# Governing Empowerment

*How aid organisations negotiate the empowerment of refugees in a context of hybrid governance with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state in Beirut since the Syrian conflict in 2011*


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[1] https://students.uu.nl/en/practical-information/policies-and-procedures/fraud-and-plagiarism.
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 Abstract

Lebanon, a country which consists of 4 million Lebanese nationals, has received a large number of about 1.5 million Syrian refugees since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011. The Lebanese state has provided a fragmentised response, which is primarily focused on the refugees' return or resettlement. At the same time, a large humanitarian response is involved in dealing with this influx of refugees. Some of these aid organisations focus on the 'empowerment' of refugees, which stands in stark contrast with the Lebanese state's positions towards refugees. This research analyses how aid organisations negotiate the empowerment of refugees with donors, Syrian refugees, and the Lebanese state in Beirut. By bringing together analytical concepts related to hybridity, humanitarian governance and empowerment, this research concludes that the empowerment of refugees is not achieved in Lebanon. The question which follows out of this conclusion, is, why does this humanitarian aid system continue? In answering this question, this research contributes to our theoretical understanding of governing empowerment in a hybrid humanitarian framework and disentangles its logic of practice.

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# Introduction

*'Basically, I don't think there's really been that need to evolve the focus [of the humanitarian response], because the people that are vulnerable are still at the same, if not worst, level of vulnerability eight years in.'*[3]

## Empirical context

Lebanon, a country which consists of about 4 million Lebanese nationals, has received a large number of Syrian refugees since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011. The Lebanese government has estimated that there are 1.5 million Syrian refugees living in the country, in addition to 280,000 Palestinian refugees (UNDP n.d.). This accounts for about 30 percent of Lebanon's population, which is the highest concentration per capita of refugees in the world. Yet, despite the large number of refugees, the Lebanese state has never ratified the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees nor its accompanying 1967 protocol. Instead, it regards displaced populations as guests, not refugees, which relieves the Lebanese state from recognising and protecting the rights stipulated in the convention. The main reason behind this 'guest policy' concerning Syrian refugees is that it allows the Lebanese state to guarantee their return and prevent their integration. This is supported by the fact that the Lebanese state is unwilling to adopt a national response to the Syrian refugees' presence, unless it is focused on the repatriation of Syrian refugees to Syria.

However, the Lebanese state's attitude towards Syrian refugees does not erase their presence within the country, as they live in temporary settlements, or disappear in Lebanon's informal housing sector, without having a legal status. Meanwhile, their livelihood often depends on the provision of services by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Some of these organisations have appealed for going beyond emergency relief and are advocating for the empowerment of Syrian refugees, to enable choice and agency. More specifically, these aid organisations work together with Syrian refugees, in programmes that are funded and supported by donors.

The Lebanese government benefits from the large local and international NGO sector, as humanitarian assistance is often geared towards the 'host community' and therefore also

[3] Citation from author's interview with UNOCHA employee, AID_I21P24 (for more information about the coding system, see the appendix).

improves Lebanese institutions, communities and infrastructure. Nevertheless, the NGOs are encountering difficulties with Lebanese regulations, for example, by those that protect Lebanese in their employment and restrict Syrians' work opportunities. Here, an interesting complication arises, which this research investigates: on the one hand, the aid organisations aim to empower 'vulnerable people', while, on the other hand, the Lebanese state wishes to control (and in that sense disempower) the same people to ensure their future return. Consequently, this leads to the following puzzle statement:

*How is the empowerment of refugees in a context of hybrid governance negotiated by aid organisations with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state in Beirut since the Syrian conflict in 2011?*

Syrian refugees live in a precarious situation in Lebanon: 69 percent of Syrian refugee families live below the poverty line, 34 percent of Syrian refugee households are moderately to severely food-insecure and 73 percent of the refugees interviewed by UNHCR aged 15 and older do not have legal residency (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and ICA 2018, 2-4). Their human rights are gravely damaged as they are forcibly evicted from areas, their houses are destroyed, and as they are at risk of arbitrary detention and arrest by Lebanese authorities. Still, there is no prospect of a political solution in Syria, which means refugees cannot return and are stuck in this protracted situation.

Meanwhile, the number of NGOs in Lebanon has increased over the past years (AbiYaghi, Yammine and Jagarnathsingh 2019). Although there are no official numbers, it was estimated that there are between 8,500 (The International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law 2018) and 10,000 NGOs in the country, which is considered to be the highest number of NGOs per capita in the region (Habre 2019).

The citation in the beginning of this introduction shows, however, that not much has changed in the humanitarian response and the level of vulnerability of Syrian refugees over the past eight years. As one human rights worker describes: *'Because of the lack of social safety nets, like access to health care, education, or employment […], people at risk or who have been affected by the crisis are still finding themselves in this emergency situation. [This] means humanitarian organisations are still providing an emergency response, even up to eight years after the crisis itself. Typically, at this point, we should be moving into more [of] a development phase, but because of the lack of responsiveness […] of the government to create more coherent policies that work both for the Lebanese host community and the Syrian population, we are*

*unable to fulfil this transition into development.'*[4] Herein lies the social significance of this research. To analyse how and why the living conditions of Syrian refugees have barely improved, despite the large humanitarian response, can open the door for deeper and more integrated ways of understanding the situation and the power relations involved. This research thereby goes beyond more common explanations such as a need for more funding. The tensions between the Lebanese state and aid organisations, which are reaffirmed in this citation, are the starting point for this analysis. Ideas related to 'empowerment', which are frequently used within the humanitarian response in Lebanon, provide an interesting tool for analysis because it conflicts with the lack of improvement of the living conditions of Syrian refugees.

## Academic approach

To answer the puzzle, I take a unique approach: this research focuses on the role of aid organisations in the negotiation process with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state, and centralises their point of view. Most previous research related to hybrid governance, which combines state and non-state forms of governance, has not engaged in-depth with the role of humanitarian aid within hybrid governance structures (Meagher, De Herdt and Titeca 2014, 6). Hybrid governance has often been applied to issues outside of refugee studies, related to neo-liberalism, environment, conflict and security, involved with different sets of actors such as private corporations, traditional leaders and vigilante groups (Colona and Jaffe 2016, 2-3).

Other studies have mentioned the role of NGOs in hybrid governance (Hagmann and Péclard 2010, 546), and have stressed the importance of treating 'state and non-state governmentality in a common frame' (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, 994), but have not analysed the hybrid structures from the *perspective of* NGOs, or aid organisations in particular. For example, in the article by Nora Stel and Chris van der Borgh, hybrid governance is applied to Palestinian refugee settlements in Lebanon, however, while this study mentions the role of NGOs in hybrid arrangements, its focus lies on the role of Palestinian political parties as service providers (2017).

For this research, however, aid organisations are particularly important for the negotiation of empowerment. There are two reasons why I have made this choice: Firstly, I believe that aid organisations have insight into potential problems and solutions related to empowerment, as they are the actors who use the term and try to implement it. Secondly, there

[4] AID_I12P12.

already are important academic projects that deal with Syrian refugees' perspective in Lebanon, (see, for example, 'Refugee Hosts'[5]) and I have been warned by academics for the 'research-fatigue' Syrian refugees might experience as they are regularly subjected to monitoring and research projects.

A second distinct feature of this research is the fact that it focuses specifically on the case of urban refugees, namely, that of Syrian refugees in Beirut. In general, a distinction is made by scholars and practitioners between two types of geographical locations where refugees reside: urban and rural areas. In urban areas, refugees more often live in informal housing, whereas in rural areas, refugees regularly live in settlements or camps. Relevant research has analysed hybrid governance in the context of the latter, non-urban refugee camps, for example, to understand the 'everyday geopolitics' within the camps (Janmyr and Knudsen 2016) or to investigate the camps as 'spaces of exception' (Ramadan and Fregonese 2017). While refugees in urban contexts have also been the subject of scholarly analysis within different academic fields, these have not necessarily looked at urban governance in particular. As Jonathan Darling explains, these studies have mostly been focused on more traditional notions of top-down state sovereignty, policing and (related) refugees' experiences, thereby missing the opportunity to analyse urban migration through a lens of fragmentised authority (2017, 179). Consequently, scholars have often neglected to research these urban refugee spaces as sites of contestation and their impact on, for example, municipal and national authorities (Crisp, Morris and Refstie 2012, S37). A hybrid governance approach to humanitarian aid for urban refugees can bring renewed attention to these issues, because it offers a lens for understanding how new forms of governance evolve. Are J. Knudsen claims that Beirut is a particularly interesting setting to research this issue, as different levels of formalisation and integration are apparent with regard to refugee settlements together in one urban context, which can influence the form of governance taking place (2016). Therefore, the geographical starting point of this research is Beirut.

In sum, the originality of this research, applying hybrid governance to humanitarian aid from the perspective of aid organisations, and to urban refugees in combination with the collection of new evidence, can contribute to these academic empirical debates.

[5] 'Refugee Hosts.' https://refugeehosts.org/our-approach/.

## Academic objectives and significance

With regard to my analytical frame, I am bringing 'hybrid governance', 'humanitarian governance' and 'empowerment' together, to form one analytical whole. Applying these concepts separately would not have allowed me to analyse the empirical reality, which shows how the interaction between evidence and ideas sometimes calls for a new combination of concepts. Following Ragin, generating a new analytical frame is theoretically significant as the different combination of analytical concepts leads to new implications for the existing concepts (1994, 35-36). The application of this new analytical framework is necessary and innovative, first, because it can analyse how the negotiation of empowerment is a form of institutional hybrid governance, which renews attention for the position of the actors (aid organisations, donors, Lebanese, state, aid organisations) within the hybrid governance structures, and their room for agency. Second, it advances humanitarian governance by using empowerment as a benchmark, and by applying it to explain the specific power involved in humanitarian aid which influences the hybrid governance structures. Third, the concept of empowerment is brought to a new level within this research, not only asking and answering if refugees are empowered by means of the humanitarian programmes, but also investigating how it is governed – through attributing meaning to the term empowerment. Hence, this research contributes to advancing new theories, as these analytical concepts are applied in a new way, to be able to make sense of the empirical complication.

The research puzzle is therefore, again, significant to ask, for two reasons: to interpret a social significant phenomenon and to contribute, with the new analytical frame, to multiple academic debates.

## Research questions

As mentioned above, the main puzzle statement of this research is the following: *How is the empowerment of refugees in a context of hybrid governance negotiated by aid organisations with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state in Beirut since the Syrian conflict in 2011?* This puzzle has been sub-divided into several smaller questions, that have guided the research, and can be traced back to the different chapters. These can be related to, firstly, the concept of hybrid governance and secondly, the concept of empowerment. Humanitarian governance has

consciously been left out in the formulation of sub-questions, as I have used this concept as an analytical tool to interpret the data gathered.

The first set of sub-questions, related to the concept of hybrid governance:

1.a. Who is involved in the hybrid governance of refugees' empowerment in the urban setting of Beirut?

1.b. What are the roles of the actors involved in the hybrid governance of refugees' empowerment in urban setting of Beirut?

1.c. What institutional relations are there between and among the governing actors and the refugees?

The second set of sub-questions, related to the concept of empowerment:

2.a. How is the (expansion of) access to information of refugees negotiated by aid organisations, with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state?

2.b. How is the inclusion and participation of refugees in humanitarian aid and society negotiated by aid organisations, with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state?

2.c. How is the (expansion of) accountability of actors in control negotiated by aid organisations, with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state?

2.d. How is the (expansion of) local organisational capacity of refugees negotiated by aid organisations, with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state?

## Chapter outline

The chapter outline, which relates to the sets of sub-questions formulated above, is the following: the first chapter situates this research in relevant theory, reviews the analytical concepts of empowerment, hybrid governance and humanitarian governance and brings them together in relation to the research questions presented above. The second chapter explains the methodology used to answer the research questions, by elaborating on the research strategy, sampling method, data collection techniques and ethics. The third chapter begins answering the first set of sub-questions related to showing what the hybrid governance structures look like, by analysing which positions the Lebanese government takes with regard to empowerment of refugees, in relation to aid organisations, donors, and Syrian refugees in the hybrid governance structure. The fourth chapter continues to answer the first set of sub-questions, by studying the humanitarian aid system in Lebanon, thereby directing attention towards the relations between the aid organisations, donors and Syrian refugees specifically as part of the hybrid governance structure. Subsequently, it analyses how the term empowerment is used within the humanitarian

aid system in Lebanon, and how the humanitarian response can be assessed on the basis of the indicators of empowerment: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability and local organisational capacity. This chapter contributes to explaining the first set of sub-questions and answers the second set of sub-questions. Based on the insights gained in chapter three and four, a new question rises, which is answered in the fifth chapter and provides a thorough analysis of why the humanitarian aid system continues in similar fashion. The conclusions tie the chapters together, reflecting on the dialogue between theory and evidence, and provide some policy consideration and recommendations for future research.

# Chapter 1: Theory and analytical framework

This chapter explains the three analytical concepts that together form the theoretical framework of this research. First, hybridity, second, humanitarian governance, and third, empowerment. It then argues how bringing these concepts together in one analytical framework contributes to understanding the empirical complication, which is the negotiation of the empowerment of refugees by aid organisations with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state in Beirut, and shows how it can be operationalised into sub-questions.

## Hybridity

Hybridity is the main lens through which this research analyses how refugees are governed in Beirut. It has been applied in different fields of study to explain different phenomena, most notably cultural studies and postcolonial theory (Guignery 2011, 1-3). In relation to this research, the application of hybridity to governance is most useful, as it can be used to describe the empirical complication: the negotiation of the empowerment of refugees, between aid organisations, donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state. This section explains this study's understanding of governance, different ideas related to hybrid governance, this study's choice for the concept 'institutional bricolage', and how the Lebanese state has been conceptualised in academic literature as hybrid before.

Governance, in this research, is informed by the notion of 'governmentality' developed by Michel Foucault, which he understands as 'the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power' (Foucault 1991, 102). In this way, structures allow for having influence, and influence can be obtained by forming these structures. Indeed, scholars have connected Foucault's understanding of power to hybridity before, for example, Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond have stated how the Foucauldian 'notion of the circulation of power' seems fitting with the idea that 'hybrid social structures, agents and agencies are made and remade' (2016, 221). This is significant, because power – in this research – is not seen as 'top-down' but instead as constructing the hybrid governance structures through negotiating empowerment (see the 'Theory, ontology and epistemology' section for more explanation). Likewise, these ideas have more-often been applied to governing refugees, as well as humanitarian governance and is of particular use for this research, as the 'rationality' through

which governmentality functions, and which is described as ‘a way or system of thinking about the nature of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed) capable of making some form of that activity thinkable and practicable’ (Gordon 1991, 3) can explain how empowerment, again, works to realise the particular form of governance of refugees in Lebanon that this research analyses.

Exploring scholarly analysis related to hybridity and this understanding of governance, ‘hybrid political order’ is an often-used term coined by Volker Boege and others with the aim to go beyond state-centric views of governance, and to take into account non-state forms of order and governance which come from different societal sources and form a new political order (2008, 6, 10). Consequently, it can be applied to all ‘levels’ of governance, local, national, international, global – and overcome perceived divisions between them. This term therefore allows other actors, such as aid organisations, refugees and donors to play a role in governance.

More specifically, hybridity can denote, according to Niagale Bagayoko, Eboe Hutchful and Robin Luckham, ‘the multiple sites of political authority and governance where security is enacted and negotiated’ including ‘the multiple ways traditional, personal, kin-based or clientilistic logics interact with modern, imported, or rational actor logics in the shifting historical conditions of particular national and local contexts’ (2016, 6). This definition reflects some broad notion of ‘multiple ways of political authority and governance’ but is specific in its focus on those sites which relate to security.

