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SETTING THE POLICY AGENDA:
DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN LEBANON

by
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Although Lebanon is considered a high disaster risk area, the country does not have an organized national disaster management system. To explore the status of the disaster management issue in Lebanon, the agenda-setting perspective was applied. This perspective suggests that only those issues considered a priority are placed on the government's formal agenda and have chance to be substantially resolved. This perspective also suggests that only a limited number of issues can simultaneously be placed on the formal agenda, and that certain factors promote or block the placement of the issue on the formal agenda. The agenda-setting perspective helped to answer to four research questions. First, what types of disaster risks exist within Lebanon? Second, to what extent is Lebanon prepared to face these hazards? Third, what is the agenda status of disaster management issue on the agenda of the government of Lebanon? Fourth, what factors explain the agenda status of disaster management as a policy issue in Lebanon?

To answer these questions, twenty-four interviews with the disaster management professionals and policy makers in Lebanon were conducted. Data was analyzed using the thematic analysis. The findings suggest that Lebanon is a disaster-prone country and is poorly prepared to a disaster event. The findings further suggest that disaster management issues are promoted on the agenda of the government by several domestic and international events and actors. However, due to political, ideational and economic constraints the disaster issue is "stuck" on the pseudo agenda of the government, where the issues with no intention for consideration are placed.

This research had several implications. First, it clarified the agenda-setting process in Lebanon by highlighting the factors that promote or block the issue placement on the formal agenda. Second, it suggested some general recommendations on how to avoid potential blockages. Third, it suggested alternative recommendations on how this issue might be addressed without the involvement of the government. Finally, the research identified areas of future research for agenda studies and disaster management in Lebanon.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Natural disasters affect the lives of millions of people. In the year 2011, three hundred disasters affected 206 million people, claimed the lives of 29,782 people, and caused damages that totaled US $366 billion (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction 2012). In the year 2014, annual disaster losses exceed a billion dollars, and these losses are projected to double by 2030 (Wahlström 2014). Unless action is taken, the world's vulnerability to disaster risks will continue to grow, and the consequences of disasters will hinder sustainable social and economic development.

The international community began to pay attention to the disaster issue in 1987, when the General Assembly of the United Nations declared the 1990s to be the International Decade of the Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) (United Nations General Assembly 1987). According to the IDNDR, nation governments would take action to mitigate the consequences of natural disasters. A variety of steps were to be taken, including the elaboration of strategies and guidelines related to disaster management, the dissemination of information on effective disaster prevention, mitigation and assessment, as well as reduction in the loss of life through the support of scientific and engineering endeavors.

The international community took an additional step with the adoption of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan for Action for a Safer World (Yokahama Strategy1994), which outlined the disaster management policy actions that should be taken at the international and

national levels. These actions included the progressive implementation of disaster

assessment and reduction plans, the development of the comprehensive national disaster

management plan with emphasis on disaster reduction, and the inclusion of disaster

reduction, prevention, and mitigation in socioeconomic development planning (Yokohama

Strategy 1994).

The Yokohama Strategy would eventually form the basis for the Hyogo Framework

for Action (HFA 2005), which further advocated for issues of disaster management to

become a national priority. In particular, the HFA urged states to create national platforms

for disaster risk reduction (DRR), adopt legislation related to DRR, allocate resources for the

implementation of disaster risk management policies and programs, as well as demonstrate

political will to foster disaster risk reduction at the local level.

Given that the HFA was signed by 168 states, one might conclude that disaster

management is on the policy agenda of most of the countries in the world. Uneven progress

towards the implementation of the Hyogo Framework, however, suggests that disaster

management is not of equal importance to all countries (United Nations Office for Disaster

Risk Reduction 2013a). In other words, some countries have not made the disaster issue a

domestic policy priority. While such countries may have included the disaster issue on their

policy agenda, their policy makers do not intend to take such issues seriously. Arab states,

for example, seem to have fallen in this category, as they have made little progress towards

the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. Lebanon, which signed the HFA in 2005,

reported no substantial improvement in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework since

2009 (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction 2013a).

B. Disaster Management in Lebanon

Lebanon established its commitment to making issues of disaster management a governmental priority when it became a signatory to the Hyogo Framework. Lebanon affirmed this commitment when it joined the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020 (Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment 2010). The Arab Strategy identified five key priorities for the effective implementation of the disaster risk reduction activities in the Arab region. First, the strategy envisaged strengthening the commitment for comprehensive DRR across sectors. Second, the states were advised to develop capacities to identify, assess and monitor disaster risks. Third, it was further recommended to build resilience through knowledge, advocacy, research and trainings. Fourth, certain steps had to be taken to improve accountability for disaster risk management at the subnational and local level. Finally, disaster risk reduction activities were to be integrated into emergency response, preparedness and recovery.

In the years after joining the Arab Strategy, Lebanon continued to affirm its commitment to addressing the disaster management issue, for example, by joining the Aqaba Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Cities in 2013.[1] This initiative established the commitment of its member states to set up units that would deal with disaster management at the local level, including the elaboration of urban disaster management strategies, making recommendations for the disaster legislation at the city level, allocating

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[1]At least two major projects preceded the Declaration: UNDP "Risk Profile and Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for the City of Beirut" (2011), and UNISDR World Disaster Reduction Campaign "Making Resilient Cities – My City is Getting Ready"(2012).

budget for municipal disaster management activities, and preparing risk assessment reports for their cities.

With its commitment established at the international and regional levels, Lebanon might seem to be making progress towards disaster risk reduction. The most serious initiative in disaster management at the national level, however, has been the launch of the "Support to the Office of the Prime Minister - Strengthening Disaster Risk Management Capacities in Lebanon" Project in May, 2009, done in partnership with the UNDP. The project set forth the following objectives: 1) the development of a coherent DRR strategy, and 2) the establishment of a disaster risk reduction and management unit (UNDP Lebanon 2009). The initial project document has been extended until December 2015. The draft strategy represents a step-by-step guide on how to act before, during, and after disasters. It details the responsibilities of all actors involved in the disaster management process. More importantly, it establishes a separate entity, the National Operations Center, which will coordinate disaster management efforts in the country through regional centers. Although the strategy or the National Disaster Response Plan was adopted as a reference document by all disaster concerned agencies and decision makers, it must be approved by the Council of the Ministers of the Republic of Lebanon to become official policy (UNDP Lebanon 2014).

While Lebanon has taken steps towards recognizing the importance of disaster management as an issue, there has not been any tangible progress with regard to the implementation of the HFA (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction 2013a). The country continues to lack institutional capacities and a comprehensive disaster management policy. For tangible policy change to occur *(i.e.* adoption of a National Disaster Response Plan), the disaster management issue should be considered a policy priority and be placed

on the government's policy agenda (Baumgartner et al. 2006; Birkland 2007; Kingdon 1995; Peters 2010). The placement of the disaster management issue on the governmental agenda would mean that the government may elect to take action with regard to that issue, which might result in the policy change, or in this case, in the adoption of the comprehensive national disaster management strategy.

C. The Policy Agenda

The agenda-setting perspective can provide insight into the status of disaster management as an issue on Lebanon's policy agenda. This perspective suggests that only issues placed on the agenda of the government have a chance to be substantially resolved. There are several core assumptions within the agenda-setting literature. First, to be placed on the agenda, issues must attract the attention of policy makers (Birkland 1998; Kingdon 1995). Second, there are two types of policy agendas: the formal agenda, which includes the issues that are being "actively" and "seriously" considered by the policy makers, and the pseudo agenda, which includes the issues with no serious intentions for consideration (Cobb and Elder 1983). Thus, a policy issue has a higher chance of being resolved (or addressed by government) if it is placed on the formal policy agenda, as opposed to the pseudo agenda. Third, there are certain factors or triggers that can affect the placement of the issue on the formal policy agenda (Birkland 1998; Cobb and Elder 1981; Kingdon 1995). These triggers come in a variety of forms, and work to either advance an issue onto the formal policy agenda, or alternatively, work to block the advancement of the issue onto the formal policy agenda.

This agenda-setting literature is relevant for those interested in understanding disaster management as a policy issue in Lebanon. Considering that no tangible policy changes have occurred with regard to the disaster management issue in Lebanon, it is likely that there are triggers that negatively affect the placement of this issue on the Lebanese government's formal agenda. At the same time, on-going disaster management initiatives in Lebanon suggest there are also triggers that advance the disaster management issue towards the government's formal agenda. The goal of this study is to identify these promoting and blocking factors. Doing so will have several implications. First, it will improve our understanding of the agenda-setting process in Lebanon. Second, it will clarify how the policy priorities are defined within the Lebanese policy context. Third, it will clarify how the issues can be promoted on the formal agenda, as well as how potential issue blockages can be handled.

It is important to mention that this study refrains from the detailed discussion of the disaster management system in Lebanon, responsibilities of the main disaster management actors, legislation on disaster issues, regional or international disaster management strategies, as well as the Draft National Disaster Response Plan.

D. Research Questions

In line with the agenda-setting perspective, this thesis explores why there have not been policy changes with regard to the disaster issue in Lebanon. In undertaking this exploration, this thesis is guided by four research questions.

- What types of disaster risks exist within Lebanon?

- To what extent is Lebanon prepared to face these disaster risks?

- What is the agenda status of disaster management as a policy issue in Lebanon?

- What factors affect the agenda status of disaster management as a policy issue in Lebanon?

E. Organization of Thesis

This thesis will have the following structure. The second chapter will address the literature review on the agenda-setting process. The chapter will provide the definition of the policy agenda. The chapter will also review the different types of policy agendas, and explain the issue placement and issue denial processes. The third chapter will explain the methodology used to complete this thesis. In particular, details about the unit of analysis, research sample, data collection, coding and analysis will be discussed. The chapter will also briefly outline some of the limitations present in the research. The fourth chapter, the findings chapter, will answer the research questions. The chapter will: 1) identify the disaster hazards that exist in Lebanon; 2) review Lebanon's overall level of preparedness for a disaster; 3) categorize the status of the disaster management issue on the agenda of the government of Lebanon, and 4) reveal the factors that affect the placement of the disaster management issue on the government's formal policy agenda. The fifth chapter will discuss the implications of the findings, as well as assess the applicability of the conceptual framework within Lebanese public policy context. This discussion will be followed by the conclusion and series of recommendations, which will cover two main areas. First, the recommendations will address the problem of issue promotion within the context of Lebanese public policy. Second, the recommendations will address the areas of potential research within the context of agenda-setting.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agenda studies came to the attention of the world after the publication of *The Agenda-setting Function of Mass Media*, by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. This study examined the role of the mass media in shaping the policy preferences of voters (McCombs and Shaw 1972). Their central thesis was that the media has a serious effect on the public's perception about which issues were considered important. Stated otherwise, the media appeared to shape the policy preferences of the public, and in doing so, plays a role in setting the public's agenda. Since then, media agenda-setting has been the focus of extensive research (Kiousis and McCombs 2004; McCombs and Shaw 1993; McCombs 2005; Soroka 2002; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007; Scheufele 2000; Walgrave and Aelst 2006; Walgrave, et al. 2008; Weaver, 2007).

