Participants feel not being provided with anything, including issues as finances, unemployment, affordable housing, clean air and traffic digestion.

[50] Author's interview with P18, 22-02-2018
[51] Author's interviews with P6, 17-04-2018
[52] Author's interviews with P28, 10-04-2018
[53] Author's interviews with P5, 11-04-2018 and P3, 05-04-2018

Activists underline that what they ask is not excessive: they are not asking for the moon[54], nor asking to be a utopian country[55], and they understand that governance is difficult as there are so many variables and challenges in the equation of social justice[56]. Yet, it is commonly felt that if politicians cannot even provide the simplest solutions for a lack of electricity, they should resign and make place for people who can improve the situation[57].

By formulating the problem around injustice and grievances, Beirut Madinati adopted frames beyond sectarian divides. Issues such as air pollution do not differentiate between sectarian affiliation: "Ultimately, everyone in this city is dying because of higher rates of air pollution. And that affects people across class, across sect. Everyone is suffering from traffic ingestion."[58] It again relates to the development versus the political issues, as it easy for everyone to relate grievances as garbage and traffic, and to motivate people to join in this cause. The injustice frame resulted in antagonistic framing against the sectarian establishment. The vertical confines between different sectarian groups, which has been the traditional way of mobilising, became a horizontal division of the people against the sectarian establishment: "Shia, Sunni, whoever, is fed up with this 'war lord', 'band of thieves', and we have to end it."[59]. Beirut Madinati strategically positioned itself as a grass-root movement stemming from the people. This is among others illustrated by their human-centred and inclusive discourse and communication strategy: their photo selection, for instance, prioritises people, traces of people, the city, and "close and eye-level points of views"[60]

Besides shared feelings of injustice and grievances, love for the city was another important component of collective identity and the formulation of the solution. This local and urban identity was mostly based on inclusiveness. People felt part because Beirut Madinati focussed on everyone who is living and working in Beirut, rather than only on those who are traditionally from Beirut and thus able to vote. It thereby also aimed to include individuals from a variety of backgrounds, including class, gender, nationality, and disabled, in addition to individuals from different sectarian groups. A sympathiser explains her motivation by imagining the mixed nature of the city, an inclusive city proposed by Beirut Madinati: "The way they work on projects that merge different communities, and not separate communities, not define urbanism based on each community. [They] create a mixed urbanism, that is a very important

[54] Author's interview with P26, 01-04-2018
[55]Author's interview with P19, 03-04-2018
[56] Author's interview with P5, 11-04-2018
[57] Author's interview with P32, 24-04-2018
[58] Author's interview with P8, 19-04-2018
[59] Author's interview with P21, 26-04-2018
[60] Presentation Social Media Strategy, and Author's interview with P10, 25-04-2018

concept."[61] This love for the city Beirut fuelled the desire to make Beirut liveable. One activist shows how the logo consists of the Arabic 'b' (*baa2*) and 't' (*taa2*), from Beirut, and how they together form a heart[62]. Another explains this love further. "A love and a belonging [to the city Bierut]. This is where we studied, we grew up, we met our loves, we have… this is our home."[63] People from across the sectarian spectrum, and originating from both inside and outside Beirut, could relate to seeing the mismanagement and the city they love deteriorating, and felt the need to support a movement that proposes an alternative.

Finally, the frame of inclusiveness was also reflected in the 'cool' image of Beirut Madinati that had partly developed unintentionally, and partly from an inclusive, progressive and positive communication strategy. A supporter explains how it helped to spread the message: "You were proud to be on Beirut Madinati. It was positive, it was new, it was revolutionary, and cool. We underestimate this word. (…) The fact that they had a strong brand, meant that people talked about it".[64] This young, 'cool' image helped it spread to young people no matter what sectarian group they belonged to. Non-supporters affirm this 'cool' image of Beirut Madinati, sometimes in a positive way by stating how the inclusive, good image stuck in mind[65]; and sometimes as critique, saying that "they used [an] American style. Nice names, beautiful careers, flashy words, video clips, we don't trust that. Because that is the American propaganda."[66]

4.3 Preventing sectarian influences to impede

While pursuing its goal to win the municipal elections, Beirut Madinati was determined to prevent any penetration of sectarian influences into its movement.

4.3.1 Staying independent

Beirut Madinati was repeatedly offered alliances and seats on the Beirutis' list multiple times, and it met with many of the competing candidates. There was also a discussion on aligning with a third list, the similarly independent 'Citizens in a State' lead by Charbel Nahas. Yet, Beirut Madinati decided to refrain from aligning with political parties in all cases. Charbel Nahas had already been in governmental positions before, and activists preferred not to form alliances with candidates perceived as having political baggage[67]. Also in the selection of the candidates,

[61] Author's interview with P21, 26-04-2018
[62] Author's interview with P1, 22-03-2018. See also the front page for the logo.
[63] Author's interview with P3, 05-04-2018
[64] Author's interview with P20, 12-04-2018
[65] Author's interview with P24, 25-05-2018
[66] Author's interview with P32, 24-04-2018
[67] Author's interview with P6, 17-04-2018

independence was an central criteria. All candidates went through a vetting process to ensure that no one had been involved in any existing political party.[68]

The decision stemmed from the purpose of remaining independent: "We didn't want to be vulnerable to [alliances] in any way, and jeopardise the ideal, and the credibility we had towards the people and the promises we made."[69] Instead, activists wanted to keep Beirut Madinati's clean, fresh and non-affiliated image: "[The established parties] can have a laundry for their image. They can embellish their image, because we are perceived as the clean, the non-corrupt, the anti-sectarian."[70] By opting a closed list with 24 candidates, Beirut Madinati made a clear statement that it did not want to negotiate with other candidates to make an alliance.

Similarly, during the campaign, Beirut Madinati enclosed a fundraising report to be transparent on donors and funding[71]. They published the finances of their crowdfunding online, and decided on the rule that donations per person could not exceed the amount corresponding to 10% of the budget. "So it wouldn't make a big difference if you would get money from a Sunni independent secular business man, or from a Shia one. Of course if they are all Sunni it makes a difference, but they were not."[72] It was to stay independent from any affiliation with traditional parties or sectarian actors. Furthermore, an activists stresses that Beirut Madinati never met religious leader, such as a priest or a sheikh, in contrast to many traditional parties who do this publically to get public endorsement[73].

4.3.2 Internal adjustment of leadership

Similar to recruitment or internal structuration processes, leadership positions – except regarding custom in the candidate list – were not based on people's sectarian backgrounds. Yet, several activists mentioned how the perception of power and leadership itself had been influenced by the sectarian system. People are not comfortable with leadership, as power is seen as immature and abusing, in which people follow one person no matter what[74]. This person, by one called the godfather[75], is perceived as having full decision power that he maintains through dividing the population, and securing his position for his children after him thus reproducing the same elite[76].

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[68] Author's interview with P3, 05-04-2018
[69] Author's interview with P3, 05-04-2018
[70] Author's interview with P16, 18-05-2018
[71] Final Donors Report
[72] Author's interview with P2, 27-03-2018
[73] Author's interview with P5, 11-04-2018
[74] Author's interviews with P16, 18-05-2018; and P20, 21-04-2018; and P9, 21-04-2018
[75] Author's interview with P19, 03-04-2018
[76] Author's interview with P22, 24-05-2018 and P28, 10-04-2018

> All those types of movements are too afraid of creating another monster. Or another leader. They have a problem with the title *Za3iim*. *Za3iim* means… not leader, but a big boss. Like Hariri. Like Jumblatt. It is a guy that people swear to. I have a different perspective of a leader. A leader can be modest and honest. Not having people shoot for him, or curse others just for him.[77]

In Beirut Madinati, leadership was internally debated, and individuals' opinions diverged on whether flat leadership was preferred or not. In the case of Beirut Madinati, these requirements also involve considering traditional, sectarian perceptions of leadership: It became the decision of the GA to incorporate non-hierarchical leadership, also because it was seen as more participatory: the decision-making power has been vested in a group called the collegiate body, that is, a body of equals. This perspective of leadership and the adaptation of Beirut Madinati show the cultural baggage of individuals. Although sectarian society may not subsume internal organisation processes as leadership and member recruitment, in the way of personal interaction, it does influence the organisation of internal structures.