Many scholars have come up with similar concepts related to hybrid governance, which all show the same characteristics, albeit with a different focus. For example, other related ideas and theories would be ‘negotiation arenas’ (Hagmann and Péclard 2010, 551) and the ‘mediated state’ (Menkhaus 2007, 78). However, as Frances Cleaver and others argue, these concepts remain somewhat limited to ‘dynamism, negotiability and contests for power between actors’ which is ‘not sufficient for understanding the nature and effects of hybrid institutions’ (2013, 29). Indeed, these concepts leave room for questioning the impact of hybrid governance on the positions of individual actors in relation to each other, an issue significant when researching the governance and empowerment of refugees.

For that reason, this study ties the broad notion of hybrid governance to the concept of ‘institutional bricolage’, to not only be able to analyse how aid organisations negotiate the new institutions related to empowerment with donors, Syrian refugees and Lebanese state in Beirut which make up the hybrid governance arrangement, but to also see how this affects the agency, captured in empowerment, of the Lebanese state, donors, aid organisations and Syrian refugees.

In full, this results in the following definition of institutional hybrid governance: ‘States operate alongside “informal” and “non- state” forms of organisation in the exercise of public authority and service provision’ (Meagher 2012, 1075) and this institutional bricolage ‘consists of the processes in which people (consciously and non-consciously) draw on existing social formulae and arrangements (rules, traditions, norms, roles and relationships) to patch together institutions in response to changing situations. Such innovations and adaptations are legitimised by reference to tradition, socially acceptable ways of doing things, existing relations of authority. The institutions so produced are dynamics hybrids of the modern and traditional, the formal and informal. They are both negotiated and structured, uneven in functioning and impact’ (Cleaver et al. 2013, 5). This institutional bricolage approach to hybrid governance is distinctive in the way that it can ‘illuminate the nature of hybridity as a dynamic and uneven process’ which enables to see ‘how the scope of negotiating governance is restricted, the room for manoeuvre for some actors is less than for others’ (Cleaver et al. 2013, 6).

Institutions, in this research, are interpreted as those (groups of) organisations that forge arrangements to form practice. For example, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) is an institution agreed upon between the Lebanese government, UN agencies and several aid organisations to deal with the influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Institutional relations are then those relations between the aid organisations, donors, Syrian refugees and Lebanese state, constructed by these institutions.

In addition, the reference to ‘existing social formulae and arrangements (rules, traditions, norms, roles and relationships)’ (Cleaver et al. 2013, 5) can prove particularly useful for analysing how these institutions are formed. For example, it can shed light on how the sectarian divisions in the political system in Lebanon affect the humanitarian response, as sectarianism builds upon traditions and roles and shapes institutions.

The specific notion of institutional bricolage has not yet been applied to humanitarian aid for refugees but is commonly used within organisational studies or development studies related to resource management (Christiansen and Lounsbury 2013, 203; Cleaver et al. 2013). Yet, because the definition refers to the ‘unevenness’ in governance structures, it is most relevant for answering questions concerning the unequal relations between aid organisations, Syrian refugees, donors and the Lebanese state in this form of hybrid governance, some of whom may have a limited form of agency as they are ‘individual bricoleurs’ who are ‘constrained by their social environment’ (Cleaver et al. 2013, 6). Again, this research tries to shed light on who has the power to form the hybrid governance related to empowerment and

can then deduct (more) power from it, and who is constrained by this form of hybrid governance.

Ontologically, institutional hybrid governance therefore relates to both agency and structure, as it offers to possibility 'to see how governance arrangements are both negotiated and structured, working to benefit some and disadvantage others' (Cleaver et al. 2013, 1).

The Lebanese state has already been described in academic literature, as being comprised of 'hybrid sovereignties' to overcome the depiction of Lebanon as a 'weak state' (Fregonese 2012, 658). The governance of refugees in Lebanon, and specifically the Palestinian camps, has also been analysed from a hybrid perspective, for example to understand the 'everyday geopolitics' within the camps (Ramadan 2013, 66) and to understand how political parties play a crucial role in hybrid governance of minority populations (Stel and Van der Borgh 2017, 491). These findings inform this study's understanding of the position of the Lebanese state within the institutional hybrid governance structures, in relation to Syrian refugees, aid organisations and donors. Yet, it also emphasises the lingering questions and contribution to be made with regard to how aid organisations negotiate and deal with this position, particularly related to empowerment. To be able to analyse how this humanitarian response works as part of this framework of hybrid governance, the following section explains ideas pertaining to humanitarian governance.

## Humanitarian governance

Hybridity, the main lens through which the governance of refugees is understood in this research, can be substantiated with theory on how humanitarian aid to refugees itself constitutes a particular form of governance. In this research, this particular form of governance, which is named 'humanitarian governance', informs and is informed by the hybrid governance structures. This section explains the blurred definition of humanitarian aid, how it works as governance, what analytical features are significant for this research, and how it has been applied in relation to refugees in Lebanon before.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), humanitarian aid is the 'impartial, independent, and neutral provision of relief to those in immediate need because of conflict and natural disasters' (Barnett and Weiss 2008, 5). However, global developments have 'dissolved the boundaries between humanitarianism and other activities' (Barnett and Weiss 2008, 6) and can now for example also include development, human rights and gender equality,

areas which are all related to empowerment by aid organisations. In result, the divide between the impartial, independent and neutral provision of relief and those 'other areas of life that are populated by various interest-driven actors, including states' (Barnett and Weiss 2008, 6) has become blurred and more complex.

This complexity has been the subject of scholarly analysis. While humanitarian aid is often represented as devoid of power, this actually functions as a comfortable myth to disguise how humanitarian organisations enjoy authority and 'induce deference from others' (Barnett and Weiss 2008, 38). In this way, humanitarian aid not only sheds light on relations between aid organisations, refugees and donors but can also explain how aid organisations present themselves towards the state, in order to gain legitimacy. As Michael Barnett argues, the fact that humanitarian aid has become increasingly rationalised and bureaucratised, and now 'aspires to transform the structural conditions that make populations vulnerable' (2005, 733-734) contributes to the result that humanitarian aid is now more firmly part of politics, and, in this research, of national and foreign policy. The politicisation of humanitarian aid might increasingly give states, both the states in which the humanitarian aid is given, as well as the (Western) states that are the donors of humanitarian organisations and thus project indirect power in the states in which humanitarian aid is given, influence over what aid actually constitutes. Equally, to depoliticise humanitarian aid by placing it within the 'world of ethics' and not of politics, can obscure the political causes of conflicts (Barnett 2013, 384). This is relevant for this research, as the historical and political relations between Lebanon and Syria play a role in the Lebanese state's response towards Syrian refugees.

Related to the analytic framework of this research, specific focus is laid on 'humanitarian governance' to denote how humanitarian aid is increasingly part of governance structures (Barnett and Weiss 2008, 38) and to place it within the larger frame of hybrid governance focusing on the relations of aid organisations with refugees, donors and states. The term humanitarian governance, coined by Barnett, entails the 'increasingly organised and internationalised attempt to save the lives, enhance the welfare, and reduce the suffering of the world's most vulnerable populations' (2013, 379-380). Barnett has proposed to understand humanitarian governance from a critical theory perspective, to understand how it shapes 'lives, habits, dispositions and institutions in order to improve the well-being of people' (2013, 381). This can, like hybridity, be related to governmentality as it similarly puts emphasis on constructing structures which provide power to shape the world. This research scrutinises if humanitarian governance indeed functions to improve the well-being of people, by analysing how empowerment is negotiated by the humanitarian aid system in the context of hybrid

governance in Beirut. In addition, it contributes to our existing knowledge of humanitarian governance by advancing part of Barnett's recommendation regarding future study of humanitarian aid, namely, to take into account ethics while being explicit about the 'benchmark' used to judge the progress of improving the well-being of people. The benchmark, in this research, are empowerment and its related indicators, presented below.

The 'constructing' power is especially present in the hierarchical relationship between 'those who give and those who receive' (Barnett 2013, 389). While humanitarian aid is often given with consent of the 'vulnerable populations', this is not always the case (Barnett 2013, 389). Prem Kumar Rajaram has argued that representations and depoliticised depictions of refugees as helpless victims might render them speechless and without agency (2002, 251). Again, this is particularly relevant for analysing if empowerment of refugees is realised, as the relation between aid organisations and refugees is based on a specific form of power which can impede empowerment.

Humanitarian governance involves studying the conditions under which states and non-state actors cooperate or contend to achieve certain goals, which, according to Barnett, is characterised by 'the alternative organising principles of markets, networks, and hierarchies' (2013, 381, 387). These alternative organising principles are used to analyse how the humanitarian aid system constructs or obstructs the empowerment of refugees in chapter four. In addition, these principles can amplify hybridity of the governance of refugees in Beirut, as this research shows that they increase fragmentation. Mac Ginty proposes that it is possible to recognise degrees of hybridity, stating that 'some actors, networks and structures *are* more fixed than others' (2010, 407). This research follows this analytical claim, to research the degree of hybridity of the institutional bricolage that shapes the empowerment of refugees. In this way, humanitarian governance contributes to our understanding of hybridity, as it gives an explanation for the fragmentation and unequal power relations in the hybrid governance of the negotiation of empowerment of refugees.

Similarly, hybridity informs humanitarian governance by means of its emphasis on the fluidity of governance arrangements. The humanitarian institutions which are 'patched together' are susceptible to change over time, which is significant for understanding the level of sustainability of the humanitarian response.

In relation to refugees in Lebanon, academic literature has already engaged with researching the effects of humanitarian governance within refugee settlements in Lebanon. For example, Estella Carpi has described how the supposed 'neutrality' of aid organisations, which is necessary to uphold international credibility and funding (2014, 410), frustrates Syrian

refugees in Lebanon, as they wish that the organisations would help overcome structural causes instead of making the refugees feel passivised (2014, 422-423). Furthermore, Are J. Knudsen has researched how the level of formalisation of a camp affects the provision of humanitarian aid, which shows 'the contested nature of humanitarian governance in Lebanon's abject spaces where the country's "noncitizens" are kept in waiting' (2016, 453-454). Both analyses show how aid is challenged in multiple ways between aid organisations, refugees, and donors which signifies the relevance to research the complexity of negotiating empowerment in humanitarian aid in Beirut.

Another interesting aspect of humanitarian governance is the apparent negotiation between aid organisations themselves in Lebanon. According to Kholoud Mansour, international actors in particular 'are implementing the same projects in the same areas and municipalities and at times are even targeting the same beneficiaries' (2017, 16). Because of this form of competition, coordination between aid organisations is impaired. Indeed, as Michael Barnett has noted, 'aid agencies must compete with each other for attention and resources, resulting in something of a humanitarian circus' (2013, 387). In that way, aid agencies fail to compete for the 'affections of the actual "consumers" of their product' (Barnett 2013, 388). Relatedly, Syrian actors are excluded from participating in UN's humanitarian response in Lebanon, as they 'might be' politically affiliated, which again reflects the 'double standards' of the international humanitarian system, which in itself is 'politicised, donor-driven and often biased' (Mansour 2017, 14). This is significant for understanding if and how empowerment policies actually function, with regard to the inclusion and participation of Syrian refugees. Moreover, it acknowledges how the divide between refugees and aid organisations can be blurred, as refugees might also organise themselves and act as aid providers. This research therefore pays attention to the influence of the humanitarian aid system on Syrian organisations, which are excluded from the UN-led humanitarian response (Mansour 2017, 13).

In sum, humanitarian governance can shed light on the specific power relations between aid organisations, Syrian refugees, donors, and the Lebanese state by means of its organising principles: markets, networks, and hierarchies. Following this research, humanitarian governance informs hybrid governance structures through its organising principles, which is a contribution to knowledge of hybridity. Together, these concepts form hybrid humanitarian governance as hybridity is the main lens through which the humanitarian governance of the empowerment of refugees is analysed. Now that it has been explained how this research understands the hybrid governance of humanitarian aid, it is time to turn to the subject of governance, the empowerment of refugees.

## Empowerment

The subject of the hybrid humanitarian governance of this research is empowerment, which functions as a buzz-word, as it is often used while seldom precisely defined (Rowlands 1997, 7). For that reason, several scholars have engaged with the concept and aimed for more clarity (Parpart, Rai and Staudt 2002, 3).

This section explains this study's understanding of empowerment, how it can be operationalised through four indicators, how it has previously been related to refugees and humanitarian aid, and how this research approaches empowerment.

For the purpose of this research, debates surrounding empowerment from gender and development studies are particularly useful to discuss, as they pertain both to the idea of subordinate groups (women, refugees) and to empowerment as an approach to development. Jo Rowlands, a senior advisor at Oxfam and scholar in development studies, understands empowerment as a process, which requires both a self-perception as being able and entitled to make decisions and participation in decision-making itself (1997, 110-115). Jane Parpart, Shirin Rai and Kathleen Staudt agree with this conceptualisation; however, they aim to go beyond the focus on the local and stress the importance of global and national forces on prospects of empowerment (2002, 3-4). To understand empowerment as a process, both with regard to self-perception and participation, rooted in global and national structures, allows this research to analyse multiple actors in their different roles: the state, aid organisations, donors, and refugees. Similarly, as empowerment 'cannot be bestowed upon by a third party' but can only be facilitated, the relations and negotiation between aid organisations and refugees appear (Mosedale 2005, 244). Therefore, the ontological stance of this approach to empowerment related both to agency and structure (Parpart, Rai and Staudt 2002, 12).

Within humanitarian aid, empowerment is a term regularly used as an approach towards reaching development goals (Narayan-Parker 2005, 3). Herein, empowerment is broadly viewed as 'increasing poor people's freedom of choice and action to shape their own lives' (Narayan-Parker 2005, 4). This concept can be related to broader terminology within the development field, such as 'capacity-building' and 'improving resilience' which are similarly based on premises of 'strengthening people's capacity to determine their own values and priorities, and to act on these' (Eade 1997, 3) and 'strengthening the capacity of local/national

actors to identify and deal with risks, vulnerabilities and their underlying causes' (European Commission n.d.).

Empowerment and other related terms function at many levels, ranging from the institutional climate and the social-political structures, to poor people's collective and individual assets and capabilities (Narayan-Parker 2005, 5). To operationalise the change of power relations between 'vulnerable people' and powerful actors, four key factors are at stake: access to information, inclusion and participation, social accountability, and local organisational capacity (Narayan-Parker 2005, 4). These indicators, while are normally applied to citizen-government relations, can also be applied to the hybrid humanitarian governance of this research. First, access to information, which underpins that 'informed people are better equipped to take advantage of opportunities, access services, exercise their rights [and] negotiate effectively' (Narayan-Parker 2005, 8). Second, inclusion and participation, which holds that 'an empowering approach to participation treats people as co-producers, with authority and control over decisions and resources devolved to the lowest appropriate level. Inclusion of traditionally excluded groups in priority setting and decision making is critical to ensure that use of limited public resources reflects local knowledge and priorities, and to build commitment to change' (Narayan-Parker 2005, 8). Third, accountability. Those who create the policies 'must be held to account, making them answerable for their policies and actions' that affect the lives of refugees (Narayan-Parker 2005, 8). Fourth, local organisational capacity: 'this refers to the ability of people to work together, organise themselves, and mobilise resources to solve problems of common interest. Organised communities are more likely to have their voices heard and their demands met than communities with little organisation. When membership-based groups federate at higher levels, they can gain voice and representation in policy dialogues and decisions that affect their well-being. Government rules, procedures, and resources that support civil liberties - for example, by guaranteeing the right to form independent associations and unions - provide an institutional climate in which such organisations can flourish' (Narayan-Parker 2005, 9). These elements of empowerment are interrelated, for example, more access to information can contribute to an increased accountability of the actors who govern, and the other way around: a lack of inclusion and participation would impede on the local organisational capacity.

Empowerment, when following these 'ideal' indicators would then shift power towards the Syrian refugees – making them more equal in their relationship with the Lebanese state, aid organisations and with donors.

Yet, to measure empowerment remains a difficult undertaking, and we should be aware of the idea that empowerment can be both a process and an outcome (Parpart, Rai and Staudt 2002, 17-18). In this research, it is understood as both, in the sense that the negotiation of empowerment is a process, but that the humanitarian aid programmes in hybrid governance are assessed on the basis of the factors of empowerment as an outcome.