There are other forms of agenda-setting research (Dearing and Rogers 1996). For example, the public agenda-setting literature is concerned with the importance of the set of issues on the public agenda. Alternatively, the policy agenda-setting literature examines the policy actions taken with regard to a particular issue or a distinct set of issues. These agenda-setting sub-fields are summarized by David Wasieleski (2001, p. 113), who states "[a]genda setting in politics is concerned with why a government body decides to attend to certain subjects, but not to others".

This chapter reviews the agenda-setting literature as it applies to the public policy context. In particular, the chapter will introduce the concept known as the policy agenda, the

types of policy agendas, and the theories that explain how issues are placed on the policy agenda. The chapter also explores the factors that affect whether an issue will gain access to the policy agenda. Finally, the reasons an issue might fall off the policy agenda will also be addressed.

A. The Policy Agenda

James Dearing and Everett Rogers (1996, p. 2) define an agenda as "a set of issues that are communicated in a hierarchy of importance at a point in time". Although this definition provides a general understanding of the term "agenda," it does not define the policy agenda. A more specific definition is given by John Kingdon (1995, p. 3), who defines the policy agenda as: "the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time". This definition is widely accepted by those who write about public policy (Anderson 2006; Dery 2000; Peters 2010; Princen and Rhinard 2006).

There are two types of policy agendas: the systemic agenda and the institutional agenda (Cobb and Elder 1983). The systemic agenda (also called the public agenda) includes all issues regarded as important by the political community and the public that also fall "within the legitimate jurisdiction of existing governmental authority" (Cobb and Elder 1983, p. 85). At this stage, the issue is not yet under consideration by policy makers, but its placement on the public policy agenda increases the chances it will subsequently be placed on the institutional agenda.

The institutional agenda (also called the formal agenda) includes all issues currently being actively and seriously considered by authoritative decision makers for potential resolution. The placement of an issue on the institutional agenda increases the chances for the issue to be substantially resolved. The formal agenda should also be distinguished from the pseudo agenda. As explained by Roger Cobb and Charles Elder (1983, p. 87), the pseudo agenda is "any form of registering or acknowledging a demand without explicitly considering its merit". Stated otherwise, the pseudo agenda includes the issues that are listed on the institutional agenda simply to please stakeholders or the public without any serious intention for consideration or resolution.

B. Issue Placement

Those who wish to address a policy issue must figure out how to place an issue on the formal agenda, thereby increasing the chances that governmental institutions will actually resolve the issue. Likewise, there is also a need to avoid having an issue placed on the pseudo agenda. The literature contains many insights into how an issue might be placed on the policy agenda. Before addressing these insights, however, we will first explain why issues are placed on the policy agenda.

1. Why Issues Are Placed on the Policy Agenda

There are several reasons of why issues are placed on the policy agenda. According to the literature, an issue can be placed on the policy agenda as a result of the attention that the public or the policy makers give to it. According to Anthony Downs (1972), public attention is the main driving force for the issue placement, as the "issue-attention cycle"

indicates. Downs also argues that agenda-setting is a cycle that consists of five stages. The first is the pre-problem stage, when a condition or problem exists, but the public has not yet recognized it as a problem. The second stage is that of alarmed discovery and enthusiasm, when the public acknowledges the existence of a problem and assumes that it can be resolved without considerable changes. At the third stage, the public realizes the cost involved in solving the problem, which reduces the initial wave of enthusiasm, causing a "sobering effect". During the fourth stage, public interest towards the issue declines. At the same time, there is also a surge of interest towards issues that have entered the alarmed discovery stage. In the final post-problem stage, an issue moves to "a twilight realm of lesser attention or spasmodic recurrences of interest" (Downs 1972, p. 40), where it may stay for a while, disappear, or become salient again in the future.

An issue can also be placed on the agenda if it captures the attention of policy makers (Kingdon 1995; Princen 2011). There are several ways to bring an issue to the attention of policy makers. This can be achieved after a crisis or a focusing event (Birkland 1998; Kingdon 1995). Thomas Birkland (1998, p. 54) defines a focusing event as an "event that is sudden; relatively uncommon; can be reasonably defined as harmful or revealing the possibility of potentially greater future harms; has harms that are concentrated in a particular geographical area or community of interest; and that is known to policy makers and the public simultaneously". Examples of crisis may include worsening environmental conditions (Newig 2004), or changes in a widely respected indicator (Kingdon 1995), for example, unemployment rate, or currency exchange rate. Crisis can also take the form of national mood swings, fluctuations in opinion, election results, changes in administration, or a partisan shift (John 2006). Natural or man-made disasters often fall in these categories, as

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they provoke the interest of the public and policy makers and may result in the consideration of corresponding disaster management policy changes by the government.

Attention can be captured due to the high visibility of the issue, for example, when the issue or problem is attached to an important national symbol (Cobb, Ross and Ross 1976; Peters 2010), or when attention comes in the form of protests (Oliver and Meyer 1999) or social movements (Smith et al. 2001). Some authors suggest that an issue can appear on the public policy agenda as the result of the attention that the President gives to it (Miller and Wanta 1996; Villalobos and Sirin, 2012). According to Jeffrey Cohen (1995), it is enough for the President just to mention an issue in his speech and public's attention towards that issue will heighten. This has nothing to do with the popularity of the President. Rather, it derives from the credibility and authority of the position. Other actors can also initiate an issue. For example, Congress, bureaucrats, media, interest groups, political parties and the general public are the source of agenda items (Kingdon 1995). Finally, according to the media agenda-setting literature, the more the media highlights an issue, the higher the chance it will capture the attention of policy makers (Dearing and Rogers 1996; Nelson 1984).

An issue may also be placed on the agenda, because it stems from a program that is already in existence or a problem that is already under consideration (Kingdon 1995; Peters 1994; Peters 2010). This is described by Guy Peters (2010) as a "spill-over effect". An issue might also make its way onto the agenda, if it is similar to issues that are already on the agenda. This is called analogous agenda-setting (Cobb and Elder 1983; Peters 2010). To appear on the agenda, a new issue can be deliberately attached to an issue that is already salient (Pump 2011), much like in the case where the issue of public smoking was coupled

to the issue of the air pollution. Furthermore, an issue can also appear on the agenda due to the "bias of political system", which rests on certain values (Birkland 2007; Schattschneider 1965). Stated otherwise, the political system dictates which issues can be raised and which cannot, creating the bias. However, as Birkland explains, this bias is gradually changing, allowing the placement of new issues on the policy agenda.

Among other factors that positively affect the issue placement are the gradual accumulation of knowledge (Kingdon 1995), or the emergence of new ideas (John 2006). The resources and/or technology available to resolve the issue may also push an issue onto the government's agenda (Newig 2004; Peters 2010). The issue can also make it on the agenda if it is accessible (Newig 2004), which means that the problem is clearly comprehendible not only by specialists or interest groups, but also by regular citizens. This is in line with the view of Maxwell McCombs (1999), who states that issues appear on the agenda because they are "easy", meaning they do not require any background information or specific knowledge. He also adds that an issue has a higher chance to be placed on the agenda, if it directly affects a citizen or citizen's immediate surroundings. Finally, the issue can be placed on the agenda, if it is fashionable (Stewart, Hedge and Lester, citing Hogwood and Gunn 2008), or if it is promoted through an advocacy campaign (Lineberry 1981).

2. *How Issues are Placed on the Policy Agenda*

There are several ways to describe how issues are placed on the policy agenda. One way is to focus on those who set the policy agenda (Cobb, Ross and Ross 1976; Cohen 1995; Klennijenhuis and Reitberg 1995; Miller and Wanta 1996; Peters 2010; Villalobos and Sirin 2012; Wang 2008). According to Peters (2010), policies are set by multiple actors

in various arenas (the pluralist approach), by a small group of people in power (the elitist approach), or by a bureaucratic agency or congressional committee (the state-centric approach). To Jan Kleinnijenhuis and Ewald Rietberg (1995), there are three models of agenda-setting. The first model is a bottom-up model, which reflects the idea that the public sets the agenda, which is then followed by politicians and policy makers. The second model is a top-down model, which reflects the idea that the political parties or politicians advance their agendas, deciding which issues are the most salient. The third model is a mediacracy model, when the media sets both public and political agenda.

Some authors suggest that it is possible to describe the placement of issues on the policy agenda by looking at where the issues come from. To Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976), there are three models of agenda-setting. According to the first model, the outside initiative model, issues emerge outside of the government and then reach the public and the formal agenda through a process of issue expansion. This was, for example, the case of the smoking ban in Lebanon. The issue was initiated by the interest groups outside of the government, and then reached the formal agenda through persistent advocacy campaigns. The second model, the mobilization model, suggests that the issues are initiated within the government. However, the policy change requires the mobilization of public support, and the issue is expanded to the public agenda to gain the support. This strategy is applied for issues, requiring significant financial resources, which will not be allocated without public approval. For example, the development programs in the third world countries is often expanded from the formal agenda to the public agenda to be successfully launched (Cobb, Ross and Ross, 1976). Finally, the inside initiative model, implies that the issues appear and are resolved within the government without an expansion to the public agenda. Such are, as

the Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976) indicate, the "potentially controversial defense contracts" (p. 135), which the concerned parties seek to keep as low profile as possible until the final approval by the government.