4.4 Alternative elite alignments

As the last section showed, it is not surprising that Beirut Madinati decided to refrain from forming alliances with sectarian elite as it would harm its neutral position. Activists state, however, that they did receive support from influential individuals. How did this enable or sustain non-sectarian collective action?

4.4.1 Support from media and society's elite

Beirut Madinati was supported by different elite subgroups, including media and communal elite. "Occasionally, incumbents might defect to the side of challengers and help produce a fundamental structural change in the field" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p.112). Although the support did not help to impact the field structurally, it nevertheless contributed to the rise of Beirut Madinati. To begin with, what contributed to the widespread popularity in 2016 was the backing of traditional media outlets. Traditionally, the television and radio outlets in Lebanon are affiliated to a party, and thus part of the sectarian system (Melki, Dabbous, Nasser & Mallat, 2012; Beyond Reform & Development, 2012). This gives normally little space for non-traditional parties to reach out to a larger audience. To illustrate, an activist who was running with an independent party for parliamentary elections says: "I have been covered by almost all

[77] Author's interview with P18, 22-05-2018

international media. Not a single local TV station. For example, I have been covered by CNN, by BBC, by Watching German, by the Guardian… Not a single TV appearance in Lebanon."[78]

However, during the campaign and elections in 2016, Beirut Madinati got support from the elite working in media outlets. The movement's campaign was broadcasted, particularly from three weeks prior to the elections onwards and after the results, when public support peaked. In this way Beirut Madinati was able to reach people who it otherwise would not have reached, specifically those from different sectarian groups[79]. Media coverage of Beirut Madinati was profitable due to the increasing interest in this new phenomenon, and that it had been seven years since the last elections. Also, the elite themselves had become critical of the establishment as seen in the last section: "Some of this media wanted to play a political role against the establishment. (…) So they gave us space, because what we had to offer coincided with their personal interest, their commercial or political interest"[80].

Second, activists from Beirut Madinati indicate that they received support from affluent and influential families and elite figures in Lebanon or abroad. Although such traditional political families may not be part of the core circles of the political elite, they have an influential position and usually ally themselves with political parties and candidates (Strassmaier & Nassif, 2016). Beirut Madinati was invited to well-known and large families who include renown local leaders or own large companies. These families either listened to their standpoints or went further and decided to support Beirut Madinati as result of dissatisfaction with Hariri's policies[81]. These families belonged to different sectarian groups, so activists were not afraid their support would be leaning towards one particular sectarian group: "So we were welcomed by families in western Beirut, in eastern Beirut, everywhere."[82] This happened overtly, as these families announced their decision and tried to influence their families or surroundings, but also secretly: "It was done under the table. Because they didn't want to get in conflict with the traditional political and traditional confessional leaders."[83] Beirut Madinati also received donations from well-off people from the diaspora, which activists had not expected because of their economic high position in society and their links with the established parties.[84]

[78] Author's interview with P16, 18-05-2018
[79] Author's interviews with P6, 17-04-2018 and P10 25-04-2018

[80] Author's interview with P2, 27-03-2018
[81] Author's interview with P34, 01-05-2018
[82] Author's interview with P9, 21-04-2018
[83] Author's interview with P9, 21-04-2018
[84] Author's interview with P8, 19-04-2018

4.4.2 The political elite's alliance

Although Beirut Madinati did not want to use the opportunity to align with political elite in the establishment, as this would defy the purpose of the movement, the parties in the establishment themselves made an alliance together on one list, responding to the growing opposition to the status quo, calling it the Beirutis' list (*La'ihat al-Biyarta*)[85] (Abu-Rish, 2016). This firstly enabled Beirut Madinati as it made antagonistic framing easier: The image was the clean, cross-sectarian alternative on the one side, and the corrupt, traditional, sectarian establishment on the other[86]. Secondly, although this was a cross-sectarian coalition with a cross-section of Beirut's major parties, it hit a nerve of supporters and some members of the traditional parties. These parties that had been competing each other for years, while suddenly making an alliance to stay in power[87]: "People from within the parties, the traditional parties, were against the Beirutis' list, he Hariri list, so they voted for us. Like people from the Kataeb Party, they were against the alliances."[88] Disgruntled officials of the FPM turned against the traditional list and advocated for Beirut Madinati, which became primarily known because these members were disciplined or expelled from the party (Abu-Rish, 2016, para.20; "Report: FPM Mulling Expulsion", 2016). Not only does this demonstrate how the opposition's alliance facilitated Beirut Madinati, it also shows how individuals of the political elite itself came to support a Beirut Madinati.

4.5 Conclusion

Whereas participating in politics is difficult in a sectarian society, and similar movements commonly abide by the streets (Milan, 2016; Murtagh, 2016; Nagle, 2016), Beirut Madinati decided to enter the political realm by participating in municipal elections. Beirut Madinati responded to the sectarian surroundings, avoided being subsumed by it and negotiated its position towards other actors.

The municipal elections were a novel strategy and enabled transcending sectarian divides. Participants feel that the elections formed a clear, concrete goal, with issues that were centred around the city that are easier to relate to across sect. Furthermore, Beirut Madinati's frames of inclusiveness and urban identity emphasised people's urban identity, as alternative to a sectarian identity, which enabled non-sectarian collective action. Finally, Beirut Madinati was determined

[85] This list included the Amal Movement, the Future Movement, the Free Patriotic Movement, the Lebanese Forces, the Phalanges Party and the Progressive Socialist Party. Discussing the reason for this is beyond the scope of this thesis, yet interesting articles are for instance Abu-Rish (2016).
[86] Author's interview with P2, 27-03-2018
[87] Author's interviews with P5, 11-04-2018, and P28, 10-04-2018
[88] Author's interview with P5, 11-04-2018

to prevent penetration of sectarian influences into its movement, seen by its decisions to stay independent and construct a flat, non-hierarchical leadership in the movement.

In all these ways, Beirut Madinati formed a challenge to the political and economic elite that sustain the sectarian social order. Yet, as I show in the next chapter, the challenge was not able to make a new settlement of the social order. Whereas the focus on the city and the elections as a tangible goal were effective in mobilising people prior to the elections, it resulted in heavy disagreements after.

Chapter 5

A Sustained Social Order: Analysing Beirut Madinati's Decline

After gaining insufficient votes to be elected in the municipal elections in 2016, and after a period of celebrating pride and discussing lessons learned[89], Beirut Madinati has slowly been disintegrating. Although it is still active with several working groups and protests, it has not been able to 'sustain the wind of change' which demonstrates the dominance of sectarian dynamics. Participants give different reasons for this decline: They highlight the external constraining nature of the sectarian society, with an internalised world view of sectarianism and strong feelings of belonging and fear, and internal struggles in Beirut Madinati that has let to its disintegration within the field of political opposition.