In addition, empowerment is context-specific, and the factors described above do not necessarily have to fit in each social setting or can have different meanings within different contexts (Narayan-Parker 2005, 84). Sarah Steimel has carried out research from this perspective and found that the staff of an American refugee resettlement organisation had a narrower definition of empowerment, which was mostly focused on economic empowerment, than the 'refugee clients' who saw empowerment in 'economic, educational, personal, and family, and other terms' (2017, 99). This had strong implications, as the refugees felt that the narrow definition was disempowering (Steimel 2017, 99).

Similar to the work by Steimel, other scholars have also identified possible effects of empowerment in international humanitarian aid. For example, Randy Lippert has described that empowerment is in line with 'the rise of an advance liberal rationality in the international refugee regime' (1999, 341) which places the responsibility and burden for action with the refugees. In contrast, Prem Kumar Rajaram has argued that empowerment might also have an opposite effect and can function to obscure the subjectivisation of refugees as 'helpless' or 'lost' (2002, 248, 262). Yet, literature which critically analyses how the negotiation and communication of empowerment works is not exhaustive (Steimel 2017, 91-92) and to research the empirical complication (the negotiation of empowerment by aid organisations with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state) through the main lens of hybrid governance can answer this question in a distinct way, as this research places empowerment in the 'wider' web of governance and shows the related unevenness between positions of power.

Although this research centralises the perspective of aid organisations, it is possible to compare their interpretation of empowerment with the academic indicators above and assess the level of empowerment in this way. Studying meaning-making is an important aspect of this research, as it is significant for the negotiation of aid organisations with refugees and influences its future outcome. In addition, this research aims to contribute to the understanding of empowerment as a contested concept, embedded in larger social structures that oppose or enable its interpretation and realisation. Because this type of analysis of the negotiation of empowerment is original, it brings new insights to the table with regard to the functioning and strategic choices related to empowerment. Therefore, this puzzle statement places

empowerment within the analytical frame of hybrid humanitarian governance, to understand the broader negotiation embedded in social structures and its related consequences.

## Theory, ontology and epistemology

Regarding ontology, the analytical framework as a whole can clearly be placed between the agency-structure divide. Empowerment, hybridity and humanitarian governance all refer to some form of agency. Following Jolle Demmers, 'actions derive their meaning from shared ideas and rules of social life' (2017, 17) which can be produced in governance, and simultaneously shape governance. Epistemologically, this research therefore aims to understand the governance of meaning-making processes which shape empowerment and is therefore interpretive. This is significant, as the ontological and epistemological stance then allows for studying the negotiation of (the meaning of) empowerment by aid organisations, with refugees, the Lebanese state, and donors.

The whole analytic framework is embedded in the concept of power: empowerment, hybrid governance, and humanitarian governance. Yet, the framework fits into one particular understanding of power, namely, that from Foucault. Power is then characterised as 'not exclusively held top-down and wielded over people' but instead as 'constituted and transformed at all levels of society' (Demmers 2017, 129; Hall 2013, 34). This conceptualisation of power informs and corresponds (with) the three concepts as they all shed light on this power-related negotiation between multilevel actors, in the meaning-making of empowerment.

## Analytical framework

Bringing the three analytical concepts together in one analytical framework, allows for understanding how empowerment of refugees is negotiated by aid organisations within the hybrid governance context of Lebanon.

The operationalisation of this new analytical framework can be found in the two sets of sub-questions which were presented in the introduction, and which guide the order of the case study chapters (see also 'Chapter outline'). In the third chapter, the first part of the hybrid governance of refugees in Beirut is untangled. Herein, hybrid governance is used as the main lens to unpack the first actor, namely, Lebanese authorities, which form the fragmentised government. More specifically, the concept of institutional bricolage guides the hybrid

governance analysis, which involves studying the institutions and institutional relations, that draw upon existing social formulae and arrangements. These social formulae and arrangements are related in this chapter to the features of the sectarian political landscape of Lebanon.

The functioning of empowerment is analysed in the fourth chapter, which completes the answer to the first set of sub-questions related to hybrid governance and answers the second set of sub-questions related to empowerment. First, it drafts the context of the humanitarian aid system, and makes use of the concept of humanitarian governance to explain how the system influences hybrid governance structures and empowerment, with regard for the relations of aid organisations with the Lebanese state, refugees and donors. The analytical features of humanitarian governance, markets, networks, and hierarchies (Barnett 2013) are applied to the case study. Then, the impact of this hybrid humanitarian governance on empowerment is assessed, on the basis of the four key indicators mentioned before: access to information, inclusion and participation, social accountability, and local organisational capacity (Narayan-Parker 2005, 4). Within this research, these indicators are catered specifically towards the case study. Access to information of refugees is analysed with regard to the humanitarian programmes they participate in, and their position in relation to the Lebanese state – relating to rules and regulations. Inclusion and participation, similarly, refers to refugees' opportunity to be involved in the humanitarian programmes they are part of, and in Lebanese society more generally. Social accountability then refers to the accountability of those actors that take part in the organisation of the humanitarian response: aid organisations, state actors and donors. Local organisational capacity in the ability of refugees to organise themselves, to work together and to gain voice in debates revolving around their position in Lebanon (Narayan-Parker 2005, 8-9). Empowerment is examined in multiple ways: first, with regard to how aid organisations' themselves explain their perceptions of the term 'empowerment' and second, on the basis of these indicators, assessing the aid programmes in this form hybrid humanitarian governance. By answering the sub-questions in chapter three and four, a new question rises which the fifth chapter answers: why does the humanitarian aid system continue, when the humanitarian response does not empower Syrian refugees in Beirut? Thus, it analyses who benefits from the system and the usage of the term 'empowerment'. In that way, it brings empowerment – and the question who gains power – to the next stage. In this analysis, reference is made to finances, public perceptions and political balances, to understand who is truly 'empowered' by the humanitarian response towards Syrian refugees in Beirut.

# Chapter 2: Methodology and research design

## Research strategy

This research has both inductive and deductive qualities. Inductive, because it aims to advance new theory, on the basis of the empirical complication; the negotiation of the empowerment of refugees. This is done by combining three analytical concepts: hybridity, humanitarian governance and empowerment. Deductive, as this research tests the analytical concepts of 'empowerment' and 'humanitarian governance' and their factors on the empirical complication.

In line with the ontological and epistemological stance of this research, which can be placed between the agency-structure divide and is interpretive, the method of this research is qualitative, to study the negotiation of (the meaning of) empowerment. I analysed how the different actors, the aid organisations, donors, Lebanese state and Syrian refugees, and policy documents convey different aims and understandings, wherein they approach the empowerment of refugees in various ways. Then I critically questioned what kind of data this yielded, to find underlying connections. In sum, this shows how the research process itself facilitated the selection of units of analysis, and the question who or what to include and to exclude, as I sought to balance different perspectives of empowerment.

The following section explains the use of the methods in more detail, and in relation to the sub-questions.

## Sampling method

The sampling method of this research has been based on the puzzle statement's outline of when, where, whom and what. First, the puzzle statement researches the influx of Syrian refugees since the Syrian conflict of 2011. Therefore, data was gathered in relation to this period of time.

Second, the research was conducted in Beirut, Lebanon. Many relevant actors (aid organisations, refugees, donors and the Lebanese state) are in some way based in Beirut, which made it easy to access participants and events. There were two exceptions to this geographical choice: towards the end of my field work period, I found it important to also interview donors because of the important role they play in the negotiation of empowerment, which I did in two

ways: I conducted one interview via Skype with a donor organisation[6] in Beirut because, due to time limitation, it was not possible to set up an interview anymore, and I conducted one interview in The Netherlands, with a foundation for internationalisation of Dutch education and academic research, which functions as a link between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (donor country) and the project implementing partners in Lebanon,[7] in order to also understand the perspective from an actor working from abroad, as distance was an often-cited 'problem' in the eyes of aid organisations.

While Beirut has been the starting point of this research, aid organisations based in Beirut often also have offices in other areas in Lebanon and are part of networks that operate outside of the city. Analysed documents also draw conclusions that are reflective of Lebanon in general. This is why most of the data gathered concerns the whole of Lebanon. Therefore, the scope of my research broadened, and the conclusions drawn are reflective of the urban local, the national, and the global context.

Third, this leads to 'who' this research has analysed. Finding interview participants started with the contacts of Insan Association, a local human rights organisation, through the means of snow-ball sampling. From that point onwards, I tried to diversify the organisations I spoke to, with regard to the field they work in (for example, human rights, education, health), if they were local or international and their role within the coordination. For example, I spoke to Terre des Hommes, a well-known international organisation which focuses on child protection, and to UN agencies because of their lead in the coordination of the overall humanitarian response. Also, I looked at the position of the aid worker within the organisation (director, funding officers, social workers). I also chose to contact organisations I found via internet, or via an NGO fair, to avoid the risk that comes with snow-ball sampling, namely, that you only speak with organisations from one 'circle'. In the end, I was able to speak to 26 aid workers from 21 different organisations. While the perspective of aid organisations is at the centre of this research, I have also engaged with Syrian refugees, and interviewed one former government official, one donor organisation and one donor-channel foundation. What is important to note is that the distinction between 'the aid organisation' and 'the refugee' is blurred, as there are also aid organisations active in Beirut which have been set up by Syrians. Therefore, I have also interviewed two organisations from Syrian origin, although these have been anonymised due to possible legal measures they might face in Lebanon. In the appendix, a list can be found of the participants of my research.

[6] DON_I2P3.
[7] DON_I1P1_2.

Lastly, regarding the 'what' of this research, I analysed policy documents which carry weight in the humanitarian response in Lebanon, most importantly, the LCRPs, the VASyR, and the 'Promise to Practice' report by several NGOs, interviews and observations with the actors (aid organisations, donors, Lebanese state and refugees) mentioned above.

## Data collection techniques and analysis

Different qualitative data collection techniques were used to answer each of the sub-questions, which are now explained in the same order.

The first step of this research was to gain insight into the hybrid governance structures in general, which relates to sub-questions 1.a, 1.b, 1.c. In order to research *who* is involved in the hybrid governance structure negotiating the empowerment of refugees, I started conducting interviews at Insan Association, which is a local human rights organisation I cooperated with during my research, based in Beirut, and which states that it advocates for the empowerment of refugees. I asked this organisation questions which related to other actors, such as, with whom they have partnerships, how their relations with government authorities function, and how they receive their finances. In addition, I did textual analysis, in particular reading those documents that focus on the coordination of the humanitarian response, such as the LCRP and documents from the UNHCR. In that way, I was able to distinguish between local and (Syrian) international NGOs, between local and national authorities, and donors and UN agencies, and to answer sub-question 1.a.

To answer sub-questions 1.b and 1.c, I continued in similar fashion with interviews and textual analysis, asking more detailed questions about how the partnerships between aid organisations work, and how they relate to donors and the Lebanese state, as well as refugees – in general, how the overall coordination of the humanitarian response functions. Again, I interviewed aid organisations, but also one former government official, and two donor parties to be able to put the perspective of aid organisations into context. Furthermore, I participated in events organised by aid organisations for aid organisations, to understand how the relations between these organisations work. In that way, I learned about the *roles* of the aid organisation, donors and the Lebanese authorities in the hybrid governance structures, and their *institutional relations*.

For the sub-questions related to empowerment, 2.a, 2.b, 2.c, 2.d, I again conducted interviews with aid organisations, and specifically asked them about the indicators of

empowerment, namely, how they provide *information* to Syrian refugees, how they ensure the *inclusion* of Syrian refugees in their programmes, how they organise *accountability* mechanisms for Syrian refugees, and how Syrian refugee are enabled to *local organisation capacity*. Not only did I ask this in relation to the programmes of aid organisation, I also asked similar questions in relation to Lebanese society and the Lebanese government. Moreover, I sustained this approach by also organising some focus groups, informal conversations and conducting observation analyses at the school of Insan Association, and at a university where a graduation ceremony for Syrian students took place. This specifically helped me to gain a better understanding of the relations between aid organisations and refugees (which also relates back to sub-questions 1.b and 1.c), as I both observed and participated in activities for a diverse groups of children and young students from outside of Lebanon, most of whom were Syrian. In addition, I held a focus group with a group of mothers, most of whom had fled from Syria.

The analysis I conducted was, as stated earlier, both deductive and inductive in nature. On the one hand, I have coded the interviews, on the basis of the four indicators of empowerment (access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, local organisational capacity) and the three characteristics of humanitarian governance (market mechanisms, networks, hierarchical structures). On the other hand, I have also coded the data on the basis of recurring themes and patterns, such as 'sectarianism' and 'public perceptions'. Together, these sub-questions answer the research puzzle statement: *How is the empowerment of refugees in a context of hybrid governance negotiated by aid organisations with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state in Beirut since the Syrian conflict in 2011?*

## Ethics and limitations

To protect the research participants, I have made the decision to keep all names anonymous, due to the sensitivity of the research topic, and to allow them to speak freely. This can be regarded as both an advantage and a limitation: an advantage because it allowed for open conversation, and a limitation because some information is lost with regard to the diverse positions people take within the hybrid governance structures. Where possible, however, I have shared the names of the organisations I have analysed in the appendix. Interestingly, a large number of participants have asked to also keep the names of their organisations anonymous. This signifies how the participants are aware of the sensitivity of this topic, with regard to their organisation, and within the humanitarian aid system more generally. Moreover, I have

anonymised the names of the Syrian organisations, due to possible legal problems they might face in Lebanon.

The anonymisation of the research participants, moreover, comes with another ethical complication: it forces me to use generalisable terms such as ‘refugees’ and ‘aid workers’ so that they cannot be traced in relation to their organisation, which falsely depicts them as homogeneous groups. In addition, to research refugees (mostly) from the perspective of aid organisations, and through a lens of hybrid governance (which focuses on their legal and social status within Lebanon) also represents a certain picture, which scholars have argued should be overcome: the one that refugees have no agency (see, for example, Rajaram 2002). Therefore, I would like to stress that this research perspective of aid organisations *does not* have to be in line with refugee’s experiences in Lebanon (see, for example, the focus group held with a group of women who had to flee, some coming from Syria). As this research is limited to the perspective of aid organisations, it would be an interesting idea to study the same empirical complication from the perspectives of the other actors involved.

Also, I would again like to emphasise again the specific group of aid workers I have interviewed, who had to flee from Syria. The depicted contrast between ‘refugee’ and ‘aid worker’ is therefore, not empirically true, but made for the sake of this study’s clarity.

I have faced some limitation due to the language barrier, as I was only able to communicate in French and English, and not in Arabic, with the research participants. Consequently, I have missed some (more refined) information during the observational analyses, although I always secured someone to translate for me. In addition, I believe that because I am non-Lebanese and a student, this might have helped me in gaining access, and in receiving ‘open’ answers, in the sense that participants did not expect me to have any previous knowledge or opinions. Yet, this also means I cannot understand the different facets of living in Lebanon, particularly in relation to the current social and political situation. This often came to the fore-front when (young) Lebanese asked me how I liked Lebanon, and when I said, ‘I like Lebanon very much’ they answered: ‘Yes, because you can leave’.

# Chapter 3: Hybrid governance of refugees in Beirut

This research aims to examine how the negotiation of empowerment of refugees, by aid organisations, with Syrian refugees, donors, and the Lebanese state, functions within Beirut. To understand this empirical complication, it is necessary to answer the sub-questions related to hybrid governance, regarding who is involved in the hybrid governance structures, what the roles of these actors are, and what their institutional relations are. Therefore, this chapter begins with analysing one of the key actors in the hybrid governance structures: the Lebanese government. This is done by first, analysing the Lebanese government's positions towards refugees, and second, investigating its specific policies towards Syrian refugees. Because this research analyses the role of the Lebanese state, ranging from local to national authorities, many of the findings presented below are not limited to Beirut, but instead refer to Lebanon in general.