Another way to describe how issues reach the policy agenda is through the convergent voice model (Cook and Skogan 1991). This model suggests that the issue has higher chances to be placed on the policy agenda, if it is proposed by more than one source. The authors also argue that issues will only remain on the agenda if they are legitimized. There are at least four sources of legitimization: 1) the systematic documentation of the problem; 2) the media; 3) high officials of both the executive and legislative branches of government; and 4) public opinion or the opinion of particular groups within the public. The efforts deriving from these sources will keep an issue in the center of attention of policy makers, eventually leading to its substantial resolution.

Issues may also be placed on the agenda if they are in competition with other issues (Cobb, Ross and Ross 1976; Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). According to public arenas model, problems compete to enter and to remain on the public policy agenda. To be successful, problems should satisfy to a number of requirements. First, the problems should contain an element of "drama" to attract public attention. [2] Second, the problems should be able to keep the level of "drama" high by adding new details. Third, there should be links with cultural values of the society the problems are defined in. Fourth, the ruling political and economic groups of the country should consider the problems under consideration as "appealing" to their interests. Fifth, the problems should also be congruent with the organizational life of

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[2] Issues that are supported by the "vivid, emotive rhetoric" in addition to the "facts" have more chances to be placed on the policy agenda (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988).

the respective public arena. Finally, the problems should also be correctly defined (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988).

According to Falk Daviter (2007), the way the issue is framed or defined can also affect its level of attention. For instance, Elder and Cobb (1984), as well as Hilgartner and Bosk (1988), suggest that policy problems can be interpreted in multiple ways, and the interpretation that is chosen will influence the "fate" of the issue on the public policy agenda. David Rochefort and Roger Cobb (1993) go further by identifying the factors that should be considered while defining a problem. These factors include, but are not limited to, the severity of the problem, the scope of people affected, the novelty or capability of winning the attention of the public, as well as the extent of the crisis or emergency. These factors affect the definition of the issue and, hence, the placement of an issue on a public policy agenda. According to Roger Cobb and Charles Elder (1983), an issue is more likely to be placed on the agenda if it is broadly defined, affects large number of people, goes beyond the resolution of one particular issue, is not technically overloaded, and is a new and extraordinary rather than a routine issue.

Finally, timing can also influence the placement of an issue on the policy agenda. For instance, Kingdon's (1995) multiple streams model suggests that an issue should come at the correct time, specifically, when a policy "window" opens. Three independent streams flow through all political system: problems, policies and politics. These streams couple at a certain point in time, and when this happens, a "window" of opportunity opens. When such a window appears, it increases the chances that an issue will be placed on the formal policy agenda, or as Kingdon calls it the "decision agenda".

3. *Why Issues are not Placed on the Policy Agenda*

The literature also identifies the factors that serve as issue-blockers, which work to keep issues off the policy agenda. According to Cobb and Elder (1981, p. 402), certain contextual factors "serve to organize and channel the flow of people, problems, solutions, and choice opportunities". These factors, which are classified as economic, ideational, and structural, can work to prevent an issue from being placed on the policy agenda.

The first factor is the economic character of the community, which affects policy priorities (Cobb and Elder 1981). The limited economic capacities of a society can force policy makers to attend to issues that are perceived to be priorities. Typically, these issues are healthcare, social security, and defense. As a result, other non-priority issues (gender equality, racial discrimination, or environmental protection) will remain excluded from the policy agenda.

The second set of factors concerns the ideology of the community. Ideational factors include culture, knowledge, and the "climate of the times" (Cobb and Elder 1981, p. 405). Since policy problems are defined within societal settings, they can only become an issue on the policy agenda if society or policy makers perceive them to be a problem. If a condition is not regarded as a problem, it cannot be converted into an issue on the policy agenda. Stated otherwise, ideational concerns are dependent on the mentality of the society in which they are defined. The policy priorities of the community are also affected by a society's level of knowledge, which can promote issues onto the agenda or block their placement. Finally, the issue placement is dependent on the "climate of times". As explained by Cobb and Elder (1981), the political system is cyclical. It goes through the cycles of

activism and change, which are followed by cycles of consolidation and immobilization. An issue is less likely to make it on the agenda, if it is raised during the consolidation phase.

The third set of factors is structural. These include social structure, political context, and institutional structure. For example, an issue may not be placed on the agenda if a group of activists protest against its placement or supports the opposing issue (social structure), or if the political parties have opposing views (political context). Finally, the changes in the institutional structure may result in the creation of new structures with new policy priorities, often contradicting to the existing ones. These structures compete with each other for the placement of their priority issues on the policy agenda, keeping priority issues of other structures away from the policy agenda.

There are other factors that may also keep issues off the governmental agenda. According to James Anderson (2006), there can be a denial of the mere existence of the problem, where the policy makers deliberately deny or do not acknowledge that the problem exists. Another common strategy is to depict a problem as being outside of the scope of government action or as one that can be addressed through non-governmental means (Cobb and Elder 1983). An issue can also be presented as entailing serious consequences for society, or assigned to a commission for further investigation (Anderson 2006), as well as denied access to the agenda due to the lack of public support (Kingdon 1995).

Finally, the issue can be kept off the agenda due to non-decision making, as suggested by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1963). Non-decision making is "the practice of limiting the scope of actual decision making to "safe" issues by manipulating the dominant community values, myths, and political institutions and procedures" (Bachrach and Baratz 1963, p. 632). In their follow-up book, *Power & Poverty: Theory & Practice*

(1970), Bachrach and Baratz suggest that non-decision making can be expressed through a set of actions. In particular, the initiators of a policy change may be threatened by sanctions, including loss of privileges accorded before. The potential issues may be portrayed as undermining conventional core of the society, including religious settings. Groups against the policy change may also pass regulations that reinforce existing conventional settings. By doing so, these groups will hamper new issues to enter the political process and make changes.

4 . Why Issues Fall off the Policy Agenda

The placement of the issue on the policy agenda does not mean that the issue will stay there until it is substantially resolved. According to Hilgartner and Bosk (1988), issues can fall of the public policy agenda because they cannot compete with other issues. There can be different reasons for this. For instance, the issue may fall off the agenda due to the lack of "drama", which would maintain the level of interest toward the issue and keep it on the agenda (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). The public may become "bored" with the issue (Kingdon 1995), if it has been too long in the center of attention. The boredom might gradually lead to the decrease in the interest to an issue until its complete removal from the agenda. This is partially supported by the "issue-attention cycle" (Downs 1972).

Issues also fall from the agenda in accordance with the zero-sum theory (Zhu 1992). To Zhu (1992), given the limited capacities of the government to address all policy issues, an issue can only be placed on the agenda, if another issue is moved off the agenda. In other words, issues fall off the agenda, when other more salient issues are placed on the agenda. Among other reasons for the issues fall from the agenda are high implementation

costs (Downs 1972; Kingdon 1995), failure to address the issue on time, as well as the belief that the issue is being solved because of the efforts that have been made in the direction of its resolution (Kingdon 1995).

The public's level of education also affects the turnover of policy issues. This is because education can diversify the scope of public demands, dictate new issues, and thus, shorten the life span of an issue (McCombs and Zhu 1995). An issue may fall off the agenda if it was not "legitimized". This means that those promoting the issue fail to systematically document the problem, do not involve the media in the support campaign, disregard the support of high officials of both the executive and legislative branches of government, or lack the public support or the support of particular groups within the public (Cook 1981).

Finally, an issue may fall off the agenda in accordance with the divergent voice model (Cook and Skogan 1991). This model describes the gradual fall of the issue. First, a strong counter voice or the divergent voice emerges due to the involvement of counter interest groups, investigative reporting, or new research findings. This can lead to the second stage: the redefinition/reformulation of the issue. Finally, if the newly defined issue lacks the support of bureaucratic institutions, media and/or interest groups, the issue begins to "die" until it falls off the agenda.

C. Conceptual Framework

This review of the literature on agenda-setting suggests two basic assumptions about policy agendas. The first is that policy issues can only be resolved if they are placed on the formal institutional agenda. The second is that a limited number of issues can be placed on the formal agenda at any point in time. This means issues that are perceived to be

policy priorities are the only ones that will become part of the formal agenda for governmental resolution.

The literature also provides insights into how issues are placed on the formal agenda. Although the size and scope of the relevant literature is broad, the topics reviewed in the literature can be organized into a tight conceptual framework. The framework consists of three basic components: factors that promote an issue towards the agenda; factors that block an issue from the agenda; and factors that remove an issue from the agenda. Each of these components will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Table 1: Factors that Advance Issues on the Policy Agenda

ISSUE ATTENTION	
Focusing Event	Large event that draws attention
Media Effect	Repeated depiction of issue on media
National Symbol Effect	Attachment to value or object of importance to society
Active Social Conditions	Submission of petitions, movements, protests, riots, strikes
ISSUE CHARACTERISTICS	
Spill-Over Effect	Extension of an issue on agenda
Analogous Issue	Resemblance of issue to one on agenda
Complementary Issue	Attachment of new issue to one on agenda
Easy Issue	No need for specific knowledge to address
Definition	Appealing framing of the policy issue
ISSUE ORIGIN	
Inside Government	Issue is initiated inside of the government
Outside Government	Issue is initiated outside of the government
OTHER	
Resources	Professionals, infrastructure, equipment available to deal with issue
Knowledge	Technics and information available to deal with issue
Advocacy	Active promotion of issue on formal agenda
Openness	Willingness of policy-makers to consider the issue

The first element of the framework reflects the factors that positively affect the issue placement process. The more an issue is affected by these factors, or triggers, the higher its chances are to be considered a policy priority, and subsequently, to secure spot on the formal agenda. These factors, identified in Table 1, can be classified according to four main categories. The first, issue attention, is described as the ability of the issue to gain the attention through different processes or events. The second, issue characteristics, is related to the nature of the issue. The third, issue origin, is linked to the actor that pushes the issue on the agenda either from inside or outside of the government. The final category is comprised of all the other factors that play a favorable role in advancing an issue towards the agenda.