5.1 External constraints: Sectarianism as a closed institutionalised system

Participants all mention the sectarian system in itself as a significant constraining force. Beirut Madinati has to cope with individual's strong identifications with sectarian parties and communities, which has proved to be too strong to fully disrupt. This strong identification results from a dynamic interplay between feelings of genuine fear and trust in sectarian leaders, and ethnopolitics, institutional socialisation and clientelist practices. An activist of Beirut Madinati, who has been active in a variety of protests, explains it critically, by reciting Michel Chiha, a contributor to the Lebanese constitution: "Lebanon is built on a balance of fear between its different constituents. So it is literally a balance of fear between Sunni, Shia, Maronite, Druze, et cetera., and everyone likes that and abuses that."[90]

5.1.1 Identification in a sectarian environment

Fear for political violence along sectarian confines, and a resulting feeling of need for protection, makes that people support a party that is able to protect them and their community's needs and interests. Participants mention the legacy of the civil war[91], as well as reoccurring upheavals of violence, regional tensions and a war in Syria, and an armed militia in the country as sources of fear[92]. A young, committed supporter of the Shia Amal Movement says that sectarian boundaries are necessary, because "no one likes us. They are all against us, so we have to defend ourselves,

[89] Author's interview with P3, 05-04-2018
[90] Author's interview with P13, activist, 08-05-2018
[91] Author's interview with P28, 10-04-2018
[92] Author's interview with P4, 05-04-2018

although I would love [to keep] religio[n] for myself, and politics secular."[93] Along the same lines, a 32-years-old supporter of the Lebanese Forces, a Christian party and former militia, recounts:

> Who would defend me? Beirut Madinati? They will run away in the first plane and escape Lebanon. Who will defend me? (…) This minister who is now Minister of Social Affairs, and I tell you the opponents [give] him ten out of ten [points], who was a fighter with the Lebanese Forces, a pilot: [he] would take again the arms and would defend me.[94]

These quotes demonstrate a feeling of necessity to support a sectarian party that would be able to provide physical and ideological protection when necessary. Similarly, the interviews reflect a genuine trust in sectarian leaders, as they provide protection and are perceived as honest and non-corrupt, or at least less corrupt than other elite: "He doesn't lie, he can fight, he helps poor people, he is with them. I tell you, he gave his son [who] was 18 years old when he was fighting."[95] Although not all participants feel fear and need for protection personally, they all recognise it in their surroundings; with family members such as their parents, and both young and old acquaintances.

Fear and trust impede belief in an alternative as Beirut Madinati. Participants mention that with genuine trust in one's own party, and fear for what is to come in Lebanon, people are hesitant to trust a new alternative with a profile that is non-sectarian. They have little belief that the strengths and capabilities of Beirut Madinati can outweigh those of one's own party[96], and feel the need to stay fully connected to their community: "People now vote because you don't know, you might need them, sometime, somewhere."[97] Also the relative short existence of Beirut Madinati makes that people feel sceptical and doubtful as they do not know the behaviour and future of this movement[98]. There are few reasons to trust this movement with young people that is unknown to many, and not part of the legacy of political families.[99] There is a fear about changing the status quo while not knowing what to expect from supporting Beirut Madinati.[100] Furthermore, because sectarianism is, by definition, a holistic system, it makes it very difficult to think of viable alternatives. Some participants also perceive Beirut Madinati as a relatively small group, such as the young Shia supporter: "Those parties as Beirut Madinati are way too small;

[93] Author's interview with P29, supporter Amal movement, 19-04-2018
[94] Author's interview with P28, a supporter of Lebanese Forces, 10-04-2018
[95] Author's interview with P31, 22-04-2018
[96] Author's interview with P14, 15-05-2018
[97] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018
[98] Author's interview with P32, 24-04-2018
[99] Author's interview with P11, 26-04-2018
[100] Author's interview with P4, 05-04-2018

300 people in downtown during an event. In my village [there] are two thousand [supporters of the Shia Amal Movement]. So they will never have a chance. Never."[101] Hence, irrespective of whether people perceive a sectarian political leader as honest or corrupt, it is a big step to support Beirut Madinati as an alternative.

Sectarianism is, by definition, a holistic system in which people internalise norms and values of sectarianism, because it is so all-encompassing. As discussed in chapter 3, this process of socialisation along sectarian lines creates and sustains identification with one's sectarian party. Participants mention for instance home, school, the media, university and segregated neighbourhoods as fields of socialisation from a young age onwards: "Especially at home. Say you are growing in a family, and you tend to always watch one same channel all the time. You are indirectly influenced."[102] Similarly, an participant explains how school, sports clubs and media outlets that are affiliated to a sectarian political party, perpetuate a cycle of sectarian identification:

> So in my village, I start by joining the scouts of the political party in the region, the Jumblatt party, the PSP. So I joined the PSP, and I moved to the scouts, then I moved to the political party itself, and then I get a job through them. Then I go to the university and join their group, it is a system.[103]

This demonstrates that people are socialised into a sectarian political system, which in turn perpetuates the sectarian fragmentation of society and keeps the system intact. Despite the mixed nature of Beirut, participants are of the opinion that citizens from different sectarian groups still live relatively segregated, are socialised into it, while room for change is little.

Nonetheless, this does not apply to all individuals, particularly not personally to the activists interviewed. In other words, there is an interesting dynamic between an alternative movement as a source of scepticism and doubt, and as a primary motivation for people to support Beirut Madinati, as they have a finally a place with which they identify. What partly explains this is the extent to which individuals are 'part' of this system. They can be differently influenced by their parents, or by having a certain background that pushes them further into this system, or pulls them away from it. For example, an activists mentions that she has a very diverse friend group, while many of her acquaintances have only friends from the Christian sectarian

[101] Author's interview with P29, 19-04-2018 *plus supporter People's Movement*
[102] Author's interview with P12, 03-05-2018
[103] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018

group[104]. A supporter of Beirut Madinati, who has lost hope after the elections, states: "These people, they are outside the system, and they don't want to belong to the system. (…) I think Beirut Madinati didn't convince sectarian groups. It convinced the people who are outside the sectarian system to vote for Beirut Madinati."[105] What proportion of Beirut society wants to go beyond these sectarian provides an interesting base for possibilities for non-sectarian movements. This is further discussed in chapter 6.

5.1.2 Ethnopolitics and clientelism

In addition to socialisation, participants explain how also sectarian elite reinforce the system of fear and trust, by playing into it for political power. Politicians and community leaders are said to make use of the fault lines resulting from the war: "[Political will] is based on power. And power itself is based on sectarianism, on communitarianism. (…) Politicians, religious communities, and so on, they all tend to agglomerate, to keep the system inherited, for centuries, and they play on fear."[106] It is this notion of ethnopolitics that interviewees frequently refer to. Sectarian leaders excite antagonism between sectarian groups with the threat that other groups might occupy regions, spread influence, or that the country will fall apart, and that support is thus a necessity,[107]. Rothschild (1981, p.2-3 in Baumann, 1999, p.61) defines ethnopolitics as: "Mobilizing ethnicity from a psychological or cultural or social datum into political leverage for the purpose of altering or reinforcing…systems of structured inequality between and among ethnic categories." Such identity politics constrains the leverage of Beirut Madinati to convince people of inclusiveness and Beirut Madinati's strengths and advantage.