## Lebanese government's positions

The Lebanese government engages in a partnership with UN agencies and (I)NGOs to carry out a response towards the influx of Syrian refugees. This partnership was materialised into policy in the Lebanon Crisis Response Plans (LCRPs). Yet, when aid organisations are asked about the government's response, they give two types of answers: first, they stress the inaction of the government, and say there is no real response. Second, they explain how the government's response obstructs the improvement of the position of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.[8] To understand what the Lebanese state's role is in the negotiation of empowerment of refugees, it is necessary to look at the positions it takes towards the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

First, the Lebanese government has never ratified the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to Status of Refugees nor its accompanying 1967 protocol (Yahya, Kassir and El-Hariri 2018, 11), and lacks any national legislation dealing with refugees (Janmyr 2016, 59). This is meaningful, because referring to them as 'guests' or 'displaced' aims to obstruct any claim to rights that belong to refugees. The most relevant rights for Syrian refugees are those of safe asylum, freedom of movement, and access to medical care, schooling and the right to work (UNHCR 2002) – which are currently not protected (see following section) and thereby obstruct Syrian refugees from empowering themselves. This position is significant for the

[8] E.g. AID_I4P3_4, AID_I5P5, AID_I8P8.

hybrid governance structure, as it shows how the Lebanese government diminishes its own responsibilities, while simultaneously making it difficult for aid organisations to carry out theirs: organisations cannot hold the government accountable in case the rights of Syrian refugees are being violated. In this way, the Lebanese government has the agency to create hybrid governance structures, defining the room for action of aid organisations.

The Lebanese government, however, is officially bound by the most prominent principles of refugee protection by virtue of customary international law, most relevantly, the principle of 'non-refoulement' (Janmyr 2016, 62). This latter principle 'prohibits refugees from being returned or expelled to places where their lives or freedoms could be threatened' (Janmyr 2016, 62).

Nevertheless, some Lebanese government officials even defy the principle of non-refoulement by practicing a discourse of return and by claiming that the presence of Syrian refugees is an 'existential threat' towards Lebanon (The New Arab 2019), which forms the second position. Gebran Bassil, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and member of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), has argued that Syrian refugees are not staying in Lebanon for (political) fear of their security, but for economic reasons, and that they are taking Lebanese people's jobs. At the same time, he stresses that Lebanon would not force Syrians to return, and that they should voluntarily return in dignity and safety (Wintour 2019). Saleh al-Gharib, Minister of State for Refugee Affairs, who is a supporter of the Syrian regime, has visited Syria to discuss the possible return of refugees (Molana-Allen 2019). Hezbollah similarly argues for the return of refugees to Syria, either to government-controlled or rebel-held areas. Other parties such as the Future Movement, Lebanese Forces and Kataeb agree with the international community that Syria is not yet safe – and argue for 'safe zones' to be established by the international community (Geha 2019; Atallah and Mahdi 2017, 26). For some parties, such as the Amal Movement and PSP, their perspective remains unclear (Atallah and Mahdi 2017, 26). Still, there rests a political consensus on the solution to the humanitarian crisis as the refugees' return to Syria. One important historical explanation for this position is the country's experience with Palestinian refugees, who have been living in Lebanon since they fled the Palestine war in 1948. At that time, it was assumed that their stay would be temporary, but this proved not to be the case. During the Lebanese civil war, from 1975 until 1990, Palestinian armed groups were heavily involved. This is one of the reasons why politicians now wish to ensure that the stay of Syrians in Lebanon is temporary.

The safety of Syria, and the related question regarding *when* the return of Syrian refugees should happen, are political points of contention between Lebanese political parties.

Indeed, this political issue and discourse again very much influences the room for aid organisations to implement humanitarian programmes. For example, Lebanon's Foreign Minister Gerbran Bassil has frozen the residency applications of UNHCR, stating that the agency has discouraged Syrians from returning, 'by asking them questions about the conditions they might face in Syria, including the possibility of military conscription, security problems and poor accommodation' (Nehme and McDowall 2018).

Third, the Lebanese government should not be regarded as one coherent whole, which makes the positions between government officials with regard to Syrian refugees vary. The origin of these positions can be found in, firstly, sectarian divides, and, secondly, the (non-)affiliation of Lebanese political parties with the Syrian regime.

The political system of Lebanon is divided based on sectarianism, which is 'equated with the grip of nonstate and sectarian parties over the state' (Fakhoury 2017, 682) and influences the ties forged with (foreign) political actors. This reflects the 'institutional bricolage' within the political system itself, in which 'people (consciously and non-consciously) draw on existing social formulae and arrangements (rules, traditions, norms, roles and relationships) to patch together institutions in response to changing situations. Such innovations and adaptations are legitimised by reference to tradition, socially acceptable ways of doing things, existing relations of authority' (Cleaver et al. 2013, 3). Indeed, within a sectarian system, religion is a source of legitimacy, and religious divisions form the political institutions. What is important to underscore, is that people *consciously* draw on existing social formulae and arrangements to legitimise their position of power, and to advance their own agendas. For example, sectarian rhetoric is used by three Christian Parties, the Lebanese Forces, the Kata'ib, and, again, the FPM, to argue that the Syrians, who mainly are Sunni Muslims, threaten Lebanon's demographic balance (Fakhoury 2017, 687). Anti-refugee sentiments are growing among the Lebanese population, and have manifested in a rally (which was organised by the FPM party) under the phrases 'employ a Lebanese' and 'Syria get out', protesting against businesses who hire Syrian refugees (El Deeb 2019). This serves to create more sectarian divisions, by creating tensions between the host community and Syrian refugees, as well as to marginalise the Syrians in Lebanese society. As Jad Chaaban explained during a lecture on 'Lebanon's Institutions, Sectarianism and Power Sharing', Lebanese politicians do not have the incentive to change the sectarian system, or to bridge sectarian divides, as the consociational balance provides them with power: portfolios are distributed based on sect. At the same time, shifting alliances are formed between political parties, which do not necessarily reflect sectarian lines. This confirms that sectarianism is consciously constructed to retain a grip on power, and

not because the sectarian divides in themselves are so persistent.[9] This relates back to this study's interpretive understanding of the functioning of governmentality, which works through a rationality that constructs the way of thinking regarding who can govern and what governing is, which in this case constructs the meaning that governance must be structured along sectarian lines.

According to Tamirace Fakhoury, dynamics which belong to 'politics of sectarianism', namely, 'slack governance, an elite fractured model, and a politics of dependence on external and domestic nonstate actors' (2017, 681) cause the Lebanese polity's response to Syrian displacement. More importantly, the fragmentised refugee response in itself benefits Lebanon's political system, which is dependent on 'the leaders' ability to instrumentalise divisive issues and consolidate sectarian and external loyalties' (Fakhour 2017, 692). Sectarianism is therefore relevant in explaining how it creates a fragmentised government response towards refugees, whereas the fragmentised response in itself stimulates the continuation of the sectarian political system.

The different relations of political parties with the Syrian regime have historical roots in the Syrian occupation of Lebanon, which lasted for 29 years until 2005, and comprised of military, political and economic domination (New York Times 2005). The Syrian occupation was a consequence of the Ta'if Agreement in 1989, after the end of Lebanon's Civil War, wherein 'the international community acknowledged Syria as the "guardian" of Lebanon's post-war transition' (Fakhoury 2017, 684). When the occupation ended, after the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri, two major political blocks were formed: The March 8 and the March 14 Alliance, which can be characterised as one pro-Syrian and one anti-Syrian coalition. These alliances effectively still influence Lebanese political actors' foreign policy towards Syria, as well as towards Syrian refugees. The March 8 Alliance supported the regime during the Syrian revolution, while March 14 approved of the uprising (Geha and Talhouk 2018, 3). Those parties that most strongly advocate for return, such as, the Free Patriotic Movement, Lebanese Democratic Party, Hezbollah, all keep a close relationship with the regime of Bashar al-Assad (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung 2018). Parties which do not advocate for return at this moment, as they feel that Syria is not yet safe enough, are against the regime. The different political parties and interrelated confessions, in turn, are perceived to hold influence of different parts of the security state apparatus: Hezbollah has ties with the General Security, the Sunni Muslims with the Internal Security Forces, and the Maronite Christians with

[9] Lecture attended by author, 4 April 2019.

the Lebanese Armed Forces (Macaron 2017). This explain why the implementation of policies towards Syrian refugees, as shown in the following section, are various between the different parts of the security apparatus. Again, this signifies how the Lebanese government should not be seen as one coherent whole, which has an effect on its institutional relations with Syrian refugees.

In sum, sectarianism and the relations of political parties with the Syrian regime fragmentise the response towards Syrian refugees. This fragmentation benefits the political agendas of these parties, as sectarianism finds its roots in divisiveness. The role of the Lebanese government should therefore be considered as deliberately fragmentised.

## Policies towards Syrian refugees

First, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plans is an important part of the response of the Lebanese government towards Syrian refugees, in partnership with UN agencies and (I)NGOs. These plans constitute a large part of the institutional relations between the Lebanese government and the humanitarian aid sector. Second, there are many other policies from the Lebanese government that affect the empowerment of refugees in the country, and which relate to the various negative positions Lebanese authorities take towards the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Both are significant for analysing the negotiation of empowerment of refugees.

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plans (LCRPs) of 2015-2016 and 2017-2020 have three main strategic objectives: '1) To ensure humanitarian assistance and protection for the most vulnerable among the displaced from Syria and poorest Lebanese; 2) To strengthen the capacity of national and local service delivery systems to expand access to and quality of basic public services; 3) To reinforce Lebanon's economic, social, environmental and institutional stability' (UN n.d.). Clearly, these objectives are very much focused on the development of Lebanon's institutions and people (1, 2 and 3), and less so on the 'displaced from Syria' (1). This trend can be found throughout the LCRPs, as well as in the programmes of the aid organisations, which always incorporate some form of support for the Lebanese host community. Humanitarian aid thereby both cooperates and takes over the role of the state, which makes it more firmly part of politics, and increases the state's interest and influence in humanitarian aid. This corresponds with the trend, the politicisation of aid, which Barnett identified, as humanitarian aid has become expanded to other 'areas of life' (2013). Indeed, the LCRPs are a crystallisation of how the Lebanese government has firmly adopted a position of power within

the humanitarian response towards Syrian refugees in Lebanon, through institutional relations with aid organisations and donors.

Similarly, it is stressed in the LCRP update of 2019 that: 'In Lebanon, the main durable solution for displaced Syrians is their safe, dignified and non-coercive return to their country of origin, in accordance with international law and the principle of non-refoulement. Another durable solution is the resettlement of those displaced from Syria to a third country. The international partners recognise that the stay of displaced people in Lebanon is temporary, and commit to continue to provide support to both host community and the displaced Syrians' (Government of Lebanon and UN 2019). This underscores the temporariness of the stay of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as an intention of the Lebanese government and UN agencies. In effect, any long-term initiatives are banned due to this rhetoric, and the integration of Syrian refugees in Lebanese society can be hindered, which impedes empowerment.

The LCRP focuses on the following sectors: basic assistance, energy, food security, livelihood, social stability, water, education, health, protection and shelter (Government of Lebanon and UN 2017). Each of these sectors are steered by the relevant ministry and UN agency. For example, health belongs to the Ministry of Public Health, together with WHO and UNHCR. Basic assistance falls under the directorate of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), in cooperation with UNHCR and Action Against Hunger which is the only (I)NGO involved at this level. The inter-sector working group is led by the MoSA, and co-chaired by the UNHCR and UNDP, supported by an Information Management Working Group. The leadership falls under MoSa, and the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (Government of Lebanon and UN 2019, 24). As the ministries are divided along the lines of political parties, and these have different ties to the Syrian regime, the responses, again, vary greatly. For example, as one coordinator who takes part in the LCRP structure explains, MoSA can be seen as a 'good partner' as it protects the non-refoulement principle and safeguard basic assistance. At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is more hard-lined, saying that the money of the Brussels Conferences should be used for return.[10] Again, this confirms the finding from the previous section that the sectarian divides within the government itself contributes to a fragmentised government's response.

Second, and related to the non-ratification of the Refugee Conventions, the legal status of Syrian refugees has evolved precariously. Of the approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees that live in Lebanon, 74 percent do not have a legal status (Human Rights Watch 2019). Even

[10] AID_I21P24.

though the Lebanese government passed a new residency policy that cut the requirement of a yearly 200$ renewal fee for residency in 2017, the number of Syrian refugees who do not have a residence permit has remained the same (74 percent) (ALEF 2019, 40). This is due to the wrong implementation of the policy, wherein the waiver of the 200$ is not applied consistently, as the amount of money has not effectively been waived but is paid for by the UNHCR – which some General Security (the intelligence agency responsible for residence permits) branches have not been made aware of.[11] In addition, the policy excludes many refugees, namely those 500,000 Syrians that are not registered with the UNHCR, and those that received residency through sponsors after January 2015 (and did not switch to obtaining residency through the UNHCR) (ALEF 2019, 40). The sponsorship (or *'kafala'*) system in itself is a problematic construction for all migrants that arrive in Lebanon and who would like to work, as it 'places more power in the hands of the employer, providing them with absolute control over the legal status' of the migrant (ALEF 2019, 56-57). Also, if Syrians are not able to find a sponsor, some Lebanese ask them to be paid for functioning as a sponsor,[12] which makes them more prone to abuse.

Resulting from a lack of legal residency, Syrians enjoy less freedom of movement, and therefore, access to health care, housing and employment (Janmyr 2016, 73). It increases their sense of insecurity, as they might be interrogated or fear arrest when they come across a checkpoint.[13] To overcome this problem, information sessions were organised between refugees and the General Security, for refugees to become more certain of what documentation they need to present, and for the General Security to understand the concerns of the refugees better. One human rights worker explained how the General Security has, unfortunately, become less responsive towards organising these communication activities, a decision which must have come from a more central level, although it is not known why.[14] In addition, the Lebanese Armed Forces have partaken in raids of informal settlements, to mass-detain male refugees. Although most of them were released, these raids have reinforced 'an environment of fear and intimidation' (Amnesty International 2019). The Lebanese government diffuses vagueness around legal residency, to again ensure temporariness. To establish a comprehensive legal framework for Syrian refugees, would strengthen their position vis-à-vis the Lebanese

[11] AID_I12P12.
[12] AID_I8P8.
[13] Idem.
[14] AID_I12P12.

government, as it would make the latter accountable. This shows why the Lebanese government is consciously vague regarding the legal residency of refugees.

In contrast, the Lebanese government provides *explicit* regulation in the field of work, stating that Syrian are only allowed to work in three sectors: agriculture, construction and cleaning (Dziadosz 2016). Again, this is an example of policy that strengthens the position of power of the Lebanese government, gaining popularity with its constituencies, while it marginalises Syrians. In this way, the Lebanese government does not formalise its response unless it benefits the position of power of the government in the hybrid governance positions.

This policy is in contrast with the fact that many aid organisations offer livelihood programmes, regularly trainings outside of these three sectors, which leads Syrians not to receive social security, nor a proper contract. This situation is not unique to refugees, poor Lebanese often find themselves in a similar situation.[15] Hence, empowerment through livelihood programmes is a questionable objective of aid organisations within the Lebanese context, and aid organisations are again restricted in their ability to improve the well-being of refugees.

Third, education has been cited as one of the more successful examples of cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and humanitarian aid organisations. Second shifts, known as 'afternoon schools', have been installed at public schools to offer education to Syrian children specifically. Yet, it was estimated that 40 percent of displaced Syrians – more than 250,000 children – are not enrolled in formal nor non-formal education (Government of Lebanon and UN 2019). Several obstacles have been identified which hamper the enrolment of Syrian children in education, most notably, child labour – due to families' extreme poverty (PAX and ALEF 2016, 27, 29) and lack of legal documentation (Jordan INGO Forum et al. 2018, 19).