Table 2: Factors that Block Issue Placement on the Policy Agenda

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS	
Economic	Resource scarcity dictates prioritization of certain issues over others
Ideational	Mentality, knowledge and "climate of times" define policy priorities
Structural	Social, political and institutional structure define policy priorities
ISSUE CHARACTERISTICS	
Consequences	Issue is depicted as entailing negative consequences for the society
Scope	Issue is depicted as being out of the scope of the governmental action
Lack of Popularity	Issue lacks public support
NON-DECISION MAKING	
Access Denial	Issue entailing policy change is denied access
Sanctions	Initiators of an issue entailing policy change are threatened with sanctions
Regulations	Regulations to reinforce the existing policy is passed

The second component of the conceptual framework contains the factors that block an issue from the policy agenda. By hindering the issue placement process, these factors play the role of so-called "issue-blockers". These factors, identified in Table 2, can be

grouped into three categories. The first, contextual factors, represent the factors that block the placement of an issue at three levels: economic, ideational and structural. The second, issue characteristics, are those factors that keep an issue off the agenda due to the perceived or real negative characteristics. The third, non-decision making, hinders the placement of an issue by manipulating community values, and political procedures.

Table 3: Factors that Push Issues off the Policy Agenda

Selective Agenda Setting	Inability to compete with other issues
Lack of "Legitimization"	No systematic documentation, poor depiction in the media, loss of interest
Cost of Policy Change	Potential high cost of a policy change
Divergent Voice	Impact of a strong counter voice
Seeming Resolution	Perceived sufficiency of actions taken in the direction of resolution
Increased Education Level	High turnover of issues due to increased education level
"Zero-Sum" Theory	Placement of an issue on the expense of the one on the agenda

The third component of the conceptual framework, outlined in Table 3, identifies the factors that explain why issues fall off the policy agenda before they are substantively resolved. For example, an issue may fall off due to the costs that it may entail (cost of the policy change), if it is considered to be resolved (seeming resolution), or due to the emergence of a potent opposing force (divergent voice). Issues may also disappear off the agenda, if other, more salient issues, emerge (zero-sum theory).

Taken together, this conceptual framework suggests that the placement of an issue on the formal policy agenda, and the eventual substantive resolution of that issue, depends on the interaction of these three triggers. Thus, if a policy change occurred, it was because certain promoting triggers promoted it to the formal agenda and kept the issue on the formal agenda until it was resolved. In contrast, if a policy change does not occur, then certain

blocking triggers either blocked the placement of the issue onto the formal policy agenda, or pushed an issue off the policy agenda before was substantively resolved.

This study explores the agenda-setting process in Lebanon by evaluating the conceptual framework presented above. To be more precise, the applicability of the conceptual framework to Lebanon's agenda-setting process is evaluated by exploring the issue of disaster management as an illustrative case study. The DM issue is an appropriate case study, because the issue appears to be affected by the interactions of the triggers discussed above. On the one hand, there appear to be positive pressures that work to promote the issue onto the formal policy agenda. On the other hand, there also appear to be negative pressures that work to restrict the issue placement. This conceptual framework will help to identify these factors and explain how they affect the disaster management issue. More importantly, the factors identified will improve our understanding on how the agenda-setting process works in Lebanon.

D. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature related to the setting of the policy agenda. It began by exploring why and how issues are placed on the policy agenda. The main focus of this review was on the factors that promoted issues onto the policy agenda. Then, the literature review explored the factors that might prevent the placement of an issue on the policy agenda. The reasons why issues may disappear off the policy agenda prior to their resolution were also considered. Finally, this chapter summarized the literature that formed the basis for the conceptual framework used in the present research, which evaluates this conceptual framework through the investigation of the DM issue in Lebanon.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

Researchers should follow a predefined pattern to ensure that their findings are valid and will be accepted by the scientific community. This process constitutes the "procedures or techniques for gathering evidence" (Nilsen 2008, p. 82). There is no universal research method. For every study, a method should be chosen that allows the researcher "to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon or phenomena of interest" (Kelley and Maxwell 2008, p. 166). This can be done through quantitative or qualitative approaches, both of which can be applied in a research project (Bryman 2008).

This chapter explains the mixed-method approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research techniques, used in this research. Quantitative technique was used for gathering the demographic information about the interview subjects. Qualitative method was applied to gather the substantial data to answer the research questions. The unit of analysis, the research sample, the process of data collection, the sources of data, as well as coding and analysis are covered by this chapter in turn. The chapter is brought to a close with a discussion of the limitations of this thesis.

A. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis, or "the what or whom being studied", can include individuals, groups, organizations, and social artifacts (Babbie 2007, pp. 94-95). The literature suggests

that researchers shall select units of analysis that are "clearly defined and easily detectable individual or collective units: persons, households, groups, associations, movements, parties, institutions, organizations, regions, or states" (Gobo 2008, p. 208). For this thesis, the unit of analysis is the public policy agenda-setting process in Lebanon. This unit of analysis will be studied by observing, or collecting data from, a "group of individuals" that possesses knowledge about the disaster management issue in Lebanon. These individuals are professionals who work in the area of disaster management, for example, experts, consultants, and employees of the public and non-profit organizations, or policy makers involved in disaster management policy.

B. Research Sample

There are two general types of research sampling. The first is called probability sampling, which occurs when the subjects are randomly selected for participation in a study. Another technique is called non-probability sampling, which occurs when the respondents are located based on a criterion chosen by the researcher (Babbie 2007). Non-probability sampling includes haphazard or convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling of the emblematic case, snowball sampling, or telephone sampling (Gobo 2008).

This study employed purposive sampling used to study a "small subset of a larger population, in which many members are easily identified, but enumeration of them all would be nearly impossible" (Babbie 2007, p.184). Purposive sampling is also used to collect data requiring "specialized knowledge, distinct experience, or unique position" (O'Sullivan, Rassell and DeVance Telliaferro 2011, p. 98). Silverman (2010) explains that the respondents can be purposively selected from those who the research problem affects. In this

study, the respondents were selected from the group of professionals and policy makers involved in disaster management in Lebanon.

C. Data Collection

Data collection, or the process of gathering information for the research project, is a major step in every research project. Data can be collected from various sources. The information used to generate the data for this study was gathered from the following sources: documents, interviews and self-administered questionnaire. The data collection steps undertaken in this study are described below.

1. Documentary Review

According to Michael Patton (2002), documents represent an important source of information about institutions and programs, as many of the documents provide deeper understanding on things that cannot be directly observed by a researcher. For this thesis, documents related to the disaster management system in Lebanon were collected, including country situation reports on disaster management, draft legislation, SOPs of the organizations involved in disaster management, and annual progress reports prepared by the governmental bodies. These documents were used to answer research questions one and two, which investigate Lebanon's disaster profile and level of disaster preparedness.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews

The main source of data for this research came through personal interviews. According to de Leeuw (2008), the interviews should consist of questions that are

understandable and answerable, and designed to allow the researcher to gather the information needed to answer the research questions. This study employed semi-structured interviews, as opposed to structured or standardized interviews, where the questions and their sequence are fixed. The semi-structured interview process also allowed the interviewees to freely express themselves using their own words, instead of fitting their ideas into pre-defined close-ended questions.

The respondents consent to participate in interviews was confirmed by an e-mail or a phone call, and a signed form, which was presented at the start of the interview. A copy of this consent form and recruitment script can be found in Appendix One and Appendix Two. There was no time limit set for the interviews. Rather, for the purpose of the establishment of a rapport between the parties, the length of each interview was determined on the spot.

The interviews consisted of nineteen questions, grouped in six categories, which can be seen in Appendix Three. The questions explored the nature of current disaster risks and the extent to which Lebanon was prepared to face these risks. The questions also covered the roles of various disaster management actors, Lebanon's strengths and weaknesses with respect to disaster management, and the recommendations for improvement. More specifically, these questions sought to identify and explore the factors that explain the current agenda status of the disaster issue in Lebanon. Although the researcher intended to interview thirty-five professionals, theoretical saturation, or the point at which no new properties or theoretical insights are generated (Bryant and Charmaz 2007), was reached by twenty-four interviews. Approximately eighteen hours of recorded audio data was produced by the interviews, which was then transcribed, coded and analyzed.

3. Self-Administered Questionnaire

The demographic information about the respondents was generated through the use of a self-administered questionnaire, which was provided to each respondent prior to the interview. The respondents were asked to provide information about their gender, age, overall professional experience, education, concentration of last degree, title of and years in the current position, as well as the number of years in the disaster management. The copy of a questionnaire that was employed in this study is included in Appendix Four.

D. Data Coding and Analysis

Coding, or "the conceptual abstraction of data and its reintegration as theory" (Holton 2007, p. 265), was undertaken to answer the research questions. The coding was done within the thematic analysis approach which focuses on "identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The data was coded manually, using the line-by-line coding technique, which helped the researcher remain close to the data gathered and at the same prevented the researcher from importing "own motives, values and preoccupations into the codes and analytic schemes" (Gibbs 2007, p. 52). It also helped to minimize coding bias (Saldaña 2010). Once the line-by-line coding was completed, the codes were refined and rearranged conceptually, which helped to avoid duplication. The multiple re-arrangements of codes and sub-codes were further conducted: some codes were split in two or more sub-codes, while others were merged.

The coding in MaxQDA professional software followed the manual line-by-line coding. [3] For this purpose, the trial version of the software was downloaded, the transcripts uploaded in the software, and coded following the logic of the manual line-by-line coding. A total of 1,215 codes were identified during this process. The software coding revealed instances of double-coding. For example, there were segments coded as "Sectarianism" and "Confessional System", which were later determined to be conceptually the same.

Once the coding was completed, the development of the themes for the analysis was undertaken. According to Boyatzis (1998), a theme is "a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p. 161). The themes were developed in the course of clustering the codes together, and identified at both the manifest (directly observable) level, as well as latent level (underlying the phenomenon) (Boyatzis 1998). For example, the theme of "Lebanon is at current risk of disasters" was developed through the simple observation of the interview data, whereas the theme "DM issue is on the pseudo agenda of the government" developed through the careful repeated analysis of the transcripts.

The demographic information of the respondents was analyzed in terms of its average value (age, years of professional experience, experience in disaster management, and experience in the current position), as well as frequency of occurrence (gender and education).

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[3] Additional information about MaxQDA software can be found at: http://www.maxqda.com/

E. Limitations of Research

According to Brutus, Aguinis and Wassmer (2012, p. 49), the specification of a study's limitations can be "useful for understanding the importance of the weaknesses of the specific research, placing the study in context, and attributing a credibility level to it". That is why every research study should explore its own limitations. This study has three limitations. First, this study only addresses the placement of issues related to disaster management. This means the findings cannot be generalized, and more research on agenda-setting might be needed. Second, while discussing Lebanon's preparedness to a disaster event, the researcher defined "preparedness" as the overall ability to deal with the disaster event, as opposed to the distinction between the prevention, mitigation, response and preparedness. More research is needed to access the state of each component of disaster management in Lebanon. Third, the sample did not include scholars, representatives of legislative branch, media, and the citizens. Such interviews might be useful for two reasons. First, the interviews would provide additional insights into the problem of disaster management in Lebanon. Second, the interviews would further our understanding about the placement of the disaster issue on Lebanon's policy agenda, and equally important, about how Lebanon's agenda-setting process operates.