Furthermore, the elite use security services as playing cards to preserve political power, connecting people to their sectarian parties. One participant referred to a statement of a friend of hers, calling the situation in Lebanon a "sectarian welfare system"[108]. People depend on their sectarian leader for social services, such as school and hospital fees, or employment opportunities. In this regard, two interviewees recount:

> Say I am voting in Beirut, and I know that my children need to be hospitalised and I go to Hariri, he will hospitalise them. But if I vote for Beirut Madinati, and he finds out and I

[104] Author's interview with P26, 01-04-2018
[105] Author's interview with P22, 24-05-2018
[106] Author's interview with P9, 21-04-2018
[107] Author's interview with P20, 12-04-2018
[108] Author's interview with P11, 26-04-2018

> will lose this service. And I am not sure that Beirut Madinati would be able to give me this service, and there is a big number of people that do this.[109]

> In my case, my parents, they wanted me to go to Jamhour school. Which is one of the top schools in Lebanon. To go to Jamhour you need someone to support you, a deputy, a minister, or something. So they had to go to the deputy of their area, which was a Christian following Jumblatt. And they have to vote for him for two or three years. Because he gave me this favour. (…) Every time they talk about him, ooh this guy is really good. He helped us to take you to Jamhour. It is the system.[110]

These stories illustrates how such a system of dependency and clientelism perpetuate sectarian boundaries, which has formed a major obstacle for Beirut Madinati to break through. The political establishment is able and willing to use clientelism and bribing, with which Beirut Madinati has to deal. Thereby, favours and bribing are appreciated and normalised. These stories shows how not everyone questions bribing:

> A lot of bribing. A lot, a lot, a lot. I don't have figures, but a small story: A couple of weeks ago I was sick and went to the doctor. And I was sitting in the lobby and waiting, so there is this secretary that was talking to my mom, talking about the etiquettes of getting a bribe for elections. Which is like: there are some people that get money from a certain person and vote for another person… this is very unethical. If you get the money from this person, you should vote for them. This is was the conversation.[111]

Dependency and clientelism align with the thought of participants that people who support or voted for Beirut Madinati are *able* to do so. They have the "luxury"[112] to vote for Beirut Madinati, are "financially independent"[113], and do not feel the need for a sectarian party for social and physical security. This highlights the difference between mobilising the masses, versus support from only those upper middle-class activists. There is a link between socioeconomic position and supporting an alternative, cross-sectarian movement, because of clientelist dynamics reflecting dependency (Kingston, 2013, p.63). Both activists as well critical participants mentioned that Beirut Madinati was indeed perceived as elitist and was for some was a valid critique.

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[109] Author's interview with P22, 24-05-2018
[110] Author's interview with P22, 24-05-2018
[111] Author's interview with P20, 12-04-2018
[112] Author's interview with P4, 05-04-2018
[113] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018

5.1.3 Capacity for repression: A little, but sectarian response

Finally, for reasons of clientelism and identity politics outlined above, and because of practices of corruption and suppression, the political elite has much capacity for repression. Nevertheless, participants perceived the levels of repression as low, and thus not as a major influence in the decline of Beirut Madinati. It does, however, demonstrates the sectarian nature of the repression linked to ethnopolitics.

Beirut Madinati was not given much attention for the first month of campaigning, and activists felt in early reactions that they were not taken seriously, or seen as a significant threat: "The first reaction was that they made fun of us. They patted us on the shoulder, they even said it is good, they looked at us as folklore, and then at some point, I think it became a threat." [114] This perception of a threat translated itself in surveillance, as activists felt that police control around their headquarters increased, and that their telephones were being tapped. Moreover, Beirut Madinati faced restrictions in some neighbourhoods that were dominated by one sectarian party, as it received threats when it aimed to open an office or planned on holding an event[115]. In one or two cases a volunteer being physically attacked. They decided to not seek publicity with these cases, because they wanted to keep the focus on the positivity and strength of the movement.

Interestingly, much of the government's reaction had sectarian elements. Particularly when Beirut Madinati gained popularity, rumours rapidly spread about affiliations with Hezbollah; the danger of their pro-civil marriage viewpoint; and that they were funded by embassies, including those from the West, Iran or Qatar[116]. Furthermore, the competing Beirutis' list played on the 'true' people from Beirut. It targeted those people from the seven big families, as well as those from the Sunni sectarian group as Sunni make up the largest proportion of the Beirut electorate (Abu-Rish, 2016). They did this in a variety of ways: with the name of their list (Beirutis' list); their slogan ("Keep Beirut for its People"); the rhetoric of Saad Hariri being the son of martyr Rafiq Hariri; arguing that Beirut Madinati had not included the important families of Beirut; and going into neighbourhoods that were strongly Sunni, such as Tariq Jedideh[117]. What this meant for Beirut Madinati is that it did not have to deal with much repression, but that it had to manoeuvre in sectarian rhetoric, and decide on how to, in turn, react to this response of those in power. By doing its own thing, and not getting subsumed by these sectarianized strategies, Beirut Madinati continued to pursue its goal[118].

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[114] Author's interview with P8, 19-04-2018
[115] Author's interview with P1, 22-03-2018
[116] Author's interviews with P7, 17-04-2018 and P8, 19-04-2018, and P2, 27-03-2018, and P3, 05-04-2018
[117] Author's interviews with P2, 27-03-2018, and P1, 22-03-2018
[118] Author's interview with P8, 19-04-2018, P3, 05-04-2018

5.2 Internal constraints: The difficulty of a common approach

In addition to external sectarian dynamics that appeared to be too dominant, activists also identify internal obstacles as reason for decline. These concern the lack of agreement on political standpoints and Beirut Madinati's future path, and the lack of recourses after the campaign.

5.2.1 Disagreement on parliamentary elections and a unified political position

The lack of agreement is a significant recurring theme reflected in the interviews. Although activists all share the overarching goal to alter the sectarian political system, as discussed in chapter 3, they struggle to agree on a unified political vision and the future path of Beirut Madinati.

During the campaign, the disagreement had not been an issue. Beirut Madinati focussed intentionally on development issues, which effectively created a niche to fight the sectarian elite and enabled an inclusive collective action frame beyond sectarian divides. Moreover, everyone was working towards a clear, concrete milestone of winning the elections, until the elections were over: "There was a common goal, which was we need to run for elections. But once this goal was over, there was a void."[119] This became a void that appeared very difficult to fill.

While the success of winning 30% of the votes stimulated a feeling of responsibility to continue, ideas on the approach and political vision of Beirut Madinati significantly diverged[120]. Soon, tensions arose about the speed of the institutionalisation phase, in terms of making a political vision and bylaws[121]. More dividing became the issue of was whether Beirut Madinati should participate in the parliamentary elections or not. Whereas some activists favoured Beirut Madinati as building a grass-root, urban movement and focussing on the 2022 municipal elections, others believed in the momentum and identity of Beirut Madinati and participation in the 2018 parliamentary elections. Following this debate, disagreement also revolved around the political vision, for example the weapons of Hezbollah. Although many agreed that the arms were an issue, activists disagreed on whether it should be a priority or not, and whether it should be dealt with pragmatically or ideologically. To illustrate:

> We fought and fought and fought and fought. So you see everyone would say [the weapons of Hezbollah] threat[en] the country and that we should face it. Other people say it is not the priority, while other say you know what Hezbollah has the right to have weapons as long as Israel is there, and the government, the state is not strong enough.

[119] Author's interview with P14, 15-05-2018
[120] Author's interview with P11, 26-04-2018
[121] Author's interview with P1 22-03-2018

> (…) I think that is the reason why Beirut Madinati lost lots of momentum after the elections.[122]

The lack of political cohesion hindered sustained collective action, which became one of the lessons learned that the interim committee formulated after the campaign[123]. The discussions dominated Beirut Madinati's meetings and GAs, and led to distrust and personal tensions between members.[124] Activists became discouraged, passive or resigned from the organisation. One activist for example expresses discouragement in response to the internal personalised tensions: "I don't have beliefs in the group dynamics and the group's willingness to work together, which makes me believe in division and that makes me unmotivated."[125] It has also hindered the momentum after the elections, and as such debates on political vision take time Beirut Madinati lost engagement of volunteers[126].