Moreover, Lebanese parents see the enrolment of their children in private schools as a necessity, because of the 'lack of capacities, educational equipment and level in public schools' – which shows how the quality of public schools is substandard (ALEF 2019, 52). Also, some Syrian children which are enrolled in public schools face discrimination (Jordan INGO Forum et al. 2018, 38) or have difficulty with the Lebanese curriculum, as it is focused on languages,[16] while the Syrian curriculum is focused on maths and physics – in Arabic.[17] Schools which

[15] AID_I17P17_18_19.
[16] AID_16P16.
[17] AID_I6P6.

offered the Syrian curriculum, were shut down by the Lebanese government.[18] This shows how one of the best functioning institutions, often cited as a best practice, which the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has formed with aid organisations is impeded upon due to other stringent institutional regulations (such as those regarding work) or fuzzy institutional frameworks (such as those regarding legal residency). Indeed, it is the institutional bricolage as a whole, and the positions of the actors in it, which determine the possible empowerment of Syrian refugees.

Fourth, recent negative directions in Lebanese policy have been both the enforcement of Syrian refugees to destroy their concrete settlements, as well as evictions. These have been alarming trends, wherein the discourse of return is publicly materialised into action. Syrian refugees and aid organisations have never been allowed to set up official camps in Lebanon, because this would, in the eyes of the Lebanese government, increase the possibility of them staying in the country. The decision that informal settlement structures made of any material other than plastic and wood should be demolished, was however only taken recently by the Higher Defense Council, of the Lebanese Armed Forces, in April 2019. It was supported by Foreign Minister Bassil, which said 'the demolition drive would prevent refugees from permanently settling in Lebanon (Chehayeb 2019a).

The living standards of Syrian refugees living in these informal settlements have severely deteriorated, with regard to hygiene to avoid diseases, and with regard to difficult weather conditions – ranging from cold and stormy winters to very hot summers (Chehayeb 2019a). In that way, the main modus of living is now in uncertainty, specifically because these refugees do not know what restrictive measures might be introduced in the future – forcing return.

Similarly, municipalities have forcibly evicted Syrian refugees for several years now, driving them out of their houses, expelling them from their localities. Although these evictions have been carried out without consistency, Human Rights Watch has obtained evidence that Syrians were targeted both because of their nationality, as well as their religious affiliation – which are signs of discrimination, and either way do not adhere to international procedural standards for law evictions (Frelick 2018) The evictions fuel cycles of hostility, as it causes 'distributive problems', when the refugees *'will move into neighbouring areas where the community will be less hospitable, because their neighbouring area just evicted them for a reason, and they will have this fear again…'*[19]

[18] AID_I11P11.
[19] AID_I12P12.

That municipalities take on this role, carrying out these evictions, is in line with the different political party affiliations described earlier. The evictions, according to one coordinator of the humanitarian response, are more about ‘political games’ than pure ‘sectarian divides’.[20] Again, no consistency can be found in the implementation of this policy.

The policies regarding the legal status and housing of refugees exemplify no incentive of the Lebanese government to further formalise the response towards the presence of Syrians in the country. This lack of formalisation diffused through these policies is what Jessy Nassar and Nora Stel call ‘institutional ambiguity’, as it ‘emerges at the continuously shifting interface between formal and informal forms of regulation’ (2019, 44). They argue that, although the institutional ambiguity is partly caused by the overwhelming nature of the refugee crisis and the lack of state capacity to accurately respond, there is also a strategic component to this ‘formal informality’ (Nassar and Stel 2019, 44). While the Lebanese government’s response has evolved from ‘no-policy-policy’ towards more ‘formalised informality’ with the adoption of the LCRP, arbitrary enforcement and lack of legal status for Syrian refugees, still effectively marginalises Syrian refugees – which is contributing to the Lebanese government’s strategy to encourage refugees to return (2019, 47-50). This marginalisation, and overall confusion caused by the institutional ambiguity of the Lebanese government’s response, is possible due to multiple sectarian positions the government authorities take towards refugees. In turn, this institutional ambiguity is reproduced by aid organisations which have to work within this vague system of policies (Nassar and Stel 2019, 51). This is related to how multiple aid organisations explain their coping mechanisms to deal with the government’s ambiguity, continuously adapting their programmes to new regulations.[21]

Herein also lies this study’s empirical contribution to our understanding of hybrid governance, and specifically, to institutional bricolage. The Lebanese government does not only consciously form institutions wherein the Lebanese state has more power, and more room to manoeuvre, compared to the other actors engaged in this hybrid governance; it also strategically chooses *not* to form institutions (for example, a comprehensive legal framework refugees), that could render the government accountable and strengthen the position for Syrian refugees. This strategy helps to ensure the temporariness of the stay of Syrians in Lebanon. The meaning and strategies related to institutional bricolages could therefore also be further analysed by researching those institutions which are not or only partially formed.

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[20] AID_I21P24.

[21] E.g. AID_I5P5, AID_I8P8, AID_I12P12.

Indeed, following these findings, we can say that the fragmentised response of the Lebanese government in the larger hybrid governance structures, impedes empowerment: the government makes use of hybridity to defy the humanitarian.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the Lebanese government should be regarded as deliberately fragmentised, rooted in sectarianism. In addition, its policies are characterised by institutional ambiguity. The Lebanese government only forms those institutions that strengthen its position in the hybrid governance framework, and consciously not arranges those that could make the government accountable and therefore strengthen the position of Syrian refugees. The hybrid governance structures in general are, due to the role of the Lebanese government, not conducive to the empowerment of refugees. The following chapter completes the analysis of hybrid governance, by adding the roles and relations of the aid organisations, donors and Syrian refugees.

# Chapter 4: The negotiation of empowerment within hybrid humanitarian governance

This chapter continues where the previous chapter left off, namely, by completing the answers to the sub-questions related to hybrid governance, and by answering the second set of sub-questions regarding empowerment. To do so, it explains the humanitarian aid system in Beirut, analyses how the term empowerment is used within this humanitarian aid system and assesses whether the empowerment (which functions as a benchmark for humanitarian governance) of Syrian refugees is happening within hybrid humanitarian governance structures.

## Humanitarian aid system

To complete our understanding of the hybrid governance structure surrounding the negotiation of the empowerment of refugees in Beirut, this section investigates the humanitarian aid system to understand the roles and institutional relations of aid organisations, donors, and Syrian refugees. The analytical features of humanitarian governance, markets, hierarchies and networks (Barnett 2013) can be helpful in understanding the working of the humanitarian aid system in Lebanon, and how it influences the hybrid governance structures.

### *Markets*

Market mechanisms are structuring the humanitarian response in Lebanon. As the survival of aid organisations depends on the external funding they receive, there exists competition between organisations. Because of the large inflow of money at the start of the Syrian crisis towards Lebanon, a lot of aid organisations were newly founded.[22] Naturally, this landscape of a multitude of organisations has enforced competition. There is a tendency among organisations to implement various programmes at the same time to 'empower' multiple target groups of refugees said-to-be an 'holistic approach' which might very much be caused because of this situation: funding allocation is often organised through a 'call for proposals' which seek out specific programmes or target groups. Having a broad range of programmes and target groups available enables organisations to apply for more funds. Market mechanisms, leading to

[22] AID_I12P12.

competition, thereby increase the number of actors involved in different fields of the humanitarian response. This leads to more shared humanitarian governance, as the number of institutions, for example in the form of partnerships between aid organisations, and related institutional relations, increases.

Other effects of this competition between aid organisation are, most importantly, an incentive to contest over participants, and a decline of coordination. Both effects lead to more fragmentation and harm the effectiveness of the humanitarian response. There is one striking example, described by an aid worker, of how contest over participants (in this particular case, children) leads to less aid: *'I sometimes have the feeling that other organisation in non-formal education, they use the waiting list to make sure that, when they open a new cycle, they have enough children to fill the cycle, which is understandable – at the same time, if I know there's another partner, why shouldn't I refer? The child needs education right now. [...]. Targets are the main thing donors focus on.'*[23] Similarly, it leads to duplication and less coordination: *'Because there's a conflict of interest between the NGOs – sometimes there's too many of them in a certain area, and they fight over beneficiaries, because they all want to help them, and they don't always share what they're doing or tell the truth. [...]. If they have a budget to help 60 students, and I have one for 60 students, and there are only 60 students in an area – there's a quarrel over them. Sometimes, NGOs, they falsely document on purpose the names of their beneficiaries – I have 10 but turn them into 20 [...] in order to get [the] fund.'*[24]

Indeed, coordination has been described by one donor as a challenging endeavour, because aid organisations and donors all have *'specific political agendas, different priorities, different frameworks of cooperation with the Government of Lebanon'* which influences *'the response and their willingness to cooperate'*.[25] This again reflects the trend of the politicisation of humanitarian aid, which is starting to include more and more interest-driven actors (Barnett 2013). Theoretically, this reflects how humanitarian governance and institutional bricolage correspond, because they both emphasise the increasing amount of diversified of actors and (unequal) institutional relations involved in governance.

This analysis should be complemented with the manifestation of between-donor competition. One aid worker specialised in finance, explains how this form of competition revolves around exposure. According to him, donors have cut projects on women's rights and

[23] AID_I16P16.
[24] AID_I14P14.
[25] DON_I2P3.

early childhood, in order to distribute their funding over more projects.[26] This reinforces the abovementioned tendency of organisations to develop programmes in various fields.

In sum, market mechanisms fuel different forms of competition, which leads to a higher degree of hybridity (increase in actors and decline in coordination) in the humanitarian response and a prioritisation of funding over Syrian refugees' interests.

*Hierarchies*

As this section argues, the humanitarian response in Lebanon is heavily based on hierarchical structures, due to money flows.

The functioning and effects of these hierarchical structures based on money flows is shown in the EU Madad Innovation Lab III in Lebanon which was organised with the following 'guiding question': 'How do we foster women empowerment within Syrian refugees, IDP's and host communities through innovation and dialogue?' (Qudra Programme 2019). This lab is part of the Qudra programme which is funded by the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (the 'Madad') fund and the German Government. The programme invited a number of local Lebanese organisations, after a selection procedure, to join Innovation Lab III. The lab was set-up to have the organisations develop an idea and work together on a pilot that would 'foster women empowerment'. The best group of organisations would in the end receive 15.000 euros, and, in case multiple groups would be selected, the 15.000 euros would be divided between the groups of organisations. In the end, this led to three projects receiving 5.000 euros, which in the eyes of one of the participating organisations was very little.[27] This is a clear-cut case of the hierarchy between donors and aid organisations: the first has the power to decide over the latter. It should therefore be concluded that the unequal relationship between 'those who give and those who receive' (Barnett 2013, 389) does not only pertain to aid organisation-refugee relations, but also to donor-aid organisation relations. Dependency thus runs through all levels of the humanitarian aid system. Aid organisations have less agency to decide which programmes should be implemented. This is significant, because donor organisations often do not operate in the field, but local knowledge is crucial to setting the right priorities and to build commitment to change. Yet, decisions are made at different stages, starting at the donor countries' government, (often) followed by the international or donor organisations' level

[26] AID_I20P21_22_23.
[27] AID_I18P20, AID_I19P2.

which either implements programmes or functions as a link between the government and aid organisations, then at the aid organisations level who are then the only actors in direct relation with the beneficiaries. Hybrid humanitarian governance, in this way, encompasses the negotiation of empowerment of refugees from the local until the global level.

More specifically, the hierarchic structures at the level of international organisations also matters, as they are often dependent on the funding they are allowed to spend by their governments.[28] Consequently, this sometimes leads to short-term programmes, related to budget cycles, which again impair the possibility to empower because these programmes cannot ensure long-term change.

In case of the lab, evidence leads to question if the ‘Madad’ fund provides the possibility for aid organisations to take into account the conditions of the field: the pilots the groups developed, had to be implementable in 20 days. After the implementation of these pilots, the groups would have to find funding for further implementation – as the EU would not necessarily continue its support.[29] Indeed, they felt that the time frame was not realistic to develop a high-quality pilot.[30] The jury itself only consisted of European representatives; there was no Lebanese, Syrian nor Iraqi expert or representative involved, lacking local perspectives. In this case, the funding scheme did not function properly in the eyes of some of the participants, and it gave the aid organisations the feeling that they were not reaching the potential of these pilots. This shows how the distance between those who give and those who receive can negatively affect the formation of aid programmes in the eyes of aid organisations.

Similarly, while local NGOs can participate in the sectoral working groups organised by the Lebanese government and the UNHCR, decisions are still made without their presence. For example, the Brussels Conferences have been one of the main instruments to ‘mobilise international financial support for the Syrians, for humanitarian aid both inside the country and in the neighbouring countries’ where countries and UN agencies convene (European Council and Council of the European Union 2019). During the First Brussels Conference, in 2017, there were no NGOs included, which meant that they could not participate in the dialogue with policy makers (European Council and Council of the European Union 2017). This developed into a full two-days dialogue with NGOs during the Third Brussels Conference (European Council and Council of the European Union 2019). Yet, one human rights worker asks herself: ‘*Was this just an act or a façade that you put up, because, eventually, decisions are not really made*

[28] DON_I1P1_2.
[29] Idem.
[30] AID_I18P20, AID_I19P2.

*in Brussels. The decisions are made beforehand, and they just go to Brussels to announce them. Letting NGOs participate in the Conference itself is not really empowerment, it's just representation. Empowerment is actually consulting with them, throughout the year, leading up to these policy making and decision making events, to have their voices actually included in this process. Now the EU can go and say yes, we convened over 300 NGOs from Syria and the region, they were active in participating in Brussels for two days, they participated in panels and side-events and all of that, which looks great, but at the same time, in the conference itself you had Syrian activists constantly vocalising that – "Okay, we're here now, but what change is my presence going to make for my people" – and that was really sad to hear, these statements were not responded to by anyone. […] it's also really disrespectful. To have people involved at a certain stage where they're actually not able to have an impact and to frame that as empowerment.'*[31] This citation is significant for two reasons: first, it confirms how NGOs are not really included at the 'higher level' of decision-making regarding the humanitarian response which again shows dependency and a lack of inclusion by donors and states, and second, and related, it signifies how the term empowerment can be used without being empowering, as it does not enable Syrian refugees to make decisions regarding their own lives and people.

In short, the hierarchic structures, which are based on money flows, lead to decision-making being taking at a large distance from the beneficiaries. This confirms the inequality that runs through hybrid humanitarian institutions, wherein aid organisations depend on donors, and beneficiaries depend on aid organisations.

*Networks*

As this section shows, networks are a crucial component in the humanitarian aid system in Lebanon. These networks function at various levels, between different kind of actors, most notably, aid organisations, UN agencies and government actors. They often depend on personal contacts which are unofficial, as people are not representing their organisations in establishing these connections (called '*wazta*' in Arabic),[32] reflective of the corrupt political system in Lebanon. In effect, overall coordination can be obstructed because of these personal contacts, creating small islands of negotiation.

[31] AID_I12P12.
[32] AID_I2P2.

Yet, coordination has evolved within the humanitarian response towards Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In the beginning, there was no official coordination, hindered by the Lebanese government. Now, the Lebanese government, UN agencies and aid organisations are united in sectoral working groups within the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), specifically geared towards the Syrian crisis. Although this research has critically reflected on the role of the Lebanese government in the LCRPs, a higher level of coordination can prevent duplication and overlap.

Another good example of evolving cooperation is the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF) which was set up in 2012, to 'provide a common platform for advocacy among international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) responding to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon and to facilitate representation of INGOs within the Humanitarian Country Team and other inter-agency coordination mechanisms' (Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum n.d.). As these organisations form an institution together, their demands can be voiced more strongly in meetings. In addition, an official forum can transcend the small islands of negotiation based on personal contacts described above. This is significant, because it strengthens the position of international aid organisations in the hybrid humanitarian governance structures.