F. Conclusion

Data collection and analysis techniques described in this chapter were used to answer this study's research questions. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The main data was generated from semi-structured interviews. A total of twenty-four respondents were identified through purposive sampling and interviewed. The sample

included professionals working in disaster management in Lebanon, as well as public

officials involved in disaster management policy making. The interviews were transcribed,

analyzed using the thematic analysis method, followed by the analysis in MaxQDA

software. Other data included the demographic information about the respondents, as well as

reports and documents. The findings generated by this study are reported in the subsequent

chapters.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings generated by this study. The chapter opens with a review of the demographic backgrounds (age, gender, education level, focus of the last degree, overall work experience, work experience in disaster management) of the respondents who participated in this study. The second section will then address the first two research questions: 1) what types of disaster risks exist within Lebanon; and 2) to what extent is Lebanon prepared to face such disaster risks? The chapter will then address the third and fourth research questions: 3) what is the agenda status of disaster management as a policy issue in Lebanon; and 4) what factors affect the agenda status of disaster management as a policy issue in Lebanon? The data used to answer these questions will provide insights into the Lebanon's agenda-setting process, as well as the status of disaster management issue as it relates to the government of Lebanon's formal agenda.

A. Demographic Backgrounds of Respondents

The twenty-four respondents who participated in this study were professionals who work on disaster management issues in Lebanon. These respondents had a variety of backgrounds. In terms of education, the majority of the respondents hold a master degree (13 or 54.2% of the respondents). The remainder of the respondents have a bachelor degree (6 or 25% the respondents), a doctoral degree (4 or 16.7% of the respondents), or a technical diploma (1 or 4.1 of the respondents). Most of the degrees were earned in international

universities outside of Lebanon, namely, in France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Belgium, and Australia.

The educational focus of the respondents tended to differ according to the type of organization in which they were employed. Those employed with international organizations (9 or 37.5%) hold degrees in humanitarian assistance, hazard management, international development, migration, public health, and environmental engineering. In contrast, those employed in the public sector (10 or 41.7%) or local non-governmental organizations (5 or 20.8%) did not have any specific education in disaster management. They possessed degrees, often earned from local universities, related to architecture, electrical engineering, management, marketing, administration, and urban design.

While the average number of years in the current position is 5.7 years, the respondents had an average length of professional experience of 19.1 years. There was somewhat less experience with disaster management issues, as the respondents' average years of experience in the field of disaster management was 9.1 years. Most respondents hold decision making positions in their organizations, while others are focal points for disaster risk reduction in their organizations.

B. Lebanon's Disaster Risk Profile

The findings indicate that Lebanon is under the constant threat of disaster. Lebanon faces two general types of disasters. First, there are the natural disasters caused by the geographic location and the effects of climate change. Second, there are the man-made disasters, which are caused by political instability and gaps in the existing disaster management policy. These findings are elaborated upon in the subsequent two sections.

1. *Natural Disasters*

The interview data reveal that Lebanon is threatened by natural disasters. In addition, the data suggest the risk of disaster might be increasing. Respondent 3 (2013), an expert in disaster risk reduction with more than twenty years of experience shared his concerns:

> Cities in Lebanon, like many cities along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, have been destroyed several times in history by earthquakes and tsunamis and sometimes with fires. In addition, we have the issue of climate change, and what it entails, including more extreme weather, including droughts in some areas, including desertification and rising sea level, and so some of these are more problematic today, including flooding, earthquakes, perhaps tsunamis, climate change and what it entails as this phenomenon keeps unfolding, it will be more problematic in 10 years, and perhaps more so in 50 years.

As the quote indicates, seismic activity and the consequences of climate change are among the most prominent natural disaster threats for Lebanon (Figure 1). Indeed, the Lebanese are quite familiar with earthquakes, as reported by Respondent 18 (2013) and Respondent 19 (2013). These respondents referred to the events of 1956, when an earthquake of a 5.9 magnitude on the Richter scale destroyed about 3,000 buildings in Beirut and claimed 186 lives.[4] In Respondent 18 (2013) own words: "[w]e at the National Committee back then had just one thought: "If 5.9 produced this, what would have happened had we had 7.0? God knows". Another earthquake struck Lebanon in 1983. This earthquake had a 5.3 magnitude on Richter scale and caused a significant damage (Respondent 16, 2013). Respondent 6 (2013) stated that Lebanon has entered the "cycle of earthquakes", which means that it is likely that a large earthquake will occur in the near future.

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[4] This is the data mentioned by Respondent 18. Respondent 19 reported 128 causalities.

The respondents also mentioned tsunami, as either a secondary risk to earthquakes (Respondent 9, 2013; Respondent 16, 2013) or as a serious risk in its own right (Respondent 3-7, 2013; Respondent 11 and 12, 2013; and Respondent 17, 2013). As a representative of a city that is located along the coast, Respondent 19 (2013) expressed concern about the severity of damage that a tsunami would cause. However, since tsunamis are rare, the respondent quickly shifted the focus of the discussion to the occurrence of sea storms. To this end, the respondent mentioned that, because of its proximity to the sea, his city experiences severe storms with strong winds every ten years. These storms often destroy the city's harbor and threat its archeological sites.

Figure 1: Natural Disaster Risks in Lebanon
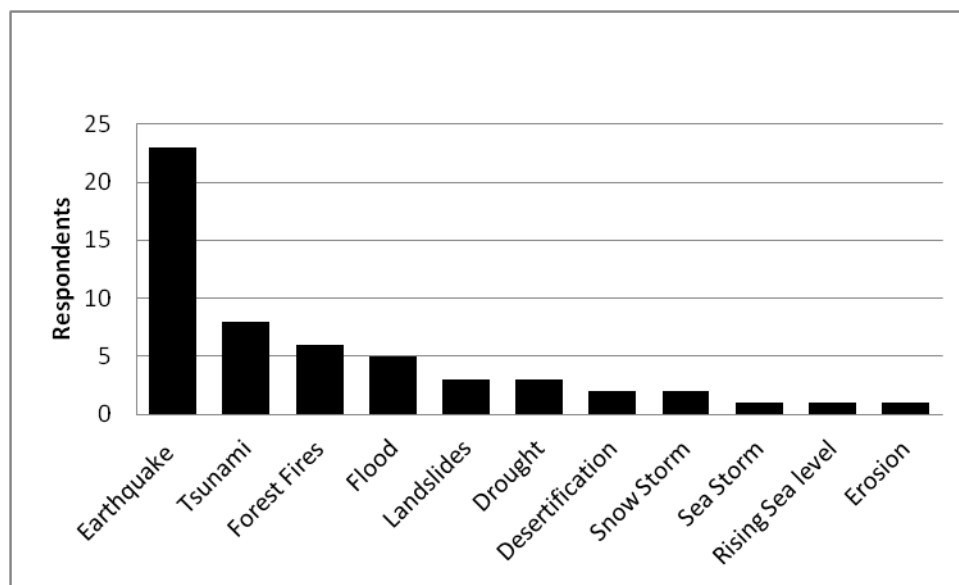
Fire was also considered a major disaster risk, as explained by Respondent 12 (2013), an expert in forest conservation and development. This Respondent described 2007

as disastrous in terms of the number of fire events. The threat to the forests and green area was so serious that the government started to fund an NGO that was developing the National Strategy for Management of Forest Fires. Although the strategy was adopted in 2009, the risk presented by forest fires is a substantial concern, as Figure 1 indicates, ranking third behind earthquakes and tsunami.

The respondents also mentioned a variety of other disaster risks, although on a much lower scale. Most often mention were floods. In particular, Respondent 12 (2013) stated that urban and riverine floods cause significant damages to infrastructure every year. Unless serious preventive measures are taken, floods will continue to threaten Lebanese communities (Respondent 4, 2013; Respondent 7; Respondent 9, 2013; Respondent 17, 2013; Respondent 21, 2013). Additional disaster risks included snowstorms (Respondent 5, 2013; Respondent 9, 2013), landslides (Respondent 7, 2013; Respondent 11, 2013; Respondent 12, 2013), droughts (Respondent 3, 2013; Respondent 20, 2013; Respondent 22, 2013), erosion (Respondent 3, 2013), desertification or loss of green area (Respondent 6, 2013; Respondent 20, 2013), rising sea levels, and extreme weather (Respondent 3, 2013). These data indicate that the Lebanese must confront a variety of natural hazards.

2. Man-Made Disasters

The interview data revealed that Lebanon is also subject to different types of man-made disasters. One of the most prominent is the threat of a war, as mentioned by the majority of respondents. According to Respondent 1 (2013), the current regional instability, as well as the war in Syria, create an environment conducive for conflict. Respondent 8 (2013) also mentioned the Israeli aggression as a threat, while to Respondent 12 (2013) and

Respondent 14 (2013), armed conflicts in general are among the constant threats for

Lebanon. Respondent 18 (2013) concisely explained the threat of war or conflict:

> The war is always there as risk. Unfortunately, we cannot dismiss the possibility of a
> civil war; we also had three wars with Israel. And as long as the Palestinian case is
> not resolved, we will always live with a threat of a new war.

As the quote suggests, the Lebanese live under the risks posed by internal and external

conflicts. Indeed, much of Lebanon's contemporary history has been shaped by conflict, or

the threat of conflict. As Table 2 indicates, however, the potential for wars or armed

conflicts is not the only man-made disaster that threatens Lebanon.