Moreover, it also impacted the image and authority of Beirut Madinati. For instance, a political advisor to the FPM and supporter of the People's Movement state that they are not united enough[127] and that "There is no Beirut Madinati right now. They are divided. There are three. One of them is running for elections here [in voting district Beirut II]."[128] Similarly, other participants argue that Beirut Madinati does not have an agenda, a program, that is, a *political* program[129]. To illustrate, when one supporter of the People's movement introduced me to a candidate of that movement, they were joking about the lenient nature of Beirut Madinati[130]: "When the Zionists are attacking our country, what shall we say to them. Please don't do it?" They laugh, and the other replied: "We offer chocolate." "Haha we offer chocolate." The interview how the moderate stance, and the little reflection on political world views was accepted and even an advantage for the municipal level, but that it is difficult to sustain in a politicised sectarian environment. Lastly, it negatively impacted collective identity. It is for example telling how one activist was just silent and thinking for a long time after I posed the question what bound them together. Then he answered "Right now I am hopeless."[131] Similarly; another activists answered: "Now? Not much. Beirut Madinati is currently in a very transitional phase where not all members necessarily agree on what is Beirut Madinati or why it exists or where it is

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[122] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018
[123] Presentation Social Media Strategy, p.69 and author's interview with P14, 15-05-2018
[124] Author's interviews with P1, 22-03-2018, and P17, 22-05-2018
[125] Author's interview with P1, 22-03-2018
[126] Author's interview with P22, 24-05-201, and P13, 08-05-2018
[127] Author's interview with P34, consultant FPM, 01-05-2018
[128] Author's interview with P32, supporter People's Movement, 24-04-2018
[129] Author's interview with P29, 19-04-2018 and P30, 19-04-2018
[130] Author's interview with P33, 25-04-2018
[131] Author's interview with P22, 24-05-201

going."[132] In this way, although Beirut Madinati has not lost its overarching goal of defining civilian-state relations in non-sectarian terms, it is divided on the best approach to do so. It implies the difficulty of actually changing the sectarian system, and shows that the people who identify 'beyond' sectarianism are still a minority, resulting in different political views, similar to movements prior to Beirut Madinati (Harb, 2016, p.16). Participants suggest that building a coalition and effective cooperation between social actors with different political views, based a non-sectarian identity and goal, could address this problem.[133]

5.2.2 Lack of resources to fight sectarianism

Finally, participants point at the lack of recourses as a crucial factor undermining effective organisation of Beirut Madinati. Recourses have been scare from the start of Beirut Madinati, and the scarcity has only been partly solved with a the combination of an effective crowdfunding campaign, and a momentum with a clear goal for elections enabled support from media elite and donors (see chapter 4). Receiving donations in cash and kind enabled among others communication through a variety of channels, the establishment of a headquarter and ten field offices, communication materials, advertisements via restaurants and bars, and campaign equipment[134]. Moreover, an activists stresses that "Beirut Madinati did not have to make that much of an effort to bring people", as there were so many people ready to help during that point in time in contrast to today, where volunteers as human recourses are difficult to keep motivated and committed[135]. Similarly, as discussed in chapter 4, the lack of media access is mentioned repeatedly in interviews; as, for instance, Beirut Madinati's protests and mobilisation for the protection of a public beach lacks coverage on traditional media outlets after momentum of the garbage crisis went down[136].

The insufficient recourses are particularly difficult in relation to the recourses that sectarian parties have at their disposal, and in regards to Lebanon's sectarian clientelist system[137]. One activist recounts: "It is a country heavily influenced by money resources, because people get paid for their votes. (…) If we do politics in our free time, we cannot topple down a regime which has hundreds of people working for them"[138]. An activist responsible for the communication strategy explains: "Just documentation on election day, we had like one billboard,

[132] Author's interview with P15, 16-05-2018
[133] Author's interview with P18, 22-02-2018
[134] Final Donors Report
[135] Author's interview with P6, 17-04-2018
[136] Author's interview with P10, 25-04-2018
[137] Author's interview with P16, 18-05-2018
[138] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018

two billboards, that is it. Everyone else had the streets covered with billboards. We could not afford them."[139]

When reflecting on ideas to overcome this constraint, a few participants refer to human recourses. They perceive that competency and expertise in technical policy domains are able to compensate for the lack of financial recourses[140]. Interestingly, this idea aligns with the identity of the political opposition field that has made extensively use of professional expertise, initially legal experts in particular, to gain legitimacy (Kingston, 2013, p.72). An activists describes the advantage of competent human recourses, which is part of an explicitly communicated frame[141]: "When people listen to us, and listen to them, they don't stand a change (…) They spend millions of dollars, we spend 10,000 dollars and we kind of level up in the electoral battle."[142] Yet, another activist is more sceptical about this view, as she does not believe that the state is constituted of incompetent people, and thinks that being educated in technical policy dossiers does not make you necessarily competent in politics.[143]

5.3 Conclusion

"Diseased systems don't heal immediately; clouded minds don't clear easily. But we have fought the good fight and at least, this time, we were on the right side of history. And we are aiming to remain on the right side of history."[144] The donor report that Beirut Madinati published after the campaign, reflects the commitment and decline of Beirut Madinati, as well as the difficulty of changing a sectarian system. Externally, strong identification with sectarian parties and ethnopolitics and clientelist practices proved to be too strong for an alternative, non-sectarian movement to break through. Internally, disagreement played a major role in the decline, showing the difficulty of deciding on the best way to manoeuvre to break the sectarian mould, as well as the small base of the field of political opposition. Indeed, "very often the advantages – material, cultural, political – enjoyed by incumbents may be enough to overcome crisis and restore order" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p.22). Nevertheless, whereas sectarianism in Lebanon is a dominant order that is difficult to alter, findings suggest that Beirut Madinati has had an impact. In the next chapter, I reflect on possibilities and prospects for change.

[139] Author's interview with P10, 25-04-2018
[140] Author's interview with P3, 05-04-2018, and P13, 08-05-2018
[141] Municipal Political Program 2016-2022
[142] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018
[143] Author's interview with P11, 26-04-2018
[144] Final Donor Report, p.1

Chapter 6
Reflections on Impact and Prospects for Change

Drawing on the analysis of Beirut Madinati's non-sectarian collective action efforts and its rise and decline, and drawing from both theoretical literature and empirical, in this chapter, I reflect on prospects of change. How much is Beirut Madinati, and thereby the political opposition field as challenger, able to disrupt the sectarian settlement and push for a non-sectarian field? In this chapter I argue that Beirut Madinati has a durable value resulting from its novel approach, despite its limitations. Then I turn to the incumbents in the field, and I further reflect on broader prospects for change coming from repeated corruptive practices among the political elite.

6.1 Beirut Madinati's novel way of politics

Rather than remaining a protest group, as was the case in the examinations of Meier (2015), Milan (2016), Murtagh (2016), Mujkić (2016) and Nagle (2016), Beirut Madinati made the step to enter the political arena. This step in itself, as well as the way in which it was organised, was novel and surprised the establishment and larger society. Beirut Madinati did thereby not only shortly disrupt the broader field of sectarian politics, but has also a durable value in changing the field, despite its limitations. Set in motion by opportunities arising from interdependent fields, "what actors do is pivotal to what happens, and genuine surprises can emerge through new ideas and innovative forms of collective action" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p.206).

Beirut Madinati has shown a standard of politics in Lebanon that distinguishes itself through non-traditional and non-sectarian politics, with alternative issues and collective action strategies. This may remedy at least the *perspective* of politics in a country where participants share strong, negative attitudes towards and disengagement of politics. Many activists share the view that Beirut Madinati has the impacted the idea of what politics is: Particularly for themselves and supporters around them, but that it also has the potential to do the same for the larger constituency. On this account an activist says:

> By addressing politics in a non-traditional way, I think at least in our relation to our region, our context, we kind of reinvented what is called politics. (…) Is political not being really able, through your expertise, to create policies and be able to implement them? Is not this politics at the end? Is politics being into the dirty political game, or having a voice?