Two other strengths resulting from partnerships between aid organisations, are referrals and knowledge-sharing. Referrals happen when one organisation refers a participant to another partner organisation, for example, because of the expertise of the partner. Knowledge-sharing is the practice wherein one aid organisation organises trainings for another organisation, such as trainings on child protection or gender-based violence. The EU Madad Innovation Lab III similarly provided a good opportunity for the organisations to get to know each other and strengthen their network.[33]

What should be noted, however, is that when I attended some of these training sessions, and asked the present aid workers who received the training what they thought of the trainings, they often replied the information was not new.[34] These trainings are in itself seen as a form of capacity-building of NGOs, which can be a programme or requirement coming from donors (Nuffic 2018). This confirms how the requirements might 'hollow out' the partnerships in the field, as the partnership itself is the target, and not the sharing of knowledge.

Networks are thus important in the humanitarian aid system in Lebanon, both for positive reasons (advocacy, knowledge sharing, referrals) as well as for negative reasons (corruption, donor requirements). On the one hand, official networks can develop the

[33] AID_I19P2.
[34] OBS_6.

humanitarian response, preventing duplication and overlap. On the other hand, networks based on personal contacts have the opposite effect. The degree of hybridity depends on this level of formalisation, as the first type is more fixed than the latter. While it is beyond of the scope of this research to analyse which type of network prevails in Lebanon, this does provide a recommendation for further research.

Similarly, while this research focused on Beirut to understand the urban governance of refugees, questions related to how the organisation of the humanitarian response in Beirut can be distinguished from other areas did not really resonate with aid organisations because they are part of national networks. While some aid organisations distinguished between living conditions of the city and the informal settlements, this only changed the content of some of the aid programmes, and not the approach.[35] Marwa Boustani, Estella Carpi, Hayat Gebara and Yara Mourad found, that a large part of refugees have settled in cities because the majority of the population of Lebanon, about 90 percent, lives in urban environments. However, international organisations in particular have largely implemented the same responses that they have previously implemented in other emergency contexts (2016, 20). Relatedly, most of the aid organisations responded with answers about Lebanon in general. Due to the lack of recognition by aid organisations, a recommendation would be further comparative research between urban and rural contexts to understand different forms of governance.

To conclude, markets and hierarchies, two features of the humanitarian aid system, hinder the incentive to centralise Syrian refugees' interest in the aid response, which leads to a lack of empowerment as the following sections show. Networks can either have a positive or negative effect, depending on their level of formalisation. The empirical evidence thereby confirms that analytical features of humanitarian governance can be found in Lebanon. The interlinkages between the three different features also reinforce this negative effect, for example, market mechanisms can solidify hierarchical structures, and disrupt networks. The relations of donors, aid organisations and refugees are all based on dependency between 'those who give and those who receive'. This outline of the humanitarian aid system in Beirut and the humanitarian governance features, contributes to explaining roles and institutional relations within the hybrid governance structures. More specifically, the market mechanisms, hierarchical structures and (informal) networks, contribute to fragmentation and unequal power relations, and therefore to unevenness and hybridity in this form of institutional bricolage.

[35] AID_I16P16.

### Use of the term empowerment

The term 'empowerment' of refugees is a recurring idea in programmes of aid organisations, alongside related terms such as 'resilience' and 'capacity-building'.[36] This terminology reflects the idea that refugees should be strengthened, and that they should be able to make decisions, take action and sustain themselves (see theoretical framework). Many aid organisations in Lebanon base themselves and their programmes on this principle.[37] There is a tendency among organisations to argue against an 'humanitarian approach' and to advocate for development and human rights, as basic assistance would create dependency among refugees.[38] In effect, this often leads to programmes which focus on education, livelihood, awareness raising (on human rights issues), case-management, and so on and so forth.

This consideration reflects the larger debate regarding the 'humanitarian-development nexus' wherein efforts are undertaken to bring both humanitarian and development aid together (Nordic Consulting Group 2018, 6). This divide between humanitarian and development aid is made by the aid industry itself (Barnett and Weiss 2008, 51) to distinguish between emergency relief and more long-term responses. An example of this divide would be the difference between two European funding schemes in Lebanon: European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis. The first funds humanitarian instruments, and the second development instruments. Ultimately, development instruments are very much justified by ideas such as empowerment and resilience of refugees and host communities and denote the apparent aim to make the humanitarian response more sustainable in response to the protractedness of a crisis, and for the host country more generally. In result, this means that the meaning attributed to empowerment by aid organisations also shapes the role of aid organisations in the hybrid governance structures, making their presence more wide-spread and durable as it is invested in non-emergency fields of work, such as education. However, the sustainability of the response is not only dependent on the presence of aid organisations. One of the underlying theoretical understandings of this research, hybridity informing humanitarian governance, places emphasis on the fluidity of humanitarian institutions, which negatively affects the sustainability of the response when there is a lack of coordination. For example, the current LCRP runs from 2017 until 2020, and it remains

[36] E.g. AID_I22P25, AID_I21P24, DON_I1P1_2.
[37] E.g. AID_I1P1, AID_I4P3_4, AID_I14P14.
[38] AID_I17P17_18_19.

questionable if the Lebanese state, NGOs and donors can agree upon a new four-year plan,[39] due to the Lebanese state's position which supports the return of Syrian refugees. Thus, the hybridity that governs this humanitarian institution negatively affects its sustainability which makes the empowerment of refugees in Lebanon more difficult to reach.

When asked about the literal use of 'empowerment' for Syrian refugees in Lebanon organisations have mixed reactions with regard to its meaning. Some organisations argue for a 'belief in empowerment.'[40] Other organisations, however, wonder if the term empowerment in itself disregards the agency refugees have, emphasising that they already have power,[41] and turn the term around: *'Who empowers who? I feel empowered when I work with Syrian refugees.'*[42]

With regard to practice, organisations offer multiple ways how to empower; by giving refugees the tools to access their rights and live in dignity, to have a voice.[43] The feasibility of these ideas, however, is questioned. Referring to the policies towards refugees that are in place in Lebanon, organisations themselves ask if empowerment can truly be realised in this context, and towards what end.[44]

Moreover, one aid worker wonders if other aid workers would be fully aware, or even interested in actually implementing empowerment for refugees.[45] Because of the vagueness surrounding the term, another aid worker says this renders it meaningless.[46]

In this way, there seems to be a paradox between the general conviction of the organisations in the underlying principles related to terminology of empowerment (resilience and capacity-building) and the reluctance to use of the actual term. This means that 'naming' the programmes 'empowering' transcends the actual effects of the programme – as some of the organisations acknowledge.

One aid workers argues that the term 'empowerment' comes from funding schemes, and is only therefore used by local organisations.[47] For example, the HOPES project from the 'Madad' fund asks the applicant in its form for non-research projects to describe 'the intended result(s) relating to gender balance or women's empowerment and how the project promotes gender equality during its implementation and delivery, as well as content-wise' (HOPES

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[39] AID_I21P24.
[40] AID_I13P13.
[41] AID_I18P20.
[42] AID_I20P21.
[43] E.g. AID_I13P13, AID_I1P1.
[44] AID_I9P9, AID_I12P12.
[45] AID_I4P3_4.
[46] AID_I18P20.
[47] AID_I20P21_22_23

2018). This signifies how the donors have a position of power in the hybrid governance structures, as they diffuse the term empowerment: aid workers doubt the usefulness of the term but still need to use it.

The following section assesses if the empowerment of refugees is achieved in hybrid humanitarian governance in Lebanon.

## Practice

As described above, the use of terminology related to empowerment does not come without its doubts. It is therefore necessary to trace this question by assessing whether the hybrid humanitarian governance can be characterised as 'empowering', and, whether it can actually shift power towards the refugees and strengthen their position. This is related to the Lebanese state's role in shaping the hybrid governance as not conducive towards the empowerment of refugees. Therefore, the humanitarian response, embedded in the context of hybrid governance, is assessed based on the four following indicators: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability and local organisational capacity (Narayan-Parker 2005, 4). These indicators are interrelated and function as a 'benchmark' to assess humanitarian governance, operationalising the analytical concept.

### *Access to information*

When asked how the organisations inform their participants of the programme and their rights, two types of action recur. First, outreach and second, awareness sessions. Outreach is meant to 'make refugees aware of programmes and policies that affect them. Such campaigns might include: community meetings, door-to-door visits, meetings with community members and leaders, messaging through flyers, posters or billboards, or arts and cultural events' (UNHCR Resettlement Service 2011). Indeed, different strategies are used by organisations in Lebanon to reach refugees, most often 'open days' in community centres, door-to-door visits or talks to people in the streets.[48] While these strategies are to some extent formalised in the design of the programmes, they are also based on more informal social networks: participants referring other to-be participants.[49] When many people come and enregister themselves, this might result in a

[48] AID_I13P13, AID_I15P15, AID_I16P16.
[49] AID_I5P5.

waiting list, and there is no need to do more outreach.[50] The question is, in that case, if it is only certain communities that participate in the programme – a question beyond the scope of this research, but in need of further research.

Interestingly, however, is that while these efforts are made to inform refugees, aid organisations themselves admit that it is likely that the refugees cannot distinguish between the different organisations, offering different programmes. As one aid worker mentions: *'I don't know if beneficiaries are able to distinguish between each and every organisation. They do understand the different services provided, and the referral pathways in place. I feel that we always have discussions concerning the different service directory, but I don't feel that the beneficiaries are very well able to distinguish between the different organisations working, and the different services presented.'*[51] This is significant, because not being able to distinguish between the different aid organisations, impairs the agency that refugees have to hold the organisations from which they receive services accountable, which is one of the other indicators of empowerment. Consequently, the lack of access to information confirms the unequal position of power of refugees vis-á-vis aid organisations within the hybrid humanitarian governance.

Awareness sessions do not inform refugees of the aid programmes itself, but instead focus on specific issues, such as legal rights or parenting sessions. During one parenting session, the participants' themselves spoke about why they attend: to talk about their children and learn how to communicate, to feel better, to gain more knowledge, to feel more self-confident and to become more patient.[52] This particular example seems to pertain well to the underlying philosophy of empowerment: to feel more strengthened.

In contrast, the context of policy changes and the deviation between policy and practice, caused by the Lebanese state, also impact to what extent Syrian refugees are informed of their rights in Lebanon. As mentioned earlier, this instils fear for arrest and detention, and obstructs the accountability of those who incorrectly enforce these policies, for example, the General Security in case of the waiver. Consequently, it is more difficult for aid organisations to successfully implement awareness sessions on legal rights, when there is (again) ambiguity in the response of the Lebanese government.

In relation to these two examples, it is possible to distinguish between empowerment 'within' and empowerment 'without'. The first, wherein Syrian refugees regain a feeling of empowerment in themselves, is obtained through these awareness sessions. The second,

[50] Idem.
[51] AID_I3P3_4.
[52] FG_1.

wherein Syrian refugees gain power in relation to other actors, most importantly, the Lebanese state, is much more difficult to achieve. Therefore, it remains questionable if refugees are truly well-informed, and if they *can* be informed when there is deliberate fuzziness.

*Inclusion and participation*

Inclusion and participation of refugees, in relation to the programmes of aid organisations, can similarly be analysed on the basis of two types of actions. First, the general participation of refugees in programmes and second, the possibility for refugees to be involved in the decision-making revolving around the programme. In addition, this section touches upon the inclusion and participation of Syrian refugees in Lebanese society.

Aid organisations often use a set of criteria to decide who is allowed to participate in their programmes. Most notably, the UNHCR uses a 'desk formula' to 'help sector partners identify and prioritise poor households eligible for assistance, in a quick manner' […] 'the formula predicts expenditure per capita based on key variables collected *upon registering as refugees with UNHCR*. These variables are mostly demographic and relate to the households' characteristics, including, but not limited to: arrival date, household size, gender of the head of the household, education level, dependency ratio, presence of members with disabilities, and age' (Government of Lebanon and the UN 2017, emphasis added). It is important to note that this formula only applies to those refugees which are registered with UNHCR, which is not the case for all Syrian refugees in Lebanon: about 1 million Syrian refugees are registered with UNHCR, while the Lebanese government estimates there are about 1.5 million Syrian refugees in the country (Human Rights Watch 2019). This, as well as more general statements related to how the needs are bigger than the capacity of the organisations and the fact that these organisations also make use of a criteria,[53] proves how not all refugees are included (and cannot be included) in the humanitarian response in Lebanon. It is questionable if these desk formulae really work in identifying the 'most vulnerable', as a majority of Syrian refugees have responded in a survey carried out by the Mixed Migration Platform how 'aid [is] not reaching those most in need' (2017, 3). Moreover, refugees are reduced to categories, and the distance between aid providers and beneficiaries is enlarged. This method discards the diversity in experiences of refugees, and their agency to interact with aid providers and talk about their encountered vulnerabilities, and how these can be overcome.

[53] E.g. AID_I13P13.

With regard to decision-making revolving around aid programmes, the level of inclusion and participation of refugees might also be regarded as ambiguous. Aid organisations often propose how 'needs-assessment' is their primary tool to involve the participants in the design of the programme.[54] Yet, some organisations explain the difficulty of implementing the outcomes of the needs-assessment, due to donors' demands or values. For example, one former aid worker explains how one particular case of a needs-assessment : *'Most women and girls said they wanted to do [sewing] and hair and make-up stuff, and boys said something like carpentry. If we were thinking from a gender equality perspective, we would say: "No, we should not do that. We should get them together in the same classroom." I'm not sure, if when we force our values on them, it will work, in their community. We should find another way to make them understand gender equality and get them to be together. [Something that fits more] with their culture.'*[55] These considerations lead aid organisations to have to balance between donors' requirements and needs.[56] Empowerment, therefore, has to fall within the framework of the meaning formed by these donors, in order to be implemented. Similar to the earlier analysis of the use of the term empowerment, which also comes from donors, this shows more generally how values coming from donor countries guide the humanitarian response, instead of the interests of the Syrian refugees. This approach defies what empowerment and resilience should actually do, namely, to strengthen the agency of Syrian refugees to shape their own lives and to strengthen 'people's capacity to determine their own values and priorities, and to act on these' (Eade 1997, 3).

In relation to the Lebanese government's role, which focuses on the temporariness of the stay of refugees in Lebanon, Syrian refugees are explicitly not included into Lebanese society. For example, while afternoon schools could be regarded as catering to the specific needs of Syrian children, they also hamper the possibility to integrate with Lebanese children. The evictions, too, make sure that Syrians are not settling down for a long-term, nor integrating. Similarly, as Syrian employment is heavily restricted in Lebanon, they are unable to develop their socio-economic position. Indeed, '90 percent of households have either no working member or only one, who is in charge of providing for their entire family' and the rate of Syrian women which work is very low, about 7.6 percent (Jordan INGO Forum 2018, 17). In addition, the focus on return makes questionable towards what end aid organisations aim to empower, when the future of Syrian refugees stays uncertain and they are not allowed to integrate.

[54] E.g. AID_I16P16.
[55] AID_I7P7.
[56] AID_I11P11.

In sum, Syrian refugees are not sufficiently included, both in the humanitarian response and in Lebanese society. Empowerment is guided by values coming from donor countries, which restricts the agency of Syrian refugees to shape their lives.

*Accountability*

For accountability, aid organisations rely on several mechanisms to be able to respond to the concerns of refugees. They use follow-ups, feedback mechanisms (such as focus groups), and complaint mechanisms, of which the last is most relevant for accountability as it offers the opportunity to hold accountable those that design and implement programmes for refugees.

The mechanisms are often variable and multi-staged, in reference to the differences between local, international organisations and donors, as well as the fields they work in. For example, one local organisation which works on the advocacy side, states how it relies on its implementing partners to communicate back the results of their advocacy.[57] Another example, given by an international organisation, describes that it regulates its complaint mechanism the other way around. When a local organisation – which implements the project of this international organisation – faces problems with a participant, the participant can contact the international organisation during one of its visits to the local organisation's centre.[58]

The main complication of the implementation of these mechanisms, is that they are often internally organised. Consequently, the organisation itself has the power to decide how they will process and react to a complaint. There is no actor who will enforce change, or compensation for the damage done. An example of a complaint from a Syrian receiving humanitarian aid, which came forward in a research done by the Humanitarian Policy Group, relates to the perceived differences between local and international organisations, stating that in international organisations there is 'less verbal abuse and the amount of aid is more' while with local organisations 'there are many thefts in addition to insults and waiting long hours…' (Grandi, Mansour and Holloway 2018, 22) Indeed, this research also found that Syrian refugees wanted to see more accountability for aid organisations, as their code of conducts are often not made easily available or visible (Grandi, Mansour and Holloway 2018, 22).