Another type of man-made disaster, which develops gradually, is related to the

refugees that have made Lebanon home. As of August 26, 2014, the number of Syrian

refugees residing in Lebanon totaled 1, 169, 846 (UNHCR, 2014). Projections about the

future are pessimistic. To Respondent 1 (2013), an expert in refugee issue with more than 25

years of experience, the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is increasing social and

political tension. When coupled with the developments in the region and the conflict in

Syria, the presence of the refugees creates new opportunities for conflict throughout

Lebanon. Other respondents mentioned the Syrian refugee influx as a threat because it might

lead to new disasters. In particular, Respondent 11 (2013) and Respondent 23 (2013)

suggested that there are disease outbreaks among Syrian refugees. Indeed, as the media

reports, there might be cases of poliomyelitis among the Syrian children residing in Lebanon

(Ham, 2014). In the opinion of Respondent 14 (2013), the crisis might encourage the influx

of terrorists to Lebanon, which might increase the potential for internal conflict.[5]

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[5] The interview was conducted in April 23, 2013. Shortly after multiple terrorist
attacks and explosions were recorded.

Figure 2: Man-Made Disaster Risks in Lebanon
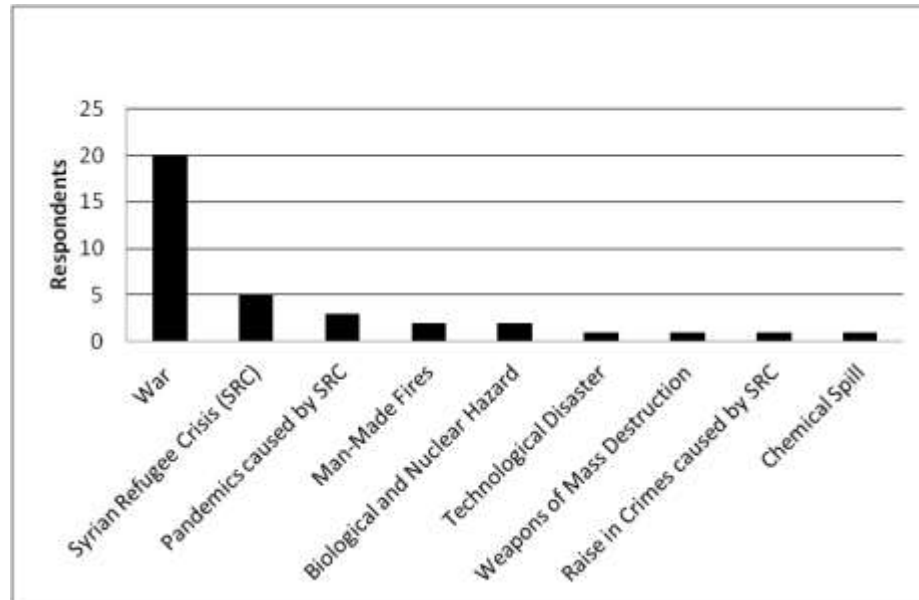
The respondents also mentioned other man-made disaster risks, which are a current

threat for the population of Lebanon. Among these risks is the threat of chemical

contamination (Respondent 9, 2013; Respondent 14, 2013) due to the hazardous substances

found in the soil and coastal water (UNEP Lebanon 2007). There are also threats related to

technological disasters (Respondent 5, 2013), nuclear and biological hazards (Respondent 9,

2013; Respondent 14, 2013), man-made fires (Respondent 4, 2013; Respondent 6, 2013), as

well as use of weapons of mass destruction (Respondent 14, 2013). This data suggest that

Lebanon has a complicated man-made disasters profile. Coupled with that of the natural

disasters, the country's disaster profile defines Lebanon as a disaster prone country. Such

profile also implies that the issue of state preparedness to the disasters should be addressed

properly through the actions at the state level. In other words, given the high disaster risk, it is reasonable to suggest that Lebanon should be prepared to confront disaster hazards. The next section explores the extent to which Lebanon is ready to confront disaster risks.

C. Lebanon's State of Disaster Preparedness

The data indicate that Lebanon is not fully prepared for a disaster event. This statement is supported by World Vision, which evaluated Lebanon's progress under the Hyogo Framework (Maalouf 2009). The study assessed the overall disaster preparedness of local governments, communities, and civil society organizations. This evaluation was done by examining the following priorities for action: governance, risk assessment monitoring and warning, knowledge and education, underlying risk factors, disaster preparedness and response, and cross-cutting issues. Of these, risk assessment, monitoring and warning received the lowest scores, and the local governments were prepared worse than the communities and the civil society organizations. Overall, the preparedness of the mentioned actors was assessed to be low due to the low level of awareness on disaster-related issues, low-priority status within the government, lack of funds, as well as lack of risk assessment activities, which would define disaster risks per communities.

A separate study addressed the prevention and the response capacities of the national government (Disaster Risk Assessment in Lebanon 2010). The study found that at the level of prevention Lebanon is not prepared for the disasters due to the various reasons. First, there is no comprehensive DRR strategy, which would form the basis for the disaster-related activities within the country. Second, there is lack of cooperation in disaster management between the public agencies, private sector and international organizations.

Third, the laws that are meant to protect against the disasters are not enforced. Finally, some

of the existing laws omit the latest developments in the area of disaster risk reduction. At the

same time, the study reported efficient disaster response at the level of individual agencies

and organizations due to the weakness in prevention at the state level, and the number of

disasters confronted in recent years (Disaster Risk Assessment in Lebanon 2010).

When asked about Lebanon's overall level of preparedness, the interview subjects

provided responses that were less than conclusive. One of the respondents stated that no one

in Lebanon is prepared for disaster events (Respondent 13, 2013). Some respondents limited

their assessment to the national government, reporting the level of preparedness to be low.

For example, Respondent 6 (2013) mentioned that the government should be prepared for

the disasters because there is at least one disaster every decade. However, due to the lack of

institutional memory, and the ineffective documentation of actions taken and lessons

learned, Lebanon remains unprepared for disasters. A similar idea was advanced by

Respondent 1 (2013) and Respondent 18 (2013). They stressed that Lebanon possesses vast

experience related to responding to disasters; however, as this experience is not documented

it cannot be used for the future reference.

Other respondents reported that the national government was poorly prepared for

disaster events. To Respondent 8 (2013), an employee of an NGO that works with

Palestinian refugees, the role of the government is limited to the payment of indemnities to

the victims, done by the High Relief Committee (HRC), whereas DM planning, budgeting,

and coordination are left unattended. Thus, in respondent's opinion, the government is

incapable of dealing with disasters. For Respondent 20 (2013), the lack of finances and

technical capacities are among the factors that contribute to Lebanon's low level of disaster

preparedness. In Respondent 22's (2013) opinion, poor preparedness is also due to the

response to frequent armed conflicts, which diverts attention from disaster planning and

prevention. Finally, the absence of a comprehensive disaster management plan (Respondent

3, 2013; Respondent 5, 2013; Respondent 6; 2013; Respondent 14, 2013; Respondent 22,

2013), and the haphazard, *ad hoc* approach to disasters (Respondent 14, 2013; Respondent

23, 2013) are among the major reasons why Lebanon is not duly prepared for disaster.

Several respondents mentioned that disaster preparedness was higher at the level of

individual public agencies and nonprofit organizations. For example, Respondent 12 (2013)

and Respondent 14 (2013) state that the Internal Security Forces, the Civil Defense and the

Lebanese Red Cross are prepared for disasters, as each of them has its own individual plan

for emergency situations. Likewise, Lebanon's health care system, with good geographical

coverage (Respondent 18, 2013), as well as on-going emergency trainings (Respondent 9,

2013) make the public health sector better prepared to respond to disaster events.

Some degree of disaster preparedness was also reported at the level of local NGOs

(Respondent 8, 2013; Respondent 12, 2013; Respondent 13, 2013; Respondent 15, 2013).

To Respondent 8 (2013), NGOs are better prepared for the disaster due to the procedural

flexibility and donor support. Respondent 13 (2013) explained the preparedness of NGOs by

the on-going cooperation with each other and continuous capacity building on disaster risk

reduction. Cooperation with international NGOs (Respondent 12, 2013), as well as narrow

specialization, enthusiasm, and years of experience (Respondent 15, 2013) account for a

NGOs' better state of preparedness as compared to other entities.

The overall low level of preparedness to disasters requires a centralized approach to

the disaster issue at the level of the government. This idea is supported by several of the

respondents (Respondent 1, 2013; Respondent 2, 2013; Respondent 3, 2013; Respondent 5, 2013; Respondent 7, 2013; Respondent 11, 2013) who see the national government as the leader in disaster management. According to these respondents, the government should set the policies and regulations, as well as improve linkages among the principal actors for efficient disaster management. Respondent 13 (2013) and Respondent 23 (2013) further suggested that unless the government embraces all the agencies under one umbrella, and ensures proper coordination, the overall preparedness will remain low. Other respondents mentioned that the level of preparedness would increase, once the Government approves the National Disaster Response Plan (Respondent 5, 2013; Respondent 6, 2013; Respondent 11, 2013; Respondent 14, 2013; Respondent 24, 2013). For this to happen, however, the disaster management issue must be on the government's formal policy agenda.

D. The Status of Disaster Management as an Issue on the Government's Agenda

This section explores whether the issue of disaster management is included on the formal agenda of the Government of Lebanon. To explore this question, the respondents were asked if they perceived disaster management to be a priority policy issue for the national government. One respondent, an expert involved in the development of the National Disaster Response Plan, mentioned that disaster management is on the agenda of the government. This respondent further described the disaster management as a priority issue, though not the top priority (Respondent 12, 2013). At the same time, the respondent mentioned that unless the government takes action and allocates resources, comprehensive disaster management will not gain the attention it requires and will "remain talks".

All other respondents reported that the disaster management issue is not a policy priority for the government. While Respondent 21 (2013), also a member of the National Disaster Response Plan Committee, did mention that the disaster issue is on the government's agenda, he noted that the committee has been working on the plan for more than two years. He also noted that the government does not seem to be interested in formally adopting the document. Indeed, the National Disaster Response Plan has recently been adopted by all the concerned agencies and organizations as a reference document. The Government of Lebanon, however, has not formally approved this document. Respondent 16 (2013) explained why he believed the national government does not take the issue of disaster management more seriously:

> Our government is a member of an international treaty, a European treaty, a treaty of the Council of Europe, on major risks. It is a solidarity treaty, not a technical treaty. So the Parliament voted for our addition since 1997. And since that time I am the permanent correspondent. Two meetings per year. Supervised by the Ministry of Foreign affairs. I have always traveled on my own expense. And nobody ever asked me about the report… So this is exactly to answer one of your questions on how much the government is interested in these things.