This means that there is potential that citizens come to see politics in a different light: Not as dirty, corrupt and entrenched with antagonism and fear, but as synonym with dialogue, inclusiveness and progression and including development issues. It has the potential to show that there lies more at the heart of politics than currently portrayed in Lebanon. After all, Mujkić (2016) rightly states: "Where there is public antagonism, there is politics" (p.230). The dialogue events that Beirut Madinati organised (and still does) are a concrete example. They are not only novel in the way of bridging gaps between people and forming a platform for alternative issues: Rather, the practice itself is a way of reclaiming politics, and may therefore have long-term, civic-oriented impact.

Similarly, Milan (2016) and Mujkić (2016) show the importance of *plenums*, a dialogue strategy distinctive during the 2013-2014 protests in Bosnia-Hercegovina, that were based on similar ideas of direct democracy, plurality of citizenship and dialogue on social justice. Such new ways of practicing politics were an "attempt to create a radically different form of political organization. In that sense, these uprisings nurtured what might be described as (future) revolutionary potential" (Mujkić, 2016, p.230). Similarly, the non-sectarian nature of the movement and the repeated emphasis on plurality rather than sectarian origin have similar potential to slowly break the "sectarian taboo associated with usual traditional politics."[145] Beirut Madinati has "chang[ed] the rules of the game"[146], by imposing the requirement to write a political program and to discuss certain issues on the traditional parties, thus raising the bar for politicians in power.[147] Activists felt inspired by the original action repertoire that had never been used before. These included an extensive technical program for the municipality; the issues that were raised such as public spaces; the constructive, inclusive, positive and solution-focussed discourse; neighbourhood dialogues; and that Beirut Madinati explained the function and mandate of the municipality[148]. By deploying such practices, challengers are able to "institutionalize new practices and rules" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p.22).

Furthermore, despite internal struggle and external constraints, Beirut Madinati spawned the emergence of similar movements with its step into the political field. It is visible in particular different parliamentary parties that formed a coalition for the 2018 elections, and mobilisation in other regions of the country. An activists says that Libaladi, one of the parties developing from Beirut Madinati, would not have existed without Beirut Madinati, which in turn would not have existed without the You Stink Movement in 2015, which in turn would not have happened

[145] Author's interview with P10, 25-04-2018
[146] Author's interview with P15, 16-05-2018
[147] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018
[148] Author's interview with P5, 11-04-2018

without the campaign on taxation even earlier[149] (Kerbage, 2017, p.6). Another participants states how it takes time and perseverance, and "a lot of correction of mistakes", but that together these initiatives will gradually break the balance of fear[150]. Regardless of that the parties it spawned did not win seats in the Parliament, the fact that they participated, shows the non-sectarian institutionalisation effect of Beirut Madinati.

Finally, with political activism and considering this to continue, Beirut Madinati as well as other non-traditional political movements have become part of 'the everyday', where diverse members negotiate their identities and interact while navigating in a sectarian society (Mac Ginty, 2017, p.9). Salloukh et al. (2015, p.176) make the argument that a comprehensive and multi-level approach is needed for a non-sectarian system. In addition to institutional and structural reforms, this change also requires "discovering, imagining, learning and deploying 'practical arts of peaceful interaction and dispute resolution among diverse partners'" (Tully, 2007, p.78 in Salloukh et al., 2015, p.180). Everyday practices of alternative interaction and cooperation at work, schools, universities, NGOs and art centres foster a non-sectarian citizenship. Nagle (2016) for instance demonstrates how different movements in Lebanon, such as the feminist movement and the victims' group, challenge the system by their specialised, everyday activism, thereby creating cross-sectarian, resonating alternatives. In this regard, new modes of political mobilisation, such as by Beirut Madinati and other non-traditional political movements, can be added to these groups, as by being politically active and even trying the step into the political arena, they have the potential to make non-sectarian political interaction an ordinary feature in Lebanese society.

6.2 Corruptive practices and destabilisation

Final reflections regard the relation between sectarianism and corruptive practices, emphasised by several informants. By showing this link, informants clarify how the political elite abuses its position in power for private gains, giving examples of electricity and construction work in the city, and that it sustains this position through practices of ethnopolitics. To illustrate, an activist says that corruption deals are opaque but known, and get worse after elections when power is secured: "We know a lot about their business deals, especially on individual level."[151] Another participant who does not vote stresses the aspect of ethnopolitics: "Behind the table [political

[149] Author's interviews with P16, 18-05-2018 and P9, 21-04-2018
[150] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018
[151] Author's interview with P6, 17-04-20

elite] are all friends. All the politicians are friends. That is why Lebanon is corrupted. (…) That is why, actually, these politicians create problems between Muslims and Christians."[152]

As result of years of problematic sectarian politics, political deadlocks and corruption, people have become disengaged of politics because of hopelessness, unbelief, and cynicism. Participants call politics in Lebanon "a big lie"[153], "dirty"[154], "corrupt and violent"[155], "inheritance"[156] and "business"[157]. Even committed activist themselves indicate that they were sceptical and unbelieving far into Beirut Madinati's campaign[158]. Activists who are more hopeful, all recognise such feelings around them: "It is very difficult to remain hopeful. It is true that if I compare myself to some friends of mine, who are completely: why even bother?"[159] Additionally, people have adapted to the inefficiencies of the political situation, and to clientelism and corruption that lay at the root of it. "We are used to adapting, and I think this is the main problem. Because we are very resilient, and that is backfiring. Too resilient."[160] Resilience thus gets a negative connotation in light of citizens who do not challenge the system easily. Instead, they adapt: By emigrating when there is no work; by buying generators when there is no electricity; by asking and receiving community favours when the state does not provide them[161]; and by residing to private beaches to avoid pollution[162]. Both the disengagement and the high level of adaptation to the situation makes inciting large masses a difficult task. The difficulty to work through the corruptive nature of sectarianism with little to no resources, particularly in comparison to the large, powerful organisations of traditional parties, and dealing with the disengagement and resilience, forms a major pitfall for Beirut Madinati.

There is thus an interesting contradiction between criticising the leaders on the one hand, and a genuine trust in them on the other hand. How long do people adhere their party, and what is the moment that they give way for an alternative, either by supporting them, or by not supporting their party? An activist of the communist party called it the "Stockholm syndrome"[163], meaning that a party may impact them negatively, but they remain loyal and are afraid of losing even more. Another activist recounts:

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[152] Author's interview with P25, 30-03-2018
[153] Author's interview with P25, 30-03-2018
[154] Author's interview with P26, 01-04-2018
[155] Author's interview with P16, 18-05-2018
[156] Author's interview with P28, 10-04-2018
[157] Author's interview with P27, 01-04-2018
[158] Author's interviews with P10, 25-04-2018, P3, 05-04-2018 and P1, 22-03-2018
[159] Author's interview with P10, 25-04-2018
[160] Author's interview with P6, 17-04-2018
[161] Author's interview with P29, supporter Amal Movement,19-04-2018
[162] Author's interviews with P5, 11-04-2018, and P8, 19-04-2018
[163] Author's interview with P32, 24-04-2018

> Let's say somebody who helped *your* father when he was down. Even if they are corrupt, you still have somebody, you gonna think this is how it is in this country, he might be corrupt, but the others as well, I am gonna vote for him. They understand it is corrupt, but they cannot be unappreciable. And sometimes there are people our age. Our age sometimes. It is that they appreciate that somebody helped them[164]

Additionally, belonging can explain another part of this contradiction: "You are forced to vote for your party. I mean not forced, literally forced, but you have to support your brothers".[165] This statement implies a feeling of belonging to a group, and loyalty, as feelings of belonging and loyalty may be stronger than the levels of despair:

> I tell you how Lebanon was created (…) Not as independent country, but when it was created as a country in 1920. The priest who went to France and he gave them official letter, we want to declare state of Lebanon. This is why we say - not the Christians, the *Maronite* – we were existing here, way before others. We belong here.[166]

This relation between corruptive practices and sectarianism is discussed by Mujkić (2016), who studies ethnopolitics and prospects of alternatives in relation to waves of protests in ethnically divided Bosnia-Herzegovina: Private interest and corruptive practices at the expense of social justice have become the extension of the clientelist system, and alienates the people from the small sectarian elite. He states:

> Every four years this oligarchy of ethno-nationalist elites gets its mandate in an atmosphere of fear in order to continue its alienation from living citizens, in its own world for itself and by itself, objectivizing its representative will of the national interest in material abundance (p.225-226).