Without enforcement, it remains questionable whether we can speak of true accountability – which naturally has to do with the legal position of refugees within a foreign

[57] AID_I12P12.
[58] AID_I11P11.

country. As was mentioned earlier, the Lebanese state is consciously ambiguous with regard to legal policies towards Syrian refugees. In addition, the Lebanese state hinders refugees from reaching their rights by regarding them as 'guests' and not as 'refugees'. Therefore, there is no place for accountability, which reaffirms the lack of power refugees have vis-à-vis aid organisations, donors and the Lebanese state within hybrid humanitarian governance.

*Local organisational capacity*

Some aid organisations offer opportunities to refugees to, in some way, organise and take the lead in initiatives. More importantly, there are several organisations wherein Syrians work or which are led by Syrians, although these are facing legal constraints.

The initiatives often pertain to ideas of a social project, wherein participants together form groups, to share experiences, but also to influence the programmes of aid organisations, and society more generally. One interesting example is the 'children municipality council', with the idea that 'children themselves advocate for child rights and to be able to be a strength in the municipality'.[59] This initiative has been hindered, however, by the municipal elections which changes the party in power: *'Depending if the party or the person is belligerent, they might just erase everything that has been done before, and you have to start everything from scratch.'*[60] This political dynamic relates back to the previous chapter, wherein the fragmentation of the political system of Lebanon was explained and their different relations with the Syrian regime, which and indicates the negative effects of this system on the sustainability of the local organisational capacity of Syrian refugees.

Similarly, Syrians work in aid organisations, as 'volunteers' due to legal constraints. Syrians are only allowed to work in three sectors, agriculture, construction and cleaning, and there are strict requirements for establishing foreign associations. [61] Moreover, there are restrictions on informal gatherings for Syrian refugees, with regard to how and where they are allowed to meet – any gathering might be questioned by local authorities.[62] This prevents the local organisational capacity of Syrian refugees.

While some of the aid workers interviewed argue how there are quite a few Syrian organisations active in Lebanon, one international agency's employee is not convinced – stating

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[59] AID_I16P16.
[60] Idem.
[61] AID_I14P14.
[62] AID_I20P21_22_23.

that it is very difficult for Syrian organisations to operate legally in Lebanon.[63] These diversified opinions reflect the analysis by Kholoud Mansour, who concludes that Syrian actors and organisations are not included in the UN coordination meetings in Lebanon, in order to comply with the Lebanese government's policies and donors' requirements (2017, 14-15).

In sum, the undervaluation of the local organisational capacity of Syrians, as well as the legal restrictions and political dynamics of the Lebanese state, lead to impair their empowerment.

## Empowerment of aid organisations

Taking into account the question of the empowerment of NGOs, to be able to empower Syrian refugees, it becomes clear that aid organisations do not have the position within the hybrid governance structures vis-à-vis the Lebanese state to give answer to these negative policies. As one aid worker summarises: *'Maybe we provide cash-assistance for a family and child, but are you really able to solve the problem of his legal status and bring him back to quality education? Are you able to let him not be exposed to daily exploitation of the landlord? No, we're providing compromised solutions.'*[64]

The NGOs have developed several coping strategies in order to somehow function in their restrained position in this hybrid humanitarian governance. An example given by one NGO, which works on advocacy and human rights, is that it adjusts its narrative towards that of the Lebanese government, to be able to advocate for Syrian refugees' rights and to not cross the government's boundaries. With regard to the issue of legal residency, for example, it proposed the argument that access to legal residency will make it easier for Syrians to repatriate when the time is right, because it will be easier to keep track of the Syrian population.[65] Furthermore, they do the same when trying to obtain consent for setting up a new project, and emphasise the benefits for the local host community. Yet, this strategy has sometimes been reversed, and the organisation can easily be blamed for being a 'terrorist apologist' which forces them to stay away from political issues, such as the Syrian crisis. In one particular case, the credibility of the organisation was put at risk, because local authorities condemned their work on LGBT-issues – even though they were advocating for refugees' rights at that moment.[66] A

[63] AID_I21P24.
[64] AID_I4P3_4.
[65] AID_I12P12.
[66] Idem.

different organisation was accused of polluting a river by local authorities, by providing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services.[67]

Similarly, the analysis above has shown that NGOs are not included in decision-making, and that aid organisations are dependent on donors. Again, organisations have to cope with the donors' demands by making compromises within their aid programmes, which can negatively influence their value in the field.

## Conclusion

This chapter has found that the analytical features of humanitarian governance (market mechanisms, hierarchical structures and networks) are reflected in the humanitarian response in Beirut. This provides an explanation for the degree of hybridity and unevenness in the humanitarian institutions, as market mechanisms and hierarchical structures contribute to fragmentation and unequal power relations. Networks can either contribute to fragmentation, or to coordination, depending on their level of formalisation. In addition, it was found that hybridity can negatively affect the sustainability of humanitarian institutions.

Furthermore, this chapter has shown how this form of hybrid humanitarian governance in Beirut does not achieve empowerment, and that aid organisations themselves are critical of the term. The programmes of aid organisations do not suffice to overcome the problems posed by the Lebanese government's positions and humanitarian aid system, and the organisations themselves are not empowered enough to empower refugees. In contrast, it reaffirms the dependency of refugees and aid organisations on the Lebanese state and donors.

Now that it is found that the empowerment of refugees is not reached in this humanitarian response, the following chapter seeks answer to the question: why does this humanitarian aid system continue?

[67] Idem.

# Chapter 5: Why does this humanitarian aid system continue?

By answering the first and second set of sub-questions in chapter three and four, it was shown that the humanitarian response in the context of hybrid governance is not moving towards the empowerment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In addition, features of humanitarian governance obstruct the incentive to centralise refugee's interests at the heart of the response. This leads me to the question why the humanitarian response, claiming to advance the empowerment and resilience of refugees while this has not been realised, still continues in similar fashion. Empowerment, in this way, not only functions as a 'benchmark' to hybrid humanitarian governance, but also sheds lights on ethics. Hence, this chapter analyses who benefits from the system and seeks out the agendas of the hybrid governance actors involved. Why does this humanitarian aid system continue? Or, who is truly empowered by the humanitarian response?

## Finances

Donors have poured a lot of financial resources in the Lebanese economy, by directly supporting the Lebanese government, by directly funding international and local NGOs, and through funding channels. With the 2019 update of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, the government appealed for 2.62 billion dollars (UNHCR 2019). Other examples of funding channels are the Emergency Response Fund Lebanon, the Lebanon Recover Fund, Lebanon Syrian Crisis Trust Fund, the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund, and the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis (UN Lebanon n.d.). Together, they make up for a contribution of around 1 billion dollars per year (Financial Tracking Service 2019), which is less than what the government (and partners) yearly appealed for. However, according to one humanitarian coordinator involved in the LCRP, Lebanon has one of the best funded humanitarian responses in the world.[68] At the end of June 2019, it has received 429.4 million dollars for this year only (Financial Tracking Service 2019).

The biggest contributors are Western and Gulf governments (Mitri 2014, 8), which have an interest in supporting the refugees' stay in the region, due to the political sensitivity of migration in their countries (see following sections). Part of the official narrative of UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Philippe Lazzarini at the launch of the LCRP, regarding *why* they are funding the humanitarian response in Lebanon, is that 'preserving the

[68] AID_I21P24.

stability of Lebanon means preserving, tolerance, diversity and stability in the region. More than ever, international solidarity needs to match the hospitality of Lebanon as host country. No country in the world can – or should – carry alone the challenge that Lebanon is facing. Responsibility-sharing with Lebanon is key' (UNOCHA 2018).

This signifies a more common narrative, that the stabilisation of Lebanon is of global interest. For example, the Dutch government states the following on its website regarding development cooperation in Lebanon: 'The Netherlands therefore invests in education and vocational training for both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese people. […] In this way, the Netherlands contributes to Lebanon's resilience. Stability is not only in the interests of the country itself, but also the best interest of the Netherlands.' (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.). A direct link is made between Lebanon's stability and resilience, terms which are related to empowerment, and the interest of the donor country. Money is then poured into Lebanon in exchange for protecting this interest, which explains the relations between the Lebanese government and donor countries, both gaining from this humanitarian response.

It is often cited how the refugee influx has put a strain on Lebanon's public sector and infrastructure - for example in the high level of unemployment. In the LCRP, it is for example stated that The World Bank estimates that Lebanon has incurred losses of 13.1 billion dollars since 2012, due to the Syrian crisis. Indeed, the International Labour Organisation has stated that 'economic growth has slowed, private investments reduced, the trade deficit has expanded, and real estate and tourism – the two most important sectors – have declined' (ILO n.d.). The Lebanese authorities have repeated this line of reasoning, in order to sustain their demands for more funding. Both the Prime Minister Saad Hariri and President Michel Aoun have often claimed how the large presence of Syrian refugees in the country weigh heavily on Lebanon's limited resources and infrastructure (Chehayeb 2019b). Nevertheless, Bachir el Khoury has argued that the presence of Syrian refugees also has economic benefits, which might even result in a net positive outcome on the economy. Firstly, their presence has led to a 'large supply of cheap labour' which benefits Lebanese companies. Secondly, the local consumption of Syrian refugees – partly financed through cash assistance programmes of aid organisations – is 1.5 billion dollars per year extra in the economy, and the 200 dollars waiver, which is now paid for by UNHCR, is direct money for the Lebanese government. In addition, some wealthy Syrians have settled in Beirut, and spend their money there. Thirdly, as was stated before, Lebanon receives around 1 billion dollars in humanitarian aid per year (Khoury 2017).

The economic problems of Lebanon, moreover, are structural, and were already present before the influx of Syrian refugees, as a result of state incompetence and corruption (Khoury

2017). In that way, the argument that the problems are caused by the influx itself, can obscure the role of the Lebanese government in the lack of economic growth. The Paris Economic Conference for Development through Reforms and with the Private Sector (CEDRE) in 2018, addressed the economic weaknesses of Lebanon, and the Lebanese government has recognised that it should implement structural reforms, such as 'fighting corruption, strengthening governance and accountability, including public finance management, modernising procurement rules, reforming customs and improving public investment management' (Government of France 2018). If these reforms are implemented, the Lebanese government will again receive money from donor countries: 11 billion dollars in loans and grants have been pledged during the conference (Ouazzani 2019). While this might prove to be an incentive for reforms, it might also keep the sectarian system further alive. As was shown in chapter three, the Lebanese government's response is currently deliberately fragmentised, to strengthen its position of power within the hybrid governance structures. Thus, it remains to be seen if the Lebanese government would change this fragmentation with reforms.

## Public perceptions

Another important factor in the continuation of the humanitarian response in Lebanon, is public perceptions. This functions at many levels, for various actors: municipalities, the Lebanese government and donor countries.

Firstly, municipalities have shown various responses towards the presence of Syrian refugees and aid organisations within their localities. This has been based on historical events, which influence the perceptions of their constituencies regarding Syrian refugees. As one aid worker explained, her organisation faced some difficulties in project implementation with the Zahle municipality, as this municipality is very strongly anti-Syrian because the area was negatively affected during the Syrian occupation in Lebanon. The area was particularly hit during the Battle of Zahle, in 1981, where the Lebanese Forces (an armed right-wing Christian resistance group) fought the Syrian Armed Forces (Jaoude 2011). Later, in 1984, Zahle was (again) victim of a three-day shelling by the Syrian Armed Forces (The Civil Society Knowledge Centre n.d.). Not only the negative experience of the municipality itself, but also the question of how it will be perceived by its constituency, play a role in its negative response towards the presence of Syrian refugees and the implementation of a project for them. If the

present municipality would be publicly perceived as 'working together with refugees', it might lose (parts of) its electorate.[69]

In contrast, other municipalities have made use of the possibility to receive support of organisations, for example, these organisations have given out grants, engaged youth in activities, done refurbishment work and created public spaces. In those cases, when the community sees this organisation provides support to the development of an area, they are more likely to accept these initiatives.[70] This also provides an explanation why many organisations target and aim to 'empower' both Syrian refugees and the host community. In addition, it might lead to an increase of the popularity of the municipality, because of the perceived advancement of the area. Hence, the (implementation of) humanitarian programmes are heavily influenced by the interests of local authorities, which again occupy a position of power over aid organisations within this hybrid humanitarian governance.

Secondly, the Lebanese government also plays into public perceptions, its audience being both the Lebanese people and donor countries. As was mentioned before, the government stresses the strains Syrian refugees are seen to put on the economy, in order to argue for receiving more financial resources. A similar tactic can be found in the 'securitisation' (Nassar and Stel 2019, 50) of the presence of Syrian refugees, which not only legitimises the lack of rights refugees enjoy in Lebanon (Saferworld and Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies 2018, 1), but also pushes for more funding, for example, to reduce tensions between refugees and host communities (which are partly produced by the discourse of the Lebanese government itself, as was shown in chapter three). In that way, it handily plays into the foreign policy objectives of the donor countries. In addition, to argue for more funding for the host community, might increase popularity among the Lebanese people.[71] Notwithstanding, the Lebanese government does not necessarily benefit from an improvement of the living conditions of Syrians and Lebanese, as this would stop the incentive to fund. On the other hand, they are put under pressure by the CEDRE Conference, as was discussed previously. Aid organisations deal with similar trends, where they need to carefully balance improvements of the lives of participants, while simultaneously showing that the needs are still very present. As one aid worker cynically stated, *'every humanitarian programme is designed to have a gap' – in order to receive funding*'.[72] For example, the building of a school might not be renewed, so that the 'old' outlook

[69] AID_I12P12.
[70] Idem.
[71] AID_21P24.
[72] INF_1.

of it helps to attract more funding, fuelling the public perception that the project is in need of more money. Several aid organisations have outed their concern for donor fatigue, now that Syria is not 'trending' anymore, eight years after the crisis with little improvement and lack of prospect for a solution in the upcoming future.

Lastly, donor countries similarly have the incentive to 'do good' for the public in Lebanon and in their own countries, to show they are sharing the 'global responsibility' (which is also related to the political balance argument described below). The 'norms' that are propagated might function as legitimation to engage in foreign aid, towards their 'own' people (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 906). For example, donor-competition also manifests itself in seeking the 'gap' where to contribute, as one donor organisation explains: *'[We] don't have the illusion we can [solve the problem], and donors are jostling each other in Lebanon, that's difficult – the Dutch embassy also wonders where [we] can make the difference, that's a way to look at it. This is also has to do with the capacity problem at the Dutch embassy, how can you provide aid as effectively as possible.'*[73] Indeed, a human rights worker and a donor organisation's employee both mention that aid programmes need to be accounted for towards the taxpayer of the donor country.[74]

Evidence of this 'norm diffusion' can be found in the workings of the EU Madad Innovation Lab III, where one participant explained that communication was very much present as he stated that he *'had the feeling to be surrounded by cameras and photographers for half of the workshop'*.[75]

In this case, empowerment and its related terms function as norms to justify this particular humanitarian response, towards the Lebanese host community and the people of the donor countries.

## Political balance

The third explanation for the continuing duration of the humanitarian response, is political: to maintain the power balances which are at stake at multiple levels, involving multiple actors.