Other respondents supported this opinion. In particular, Respondent 2 (2013), the head of an international humanitarian mission, mentioned that the issue of disaster management has been included on the agenda of the government. However, working with public institutions he came to realize that, in reality, disaster management is not a policy priority.

Respondent 13 (2013) and Respondent 23 (2013) agreed with this conclusion. To Respondent 13 (2013), the government cannot attend to the disaster issue because it has other matters to address. Respondent 23 (2013) was more specific. This respondent, an expert from the High Relief Committee, explained that every time the government tries to prioritize disaster management, something else intervenes and diverts the government's

attention away from the disaster issue. For example, the most recent attempt to consider

disaster management was diverted by the Syrian refugee crisis. Thus, in this respondent's

opinion, disaster management is not among the government's current policy priorities.

The interview data suggest that the disaster issue is on the government's policy

agenda. However, this issue is not a policy priority. Although the reasons for this will be

discussed in the next chapter, the interview data also indicated that various factors, or

triggers, influence the status of the disaster management issue in Lebanon. The focus of this

chapter will now shift to consider these triggers, both positive and negative, in detail.

E. Triggers Affecting the Disaster Management Issue Placement on the Agenda

The data indicate that two categories of triggers influence whether the issue of

disaster management gains access to Lebanon's governmental agenda. The first category, or

the promoting triggers, work to advance such issues onto the government's formal agenda.

The second category, or the blocking triggers, work to prevent an issue from gaining access

to the institutional agenda, or assuming an issue makes it to the institutional agenda, from

moving from the institutional pseudo agenda to the formal agenda.

1. Promoting triggers

The interview data reveal that several factors work as promoting triggers, paving

the way for the issue of disaster management onto the formal agenda of the government.

These triggers can be organized into two categories. The first category is comprised of

domestic events that push the disaster issue onto the agenda from inside the country. The

second category is comprised of international events that work as issue promoters for the disaster management from outside the country.

a. Domestic Events

Various respondents indicated that domestic events had made issues of disaster management more prominent in Lebanon. These events are: the recent war with Israel (2006), Ethiopian Plane crash (2010), as well as several building collapses in Beirut (2011-2012). These events stood as reminders that the country did not have a system of disaster management, and is thus, vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters.

i. War of 2006

The War of 2006 demonstrated that Lebanon was not fully prepared for disaster events, as witnessed by two major organizations involved in the disaster management in Lebanon (Respondent 22, 2013). The first organization is the Lebanese Civil Defense. According to Respondent 21 (2013), who has substantive work experience with the agency, the Civil Defense should have at least 4,000 employees to fulfill its functions properly. However, due to the freeze in the public sector employment, the Lebanese Civil Defense lacks some 2,500 employees, and thus, can barely work within a district. During the War of 2006, the shortage in personnel, coupled with the lack of equipment, became so problematic that the agency had to involve a large number of volunteers to manage the disaster situation (Respondent 21, 2013).

The war also revealed the problems within the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Respondent 14, a military officer and participant of numerous disaster response events,

noted that the LAF's secondary mission is disaster relief operations. Due to its deployment

all over the country, the LAF is one of the first respondents to any disaster event. Thus, it is

important to make sure that LAF units are operating in unison. This became an issue during

the War of 2006, when refugees flooded the country. There was an urgent need for clear

decisions from the government about how to deal with the refugees without creating

tensions and unwanted conflicts. In the absence of a governmental body to deal with

disasters, the situation was managed haphazardly, creating chaos and disorder. In the

Respondent's opinion, at the strategic, or so-called "government" level, the Lebanese Armed

Forces are left on their own (Respondent 14, 2013).

ii. Ethiopian Plane Crash

The second domestic event that revealed problems with disaster management in

Lebanon was the Ethiopian plane crash that occurred on January 25, 2010. Ethiopian

Airlines ET409, a Boeing 737-800 on route to Addis Ababa, crashed five minutes after

takeoff and claimed the lives of all ninety passengers. One respondent described the tragedy

as "a perfect example of mismanagement" (Respondent 22, 2013). The crash revealed

several gaps and problems in the national disaster management policy of Lebanon. First of

all, due to the absence of clearly defined responsibilities, conflicts developed between the

main disaster management actors (Respondent 6, 2013). These actors delayed maritime

search and rescue operations for at least a week, even though the marine command of LAF

was ready to start immediately (Respondent 14, 2013). For the same reason, the issue of

declaring a person dead was also delayed (Respondent 6, 2013), and the relatives of the

victims were not able to get a clear account of the situation. The response operations were

described as "chaotic" (Respondent 4, 2013) due to the lack of effective coordination at the country level and the interventions that were coming from abroad.

iii. <u>Building Collapses</u>

The collapse of buildings in Lebanon has also drawn attention towards the issue of disaster management. These events were reported as disasters in their own right (Respondent 4, 2013; Respondent 14, 2013; Respondent 24, 2013), as well as secondary to earthquakes (Respondent 6, 2013). Most prominent was the collapse of the Fassouh Building in Ashrafieh, Beirut on January 15, 2012 (Moussaoui, 2012). The building, which had been in critical condition for years, collapsed and claimed the lives of at least twenty-six people.

The collapse pointed to problems of both disaster prevention and disaster response. For example, Respondent 15, a building engineer with more than 10 years of experience, explained the problems at the prevention level. To this respondent, the building collapsed for the number of reasons. First of all, there was no enforcement of technical standards at the construction stage. As the result, the construction materials were of a poor quality, which decreased the resistance of a building to a disaster event. Also, the building was rarely checked for the safety, and the check-ups were done by policy officers who lacked expertise in engineering. Furthermore, the evacuation drills that are done in many disaster-prone countries are not done in Lebanon in a consistent manner, if at all. The respondent pointed that these problems became evident after the Fassouh building collapse, and resulted in the elevated interest toward the disaster issue in the media, and possibly, in the government.

The collapse of Fassouh building also revealed problems in Lebanon's disaster response system. Respondent 24 (2013), a public official who arrived at the scene shortly

after the collapse, described the response operation as "a mess". The respondent explained

that the responding agencies on the site were not working in an organized manner. In

particular, the Lebanese Armed Forces lacked the skills needed to safely remove the victims

from the rubble. However, the experts had difficulties providing assistance, as the LAF took

over the leadership for the whole rescue operation and did not coordinate their actions with

the other responders. As a result, the rescue operation was not as efficient as it could have

been. Respondent 24 (2013) went further and suggested that, in case of an earthquake,

thousands of buildings would be destroyed. At the same time, the respondent mentioned,

that Fassouh building collapse encouraged public officials to start paying attention to the

disaster issue.

b. <u>International Events</u>

Several international events have also pushed the issue of disaster management

towards the government's agenda. These events include the earthquakes and tsunamis that

struck Indonesia (2004) and Japan (2011), the destroying earthquake of Haiti (2010), the on-

going Syrian refugee crisis, as well as Lebanon's obligation under international documents

to ensure efficient disaster management within the country.

i. <u>Earthquakes and Tsunamis</u>

In recent years, earthquakes and tsunami have made it clear that government's must

take the issue of disaster management seriously. As indicated by several respondents,

Lebanon became one of these countries. According to Respondent 5 (2013), the government

started to pay some attention to the disaster issue after the earthquake in Indonesia in 2004.

Respondent 24 (2013) mentioned that the earthquake encouraged public institutions to turn

to the disaster issue. In particular, between 2004 and 2010, dozens of meetings were held in

the Lebanese Parliament, Engineers Syndicate, and the UNDP. The purpose of these

meetings was to adopt legislation that would help Lebanon to be better prepared for

disasters. These meetings resulted in the elaboration of the Draft Law On The Anticipation

of Disasters.[6] The draft has been the subject of debate for the last three years and, if adopted,

will become the fundamental document, regulating disaster-related issues in Lebanon.

      Another respondent highlighted the impact of the Haitian and Japanese earthquake

events on the attention directed towards disaster management (Respondent 22, 2013). After

these events, the government realized that, if an earthquake strikes, the consequences can be

fatal, considering the country's small size, its high seismicity, and its disaster records. In

Respondent 22 (2013) own words: "[i]t can be a disaster and Lebanon will cease to exist".

The respondent concluded that the consequences of the disasters in Haiti and Japan, as well

as the threat of having a similar one in Lebanon, draw the attention of the government of

Lebanon to the issue of disaster management.

ii. Syrian Crisis[7]

      The Syrian crisis has also turned the government's attention towards the disaster

issue (Respondent 1, 2013). Although the government has experience with refugees, the

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[6] The draft was initially introduced by MP Pierre Gemayel in 2001.

[7] Syrian crisis has a contradicting effect on the issue of DM, serving as a positive as well as a negative trigger for the DM issue. Please see blocking triggers for more details.

Syrian crisis has become a serious challenge. First, camps have not been established for Syrian refugees, which hinders the processes of registration and monitoring (Respondent 1, 2013). Second, Lebanon's small size makes the establishment of temporary shelters difficult (Respondent 3, 2013), which is further complicated by the desire of refugees to settle in Lebanon according to confessional principles (Respondent 1, 2013). Third, refugees have been hosted within the communities that have not received sufficient levels of assistance (Respondent 1, 2013; Respondent 23, 2013). Finally, the funds that are expected to arrive from the donor organizations and countries have not yet materialized (Respondent 1, 2013).

All of these turned the Syrian crisis into a "major disaster", as described by Respondent 14 (2013). More importantly, the crisis revealed that the Government of Lebanon was not prepared to face such a disaster, due to the absence of a comprehensive plan, lack of coordination and inefficient use of financial resources (Respondent 1, 2013). It became clear that, if not managed properly, the crisis will gravely affect the entire system (Respondent 1, 2013; Respondent 5, 2013; Respondent 8, 2013, Respondent 23, 2013).