Although the protests have certain long-term impact, Mujkić labels expectations of demonstrators and international workers naïve, as the existing ethno-nationalist elite will not simply relinquish their power position under pressure of civic protest. This is similarly stressed by Salloukh et al. (2015) who rhetorically ask: "Will all those Lebanese operating beyond the reach of the law, or entrenched comfortably in clientelist networks – whether in the public sector or

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164 Author's interview with P20, 12-04-2018
165 Author's interview with P29, supporter Amal movement, 19-04-2018
166 Author's interview with P20, 12-04-2018

outside it – accept reforms that may dry up the corruption swamps financing their inflated consumer habits?" (p.180).

It is indeed doubtful whether social movement organisations can be strong enough without a large popular base. Yet, empirical data hints at a potential possibility that derives from the alienation Mujkić (2016) mentions. In the opinion of many informants, corruption is slowly reaching, or has recently reached, a point where the alienation between the elite and the people starts to overshadow the vertical boundaries between the sectarian groups. In this regards, two other accounts illustrate this as well:

> There was so much corruption, and people were so upset, from the Christian leader, and the Sunni leader, and from the Shiite leader, that somehow they have started to put them together in one group which is that of corruption and diluted the labelling of their sectarian around it. This is in the past five years or so.[167]

> He is not good, he gives to his sons, his family and friends, his inner circle only. But I am his son too. I am 100 percent Amal, my heart you know, but that is why it is heart breaking, that he is not so good now.[168]

Hence, although corruptive practices are difficult to alter, the corruption in itself is for some participants a potential for derailment of the field of sectarian politics. Participants argue that it as a given that the current political establishment will always continue to mismanage the country, as "they cannot stop the cycle of corruption and bad government. You can always count on them for them to remain corrupt and keep on doing behaviour that will annoy people."[169] Moreover, as discussed before, this might keep inciting other groups of elite, such as media owners or the outer elite, to switch support to alternative movements.

Additionally, there might stem potential support for a non-sectarian movement from the portion of society that is disengaged of politics[170]. Although difficult to determine the exact size of this segment, the low turnout in both the municipal and parliamentary elections shows that mobilising these people can have significant political leverage. It is indeed a strategy adopted by independent political parties, "the blue ocean strategy"[171], as tapping into new supporter 'market' spaces of those disengaged has significantly more potential than targeting individuals with a

[167] Author's interview with P10, 25-04-2018
[168] Author's interview with P29, 19-04-2018
[169] Author's interview with P13, 08-05-2018
[170] Author's interviews with P16, 18-05-2018, and P20, 12-04-2018
[171] Author's interview with P22, 24-05-2018

strong sectarian political identity. It would also be necessary, as most participants share the opinion that the supporters who share the values of Beirut Madinati form a minority in Lebanon[172]. It is linked to a generational aspect of the field of opposition, mentioned by participants. Beirut Madinati could tap into a network of young people who were particularly active and "on fire"[173] allowing for non-sectarian collective action. Most activists share the view that young people therefore play an important role, and would support an alternative because of marginalisation from the traditional sectarian parties[174]. Also, due to the large proportion of young people in Lebanese population, they are seen as an interesting constituency[175]. Yet, some activists are critical about this generational aspect, arguing that young people can have a strong sectarian affiliations, such as the three young non-supporters among the participants, and that statistical data is needed to make a statement on the feelings towards sectarianism of the young people[176].

These points align with the idea of Fligstein & McAdam (2012) that field change depends on "whether or not incumbents are able to deliver ends to their members (…) measured in terms of votes, profits, political change, legal victories, clients served, or whatever unit of measurement makes sense" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p.177). The stability of a field is threatened, if the political elite is not able anymore to deliver the right ends, and the electoral results in Lebanon suggest that the political elite themselves are not able to mobilise supporters.

On a final note, what is needed for mobilising disengaged and aggravated citizens, and for a large popular mass to break the sectarian mould, is conviction. In this regard, an activist recounts that what made Beirut Madinati briefly but significantly expand in 2016, was the shared conviction that change was a necessity, and possible to reach by winning the municipal elections, and that this was a battle worth fighting for.[177] This role of conviction and hope is echoed in the interviews, yet, the words hope and hopeless are just as often said, and participants state these attitudes are not widespread among the population.

6.3 Conclusion

By focussing on the challengers as well as on the incumbents, in this chapter I have included two final reflections on the potential of change of a sectarian social order. It showed that the novel means of participation in the elections and a different, non-sectarian way of 'doing politics' can

[172] Author's interviews with P11, 26-04-2018 , and P29, 19-04-2018
[173] Author's interview with P10, 25-04-2018
[174] Author's interview with P4, 05-04-2018
[175] Over 600,000 young people had become eligible to vote before the parliamentary elections in 2018 since 2009, corresponding to 16% of the total eligible voters (National Democratic Institute, 2018).
[176] Author's interview with P17, 22-05-2018
[177] Author's interview with P7, 17-04-2018

become institutionalised in the field of sectarian politics, and thus incrementally change the sectarian order. Moreover, participants consider large-scale corruption as a factor that could influence change, as it leaves a large portion of society disengaged, and affects trust in sectarian elite. It can be concluded that a combination of an alternative, innovative non-sectarian coalition, in which people would put their trust, together with a repetition of the inability of the political elite to provide services, could enforce change the political field of sectarianism.

Conclusion

A society divided along sectarian lines, and the manoeuvres of a social initiative that falls outside sectarian categories, have been at the core of this thesis. Following Beirut Madinati's engagement in non-sectarian collective action, and a period of rise and decline, in the thesis I aimed to answer the research puzzle: How did Beirut Madinati engage in collective action that transcends sectarian divides to gain political influence in Beirut, Lebanon, between 2015 and May 2018? In this conclusion I turn to the main findings that regard the expression of Beirut Madinati as an opposition field; its ways of engaging in collective action in a sectarian society; and its lasting impact. I further reflect on a limitation stemming from the focus of the thesis, and provide suggestions for future research.

Rooted in a crisis around garbage disposal and large non-sectarian and pro-justice mobilisation, the emergence of Beirut Madinati reveals a broader field of political opposition in Lebanon. Sectarianism is omnipresent in Lebanon, and sustained by political elite and socio-political processes following clientelism and institutionalisation. Yet, within this broader field of sectarian politics, another community exists that consists of individual and collective actors that do not define themselves in dominant sectarian categories. Instead, this group upholds a non-sectarian political identity. Coming from a primarily middle-class, academic, activist background, social actors in this field create different forms of collective action that started in the 1990s. Yet, what binds them is the common stake to change the sectarian social order in Lebanon.