With regard for the national context, the political balance in Lebanon is maintained by means of its refugee regime. As Fakhoury, has argued, Lebanon's political system rests on divisive issues and 'consolidate sectarian and external loyalties' which enforces both strategic

[73] DON_I1P1_2.
[74] AID_I12P12, DON_I2P3.
[75] AID_I19P2.

alliances with the country, as well as those with foreign partners' (2017, 693). The refugee rhetoric is, therefore, a typical example of a 'divisive issue' employed to enforce strategic alliances within the country (advocating for return in order to receive national public support) and foreign partners (showing the 'hardship' due to the presence of refugees –receiving (financial) foreign support). As was argued in chapter three, the sectarian power balance should be seen as constructing the interpretation of the presence of refugees. In turn, the sectarian power balance itself is maintained through this construction.

The international community has continuously lauded Lebanon for its 'resilience'. According to Jamil Mouawad, this discourse works to cover up the practices from the international community and the political elite, that hollow out state public institutions, and which make the society 'dependent on a system of aid and clientelism rather than on state-driven development projects' (2017, 4-5). The Lebanese government has for a long time refused to come up with a policy, but also has a lack of funds to implement the policies it might decide on (Hamdan and Khater 2015, 35). Therefore, the state apparatus cannot function by itself, making it dependent on foreign aid. As the role of the state is mostly limited to 'raising money' and to 'validating or endorsing the decisions and strategies of donors and international agencies' (Hamdan and Khater 2015, 35), the (international) aid community functions as a parallel state. Again, it is not state institutions that are developed, but a society that depends on a system of foreign aid. Therefore, it is again questionable if the CEDRE Conference would reform this, as it also reconfirms the dependency on, instead of reclaiming the state.

The use of the term 'resilience' can also benefit global political balances. As Jolle Demmers, drawing from Robert Cox has argued, 'the term has been transformed over the past decades to mean support by international agencies for do-it-yourself welfare programmes in the periphery. These programmes aim to enable populations to achieve self-sufficiency, to contain the exodus from the borderlands to the metropolitan zones and hence create some sort of stability among populations which the global economy cannot absorb' (2017, 79). Empowerment then functions as a façade, which does not actually aim to change the situation – but instead is meant to preserve the status-quo to benefit the global economy. In this particular case, the status quo is to keep the refugees in the region bordering Syria. Again, it has often been described in academic literature how foreign aid can operate as a foreign policy tool, benefitting the interests of donor countries (Apodaca 2017, 1). These countries have an interest in combatting migration, as this is often a very sensitive political issue. This also plays into public perceptions: the donor countries are afraid of losing *their* constituency, especially as current populist rhetoric regularly relies on scapegoating 'migrants'. Because the Lebanese

state is aware of this situation, they can demand more support – recently, they have heightened the pressure by calling for resettlements to Europe (Geha and Talhouk 2018, 3). Again, this relates to both finances and public perceptions: which leads to the Lebanese state having both the interest and leverage to strengthen its position in hybrid humanitarian governance, vis-á-vis donor countries, and, effectively, aid organisations and Syrian refugees.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed why the humanitarian aid system continues in similar fashion, focusing on empowerment, by looking at three possible benefits that make up the logic of practice: finances, public perceptions and (maintaining the) political balances. Empowerment, and related terms such as stability and resilience, function as 'norms' that justify the aid system and disguise this logic of practice.

From this chapter, it can be concluded that the elites ruling the Lebanese state, as well as the donor countries, benefit from the humanitarian system – and are therefore the actors which are empowered by the humanitarian response towards Syrian refugees. Aid organisations only partly receive benefits in the form of work and financial resources; however, they are not empowered enough to truly implement an 'empowering' response. The 'beneficiaries' (those who *should* benefit) from the humanitarian response, Syrian refugees, are the ones who are empowered the least. This leads to a question of ethics: how 'humanitarian' is it to implement a humanitarian response, negotiating the empowerment of refugees, which primarily empowers those actors in power and not those supposed to be empowered?

# Conclusions

This research sought to answer the puzzle statement: '*How is the empowerment of refugees in a context of hybrid governance negotiated by aid organisations with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state in Beirut since the Syrian conflict in 2011?'* This question was formulated to gain insight into the humanitarian response towards the influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and originated from the following empirical complication: the aid organisations' aim to empower refugees, which stands in stark contrast with the Lebanese state's wish to control (and in that sense disempower) Syrian refugees to secure their future return or resettlement outside of Lebanon. Studying the negotiation of the empowerment of refugees in Lebanon is socially significant, because it contributes to a further understanding the lack of change in the humanitarian response and level of vulnerability of Syrian refugees over the past eight years.

The application of a new analytical framework, bridging the debates on hybridity, humanitarian governance and empowerment, is necessary to shed light on this empirical complication. Instead of simply assessing the effects of empowerment, this study places it within the framework of hybrid humanitarian governance to show how the negotiation of empowerment works and what it means for the positions of power of aid organisations, donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state.

This conclusion will both reflect on the findings of this research, which answer the puzzle statement, as well as on the broader implications of these findings on our understanding of hybridity, humanitarian governance and empowerment. In addition, it will present some practical considerations and suggestions for further research.

## Findings

The puzzle statement was analysed in three parts, each describing a different aspect of the negotiation of empowerment by aid organisations with donors, Syrian refugees and the Lebanese state.

Firstly, the analysis began to answer the first set of sub-questions related to hybrid governance, analysing who is involved, what roles these actors take, and what institutional relations they are in. It analysed the positions and policies of the Lebanese government and claimed that the Lebanese government should be regarded as fragmentised. This fragmentation is rooted in sectarianism, and simultaneously strengthens the sectarian system. In addition, its

policies are characterised by 'institutional ambiguity' (Stel and Nassar 2019). This relates to the fact that the Lebanese government only patches together those institutions that empower its positions in the hybrid governance framework. More importantly, it consciously does *not* form those institutions that could make the government accountable for its response and strengthen the position of Syrian refugees in Lebanese society.

Moreover, this research saw that the relations between donors, aid organisations and refugees are all based on a form of dependency between those who give (donors) and those who receive (aid organisations, and, ultimately, refugees). This dependency originates from the fact that the humanitarian aid system in Beirut is characterised by market mechanisms, hierarchical structures and networks (Barnett 2013). Market mechanisms and hierarchical structures lead to competition over funding and to decision-making from a large distance, therefore hindering coordination and the incentive to centralise Syrian refugees' interests. Only formalised networks can facilitate a more adequate humanitarian response, by improving coordination, but it remains questionable if it is not the personalised networks that cause disorganisation which prevail in Lebanon.

Therefore, the hybrid humanitarian governance structures are, due to the restrictive and ambiguous nature of the Lebanese government's positions and the negative features of the humanitarian aid system, not conducive to the empowerment of refugees.

Secondly, this research assessed the second set of sub-questions regarding hybrid governance of refugees on the basis of the four indicators of empowerment: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability and local organisational capacity (Narayan-Parker 2005). The research findings show that the current form of hybrid humanitarian governance in Beirut does not achieve the empowerment of Syrian refugees, as the programmes of aid organisations do not suffice to overcome the problems posed by the Lebanese government's positions and humanitarian aid system. Indeed, the organisations themselves are not empowered enough to empower refugees. Again, this shows the dependency of refugees and aid organisations on the Lebanese state and donors.

Relatedly, this research found that empowerment links to the ideal of long-term development instruments, which many aid organisations prefer over emergency relief. However, hybridity without coordination leads to fluidity of humanitarian institutions, which affects the sustainability of the response, making it more difficult to reach the empowerment of refugees.

Thirdly, the question was posed why the humanitarian response continues in similar fashion, when the empowerment of refugees is not being reached. In that way, it analysed who

benefits from this humanitarian response, or, who is truly empowered by it. Findings show that the elites ruling Lebanon, as well as donor organisations, benefit from the current humanitarian response and strengthen their positions of power within hybrid humanitarian governance. This is done through three possible benefits which make up the logic of practice: finances, public perceptions and maintaining the political balances. Aid organisations partly benefit from the response through financial resources and jobs but still lack the institutional capability to empower refugees. In that way, empowerment functions as a façade, which does not actually change the situation but instead is meant to preserve the status-quo of these hybrid governance structures, benefitting those in power.

The findings of this study show that this form of hybrid humanitarian governance does not achieve empowerment, because of the positions of the aid organisations, Lebanese state, donors and Syrian refugees vis-à-vis each other, and instead strengthens the position of those already in power.

## Theoretical implications

In general, this research has advanced our theoretical understanding of the strategic use of hybridity, humanitarian governance and empowerment by posing the question: 'Why does this humanitarian aid system continue?' In this way, in has shown the logic of practice (finances, public perceptions, and maintaining political balances) behind this hybrid humanitarian governance of empowerment. This empirical insight, and the findings presented above, complement existing theories of hybridity, humanitarian governance and empowerment as follows:

Firstly, this study confirmed that the lens of institutional hybrid governance supports critical investigation of the unevenness in positions in the hybrid governance structures. This was demonstrated by the limited agency of refugees and aid organisations, and the strengthened agency of the Lebanese state and donors in the hybrid governance structures. More specifically, this research went beyond the common notion of institutional bricolage which assumes actors patch together institutions (Cleaver et al. 2013), by showing how the Lebanese government made the strategic decision to only form ambiguous institutions, or, in some cases, to not arrange institutions at all. As this research was ontologically placed between the agency-structure divide, it displays the ways in which donors and the Lebanese state have more agency to shape the structures, from which they then again derive more agency.

Secondly, humanitarian governance theory informed this study's hybrid governance approach by providing an explanation for what causes the unevenness (Cleaver et al. 2013) and degree of hybridity (Mac Ginty 2010) of these structures. Indeed, market mechanisms, hierarchical structures and informal networks (Barnett 2013) lead to more competition, distance and less coordination, which causes fragmentation and unequal power relations. In turn, hybridity without coordination increases the fluidity of humanitarian institutions, which harms the sustainability of the humanitarian response.

Thirdly, this study showed how the use of the term empowerment enables this hybrid logic of practice, by justifying the continuation of the humanitarian response, allowing those in power to preserve the status quo while simultaneously disguising the role of finances, public perceptions and maintaining political balances. Moreover, this research followed Barnett's recommendation for further research (2013), by using empowerment as a benchmark to assess humanitarian governance, and by posing the following ethical question for further deliberation: how 'humanitarian' is it to implement a humanitarian response, negotiating the empowerment of refugees, which primarily empowers those actors in power and not those supposed to be empowered?

## Practical considerations

In this section, I would like to offer three practical considerations that might help think about possibilities to improve the humanitarian response.

Firstly, empowering aid organisation in their relations with donors and states, might help overcome these problems organisations face in their attempt to implement programmes aimed at realising the empowerment of refugees. In this particular case, donors could make use of the reliance of the Lebanese state on aid organisations and financial support from donors to demand more institutional clarity. In this way, they can ask for protecting the rights and inclusion of Syrian refugees. In addition, donors should try to solve problems of humanitarian governance, by changing the market mechanisms and hierarchical structures, and formalising networks.

Secondly, aid organisations could improve their dealings with the humanitarian aid system. This could be done by improving their coordination, formalising their networks, and forming one unity – which would overcome the negative features of humanitarian governance such as market mechanisms and hierarchy that hinder a well-functioning humanitarian response. This is a trend that is already happening in Beirut, for example, by means of the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum. This responsibility lies in particular with those organisations that

at the moment wage the most influence within the response in Lebanon, such as large UN agencies and international organisations.

Lastly, avoiding the use of the term empowerment by aid organisations in Lebanon would open the floor for truly assessing the situation Syrian refugees currently live in, and how their agency is limited within the hybrid humanitarian governance structures. Indeed, because of the findings described above, empowerment is a rather burdened term, and aid organisations in Lebanon doubt its value in the field.

### Further research

In relation to the limits of my research, I wish to provide three recommendations for further research.

Firstly, while the starting point of this research was to analyse urban governance specifically, this demarcation did not resonate with the geographical presence of aid organisation in both rural and urban areas. Due to the limited scope of this research, which solely focused on the perspective of aid organisations, it was therefore not possible to further investigate urban governance. However, it would still be useful to conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis between an urban setting in Lebanon and a rural/informal settlement location, to research how governance of refugees differs between the two. An interesting starting point for this recommendation would be to look at the networks in these different geographical settings, as this study confirmed that the level of formalisation of these networks does influence the quality of the humanitarian response.

Secondly, it would be necessary to further investigate the negotiation of empowerment of refugees from the perspective of the other actors involved in the humanitarian response in Lebanon to fully grasp their roles and institutional relations. More specifically, I would recommend analysis from the perspective of the blurred divide between Syrian refugees and aid workers, to see how they perceive empowerment as they would be able to assess 'both sides of the story'.

Thirdly, investigating this negotiation of empowerment in other case studies and contexts, could affirm or deny the presented logic of practice behind these hybrid governance structures. This could help to ascertain if this form of hybrid humanitarian governance is more common.

All three recommendations would help to better understand the interests of the actors involved, and their relations to each other. These understandings encourage more critical

reflections on the governance of refugees, and, hopefully, a new way to approach empowerment in practice.

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# Appendix

Observations and informal discussions

| Code | Date | Location | Organisation | Method |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| OBS_1 | 22-2-2019 | School | Insan Association | Observation analysis Informal discussion |
| OBS_2 | 26-2-2019 | Office | Insan Association + Terre des Hommes | (Participant) observation analysis |
| OBS_3 | 15-3-2019 | School | Insan Association | Observation analysis |
| OBS_4 | 22-3-2019 | School | Insan Association | Observational analysis |
| OBS_5 | 27-3-2019 | School | Insan Association + Terre des Hommes | (Participant) observation analysis |
| OBS_6 | 5-4-2019 | Hotel | Insan Association + International Rescue Committee | (Participant) observation analysis |
| INF_1 | 11-4-2019 | School | Insan Association | Informal discussions |
| INF_2 | 3-4-2019 | University | No organisation | Informal discussions |

Interviews and focus groups

| Code | Date | Organisation | Local or international | Method |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| AID_I1P1 | 12-3-2019 | Insan Association | Local | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I2P2 | 13-3-2019 | Insan Association | Local | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I3P3_4 | 14-3-2019 | Terre des Hommes | International | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I4P3_4 | 18-3-2019 | Terre des Hommes | International | Follow-up interview |
| AID_I5P5 | 19-3-2019 | Insan Association | Local | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I6P6 | 22-3-2019 | Crossing Borders Lebanon | International | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I7P7 | 25-3-2019 | No formal organisation | - | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I8P8 | 26-3-2019 | CLDH | Local | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I9P9 | 1-4-2019 | UNRWA | International | Semi-structured interview |

| AID_I10P10 | 3-4-2019 | Anonymous | International | Formal conversation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| AID_I11P11 | 5-4-2019 | Anonymous | International | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I12P12 | 12-4-2019 | ALEF | Local | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I13P13 | 12-4-2019 | Anonymous | Local | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I14P14 | 13-4-2019 | Anonymous | Local | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I15P15 | 15-4-2019 | Community centre | Local | Unstructured interview |
| AID_I16P16 | 15-4-2019 | Anonymous | Local | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I17P17_18_19 | 20-4-2019 | Insan Association + Anonymous + Anonymous | Local and international | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I18P20 | 25-4-2019 | Anonymous | Local | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I19P2 | 25-4-2019 | Insan Association | Local | Follow-up interview |
| AID_I20P21_22_23 | 2-5-2019 | Anonymous + Anonymous + Anonymous | Local and international | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I21P24 | 3-5-2019 | OCHA | International | Semi-structured interview |
| AID_I22P25_26 | 8-5-2019 | UNHCR + Anonymous | International | Semi-structured interview |
| DON_I1P1_2 | 16-5-2019 | Nuffic | International | Semi-structured interview |
| DON_I2P3 | 24-5-2019 | Anonymous | International | Semi-structured interview |
| FG_1 | 22-3-2019 | Insan Association | Local | Focus group |
| GOV_I1P1 | 2-4-2019 | Former advisor Ministry of State for Displaced Affairs | Local | Semi-structured interview |

Abbreviations

1. AID: Aid organisation
2. DON: Donor
3. FG: Focus group
4. GOV: Government official

5. INF: Informal conversation
6. OBS: Observation