While manoeuvring in a sectarian political field, Beirut Madinati strategically negotiated and responded to the sectarian divides, in order to reach out to different sectarian groups. It did so by making the step into municipal politics with campaigning in the elections, and thereby challenged sectarian social order. Nevertheless, the story of decline of Beirut Madinati demonstrates the dominance of sectarianism: Being invested with the ideological, political and material recourses, the sectarian political elite are in a dominant position and able to restore and sustain a stable field. Activists have to overcome sustained processes of ethnopolitics and institutionalised sectarianism. Similarly, they have to overcome internal disagreement, and build a strong coalition to sustain non-sectarian collective action.

Despite the limitations, I have argued that through the deployment of innovative collective action, Beirut Madinati remains valuable and has an impact on sectarian politics. The step into the political arena, as well as new way of engaging in and formulating politics, has the potential to be institutionalised in the social order and result in incremental change (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

Besides the importance for a country as Lebanon, this thesis aimed to contribute to knowledge on collective action in sectarian societies. I particularly focussed on those actors in a field that identify in non-sectarian terms, and that thus have little space in a country where social divisions run deep including educational institutions, media outlets and associational life.

The aim of this thesis was to contribute to insights on collective action and sectarian divides. It should be acknowledged however that a one-sided 'reading' of Lebanon as a divided, sectarian society is a limitation. As Mac Ginty (2017) rightly argues, continued labelling of societies as deeply divided may reinforce the boundaries and it can thus become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Although I have touched upon the role of class, additional research could enhance the intersectionality in relation to sectarianism. This is because a one-sided focus on sectarian dynamics may lose sight of many other vertical and horizontal socioeconomic issues that are similarly important to address. They include national diversity, economic class, or urban and rural origins. Thus, how do non-sectarian identifications interact with structural identities as gender, family background, and urban-rural divides?

Furthermore, there are still other important questions that are left unanswered in research on non-sectarian collective action, and that nevertheless would yield valuable insights. First, it is the question why certain individuals abide to the dominant form of sectarianism, or become disengaged, while others join an alternative movement. Why do some individuals reject conformity to sectarian identities, while others do not? And, following from the limitation above, what role do larger structural aspects play a role, such as class, gender, and urban divides? This would be important for creating a larger basis for collective action. Second, how can a strong and effective coalition be built within the field of opposition to sectarian politics as a next step? An interesting link could be made as well with 'first-timers' in non-conformity to join alternative movements (Verhulst & Walgrave, 2009)

In addition to a climate of domestic sectarian politics, Lebanon is situated in a region where sectarian divides seem to harden rather than disappear. Similarly to domestic ways of sustaining elite positions, a 'cold war' between different regional powers play out in sectarian tensions that influence Lebanese sectarian politics (Gause, 2014). In addition, the hot wars that are currently fought at Lebanon's borders continue to reproduce sectarian dynamics. The regional dimension forms a significant constraint for any non-sectarian political movement. Nevertheless, bottom-up collective action remains to play a crucial role in overcoming sectarian divides. A multi-level and multi-sector approach for change is necessary, including political and economic reform, and herein social movement remain to play a crucial role.

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Appendix A

Participant Overview

Assigned number to the interviewee	Profile Functions in Beirut Madinati, gender, estimated age, profession	Date
Active		
P1	Volunteer, coordinator, F, 20s	22-03-2018
P2	Volunteer, coordinator, M / 20s	27-03-2018
P3	Volunteer, F, 2-30s / NGO	05-04-2018
P4	Candidate, early organiser / F / 30s	05-04-2018
P5	Volunteer, M, 20s,	11-04-2018
P6	Candidate, M, 50s,	17-04-2018
P7	Coordinator neighbourhood working group, interim steering committee and grievance committee, F, 30s	17-04-2018
P8	Initiator, collegiate body, F, 40s	19-04-2018
P9	Candidate, M, 40s	21-04-2018
P10	Communication coordinator, collegiate body, F, 30s	25-04-2018
P11	Member steering committee and collegiate body, communication coordinator, F, 30s	26-04-2018
P12	Volunteer, photographer, M, 30s	03-05-2018
P13	Delegates coordinator, GA-member, M, 3-40s	08-05-2018
P14	Volunteer fundraising, GA-member, F, 20s	15-05-2018
P15	Coordinator neighbourhood working group, F, 20s	16-05-2018
P16	Coordinator, M, 40s-50	18-05-2018
P17	Area coordinator, alternative municipality working group, public policy coordinator, collegiate body, M, 30s	22-05-2018
P18	Candidate, M, 30s	22-02-2018
Sympathiser		
P19	F, 20s, NGO practitioner	03-04-2018
P20	M, 20s, Banker/NGO practitioner	12-04-2018

P21	F, 40s, Legal consultant	26-04-2018
P22	M, 30s, Company owner/entrepreneur	24-05-2018
P23	M, 30s, Artist	15-05-2018
P24	F, 30s, NGO-Practitioner	25-05-2018
Critical or non-supporters		
P25	No party, M, 20s, student	30-03-2018
P26	Party unknown, F, 4-50s, profession unknown	01-04-2018
P27	No party, M, 20-30s,	01-04-2018
P28	Lebanese Forces, M, 30s, Accountant	10-04-2018
P29	Amal Movement, M, 20s, Shop employee	19-04-2018
P30	Hezbollah, M, 50-60s Political candidate	19-04-2018
P31	Hezbollah/Amal Movement, M, 20-30, Shop owner	22-04-2018
P32	People's Movement, M, 50s, Shop owner	24-04-2018
P33	People's Movement, M, 40s, Political candidate	25-04-2018
P34	Free Patriotic Movement M, 30s Lawyer, policy consultant	01-05-2018

Overview of events organised by Beirut Madinati

Event	Description	Data and place
Political Announcement	Public meeting to announce its point of view on the parliamentary elections.	21-04-2018. Mansion Abdulkader Street, Zoqaq el-Blat, Beirut
Title: What do we want from Beirut's MPs? Mar Michael.	Public neighbourhood dialogue with the aim to hear what residents' needs and priorities are. Issues raised were tranquillity in residence areas, parking spaces, gender equality, rent, right to know of disappeared people, and elementary local services.	28-04-2018. Deir Ja'ara, Vendome - Mar Mikhael Street, Beirut

Overview of documents researched

Document	Description	Source	Language
Bylaws	Internal structuration on identity of Beirut Madinati, and the rules and regulations of the organisation.	Received from P17, 28-06-2018.	Arabic
Donors Report	Document reporting the donors and monetary amounts received via fundraisings and the crowdfunding campaign.	Received from P17, 07-07-2018. Before published on http://beirutmadinati.com/	English and Arabic
Municipal Political Program 2016-2022	The municipal political program including: Information about Beirut Madinati; its vision and outcomes; 10 thematic points of action; and the vision on implementation, finances and institutional reform.	Received from P10, 25-04-2018	English
Presentation Social Media Strategy	A presentation made by the activist for information on the communication and social media strategy of Beirut Madinati.	Received from P10, 25-04-2018	English
Website	About Beirut Madinati, activities of working groups.	http://beirutmadinati.com/	Arabic
Facebook page	Posts on events; political statements; discussions, invitations for protests.	https://www.facebook.com/BeirutMadinati/	English, Arabic
Newspaper articles and reports	See references: Reports and newspaper articles.	Various	English
YouTube channel	Campaign advertisements; television broadcastings; expert	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTmCsDq34R	Primarily Arabic

Twitter	interviews. Posts on events; political statements; discussions, invitations for protests.	N0wFjQ3RaOTrw https://twitter.com/beirutmadinati	Primarily Arabic