Thus, the crisis prompted the government to take urgent steps to mitigate the unwanted consequences. When asked about the impact on the Syrian crisis on the issue of disaster management, Respondent 12 (2013) mentioned that the crisis was considered as one of the disasters. As such, it "obliged" the members of the National Disaster Response Plan Committee to adopt the guidelines for the displaced, which became the integral part of the Response Plan. The inclusion of the guidelines into the Response Plan emphasized the commitment of the government of Lebanon to work toward the comprehensive disaster management approach. Stated otherwise, the Syrian refugee crisis, albeit indirectly, served

as a positive trigger for the placement of the disaster management issue on the agenda of the government of Lebanon.

iii. Lebanon as a Member of the International Community

When asked what were the main external triggers for the advancement of the disaster management issue, Respondent 10 (2013) explained that, as with all United Nations member states, Lebanon has bound itself to certain commitments, one of which is disaster management. Respondent 5 (2013) was more specific and pointed at the Millennium Development Goals, and especially the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, which brought disaster management to the attention of the Government of Lebanon:

> [Y]ou have the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction made in 1990s, where it was established that preparedness saves more lives, than response, and this is the challenge that all countries in the world are taking, and we want to jump on the bandwagon, we want to show that we are following the international standards, we want to show that we are progressing.

To Respondent 22 (2013), the government was obligated to become serious about the disaster management issue after it signed the Hyogo Framework. Respondent 17 (2013) and Respondent 11 (2013) also mentioned that their ministries started to focus on the disaster management issue after Lebanon signed the Hyogo Framework. According to these respondents, commitments undertaken by the Hyogo Framework obliged the government to start paying attention to the DM issue and take corresponding steps to comply with the international requirements.

Documentary data supported this conclusion. For example, one of the Hyogo Framework priorities for action urges the states to make disaster risk reduction a national

and local priority by, among others, encouraging community participation in DRR activities. According to the *Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action: Summary of Reports 2007-2013*, the government of Lebanon was successful in promoting the "Making Cities Resilient" campaign within the country, which resulted in the official involvement of some 257 municipalities in disaster risk reduction activities (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction 2013b). This example demonstrates that the government of Lebanon is taking certain steps towards implementation of the country's obligation in DRR. In other words, the fact that Lebanon is a member of international community positively affects the status of disaster management issue on the agenda of the government of Lebanon.

2. Blocking triggers

This research suggests that several blocking triggers block the placement of the disaster management issue on Lebanon's formal policy agenda. These blocking triggers can be organized in four categories: political concerns, economic concerns, ideational concerns, and the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis. The subsequent discussion addresses how these concerns keep issue of the disaster management off the government's formal agenda.

a. Political Concerns

There are political obstacles (concerns) that inhibit the advancement of the disaster management issue towards the formal agenda. These obstacles include Lebanon's confessional system and its unstable government. The Taif Accord (1989), which ended the civil war, established certain rules based upon religious affiliation for high-level political posts. In particular, the post of the President is reserved for a Maronite Christian, the Prime

Minister position is reserved for a Sunni Muslim and the position of the Speaker of the Parliament is reserved for a Shi'a Muslim. This confessional approach is not restricted solely to these positions. According to Respondent 3 (2013), the Taif Accord increased the politics of patronage and sectarianism (confessionalism) in Lebanon, which has spread to all levels and sectors of the government. Inevitably, patronage and sectarianism also affect the agenda-setting process as a compromise between political forces, making it more challenging and complicated.

Within this political structure, the issue of disaster management can become problematic. Respondent 24 (2013), a public official involved in the elaboration of the disaster management legislation, suggested that the issue of disaster management is complex, and can be described as a "Sunnite-Maronite" political issue. This is due to the fact that the two government bodies related to this issue are the High Relief Commission and the Ministry of Defense (LAF), which are Sunnite and Maronite structures respectively. These structures have different disaster management mandates. The LAF are among the first responders to a disaster event. They provide the instant non-monetarily response through the active rescue operations at the disaster scene.

In contrast, the HRC is never involved in on-site activities, limiting itself to the payment of compensation for the damages caused by the disasters. However, both of structures want to have an upper hand in disaster management, which creates conflict of interests. The conflict is further aggravated when the establishment of a centralized body is discussed. Respondent 24 (2013) mentioned that the religious background of the individual that would head this body might provoke unwanted tensions, because the representatives of

the other confessional group might oppose the new appointee. Therefore, in his opinion, disaster management issue is kept off the formal agenda to avoid such clashes.

The political situation in Lebanon causes the government to suffer from instabilities. When asked about the status of disaster management as a governmental agenda item, one of the respondents stated that there was no government in Lebanon, and thus, the question was irrelevant. The absence of the national government was also a serious concern for Respondent 12 (2013), who mentioned:

> But how can they take decisions, if there is no government. This is the main challenge. Now we do not have a Cabinet. We just need one decision. And if you do not have the Cabinet, you will not have the decision.

This quote indicates that the status of the disaster management issue on the agenda of the government is affected by the nature of the government itself. Lebanon's government can be described as unstable. There are periods where the country does not have a formal cabinet. For instance, Prime Minister Najib Mikati took five months to form a Cabinet in 2011, which operated until he officially resigned in March of 2013. The new Prime Minster, Tamam Salam, who officially took the post in April 6, 2013, announced a new Cabinet on February 15, 2014. Likewise, there are no guarantees that the new cabinet will follow-up on the issues that were being addressed by old cabinet. Whether disaster management becomes part of the new governmental agenda remains unclear, as suggested by Respondent 6 (2013):

> There is always a change in policy when there is a new prime-minister, there is a new direction, a new vision, so it is hard to keep track on all of that…Well, it is definitely not the first part of the governmental agenda, like education, like gender equality.

The fact that PM Mikati began to pay attention to disaster management, which resulted in the joint project with UNDP to elaborate National Disaster Response plan, does not

guarantee the inclusion of the disaster management issue on the formal agenda of the new

government. While political factors play an important role in blocking the placement of the

disaster management issue on the agenda, they are not the only factors that affect this issue.

The placement of the disaster management issue on the agenda of the government of

Lebanon is also affected by economic constraints.

b. <u>Economic Concerns</u>

The placement of the disaster management issue on the formal agenda of the

government of Lebanon is hindered by economic concerns. As explained by Respondent 6

(2013), Lebanon has suffered financial problems since 2005. Attention to disaster

management issue might lead to the adoption and further implementation of the National

Disaster Response Plan, which is a costly undertaking. At the same time, the state budget of

Lebanon does not include a separate line for the disaster management in general

(Respondent 3, 2013), or disaster prevention (Respondent 22, 2013) in particular. This

means, that investing in disaster management would imply cutting funds from other projects,

and this is something that "no one is really ready to do" (Respondent 17, 2013).

Besides, several respondents mentioned that even if the government has the money,

they are not likely to be channeled toward disaster management due to other policy priorities

(Respondent 6, 2013; Respondent 18, 2013; Respondent 22, 2013). For example,

Respondent 18 (2013) explains that money is needed for everything, National Disaster

Response Plan included. The Government, however, is not eager to allocate money "for

things that may or may not happen". Respondent 6 (2013) was more specific. To this

respondent, the funds that Lebanon may generate from oil and gas deposits are not likely to affect expansion of the disaster management issue on the agenda due to other concerns, the major one being the Army. Given the current budget deficit, the non-priority status of the issue of disaster management, as well as high implementation costs of the National Disaster Response Plan, the issue of disaster management might not be included on the formal agenda of the government of Lebanon any time soon.

c. Syrian Crisis

Another negative trigger that prevents the advancement of the DM issue is the impacts caused by the current Syrian crisis. Like other Middle Eastern countries, Lebanon is affected by developments in the region, the most overwhelming of them being the Syrian refugee crisis. The escalation of the political situation in Syria and the subsequent crisis, has caused hundreds of thousands of Syrians to seek refuge in neighboring countries. Most of them have moved to Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey (UNHCR 2014).

The attitude of Lebanon's government towards this crisis has changed over time. As witnessed by Respondent 1 (2013), an expert on refugee issues with almost two decades of experience, the first reaction of the Government was to ignore the problem. This was because the initial number of refugees was relatively low. It was believed that the problem would resolve itself in a couple of weeks. The government, however, had to acknowledge the problem when the number of refugees registered with the United Nations exceeded one hundred and fifty thousand. One of the problems was that the refugees went to certain locations based upon their religious affiliations and were reluctant to go elsewhere. As a result, many refugees stayed in the poorest parts of Lebanon, which traditionally had the

lowest access to services. This put additional pressure on communities, and the government (Respondent 1, 2013; Respondent 6, 2013; Respondent 10, 2013).

According to Respondent 10 (2013), the scale of the crisis is, "beyond any institution or government". More importantly, as the crisis has expanded, it has become a top priority for the government (Respondent 5, 2013; Respondent 23, 2013). Even though the crisis is considered a disaster (Respondent 1, 2013; Respondent 12, 2013), it has not caused the government to consider the disaster management issue to be a policy priority. On the contrary, as a current priority, the crisis seems to have diverted attention from many other important policy issues, disaster management issue included.

When asked about the status of the disaster management on the agenda of the government, Respondent 5 (2013) was explicit: "[i]t is not a priority at the moment. That is the issue. It is not a priority. Until I think this refugee crisis is resolved, it will not be a priority. Let's not dream. To be honest". The majority of the respondents shared this opinion. As long as the crisis remains a serious problem, a number of other issues, including disaster management, will have uncertain status on the governmental agenda.

d. <u>Ideational Concerns</u>

Another obstacle that prevents the advancement of the issue of disaster management resides within the historical experience of the Lebanese people. Respondent 9 (2013) mentioned that since Lebanon has experienced multiple emergencies during the last forty-five years, the people have developed a casual attitude towards disasters. Indeed, many people think that they know what to do when a disaster strikes. The same idea is supported by Respondent 18 (2013), who explained that this attitude is a combination of life

experience and intellectual capabilities, meaning that people act instinctively based on their past experiences. Another motivating factor is the constant "state of emergency", or the non-stop string of pre-war, war, post-war situations, that does not allow the government to think about the potential for disasters or the need to get ready to face such disasters (Respondent 22, 2013).

The government's ideational perspective that there is not a need to take action also blocks the placement of the disaster issue on the policy agenda. Respondent 15 (2013) shared his experience attempting to convince the government that measures should be taken to prevent building collapses. He helped to organize a conference, which provoked negative reactions from government agencies. In particular, public officials could not understand the purpose of the conference, especially because there had not been a building collapse. The same idea was advanced by Respondent 16 (2013), who referred to a conversation he had with a public official after an earthquake in 1983. The Respondent stated that the first question he was asked was how often earthquakes happened and when the next would be expected. The respondent replied that earthquakes usually occur once every 50 years. The official then immediately lost interest, and explained that since earthquake would not happen during his time in office, he was no longer worried about earthquakes.

F. Conclusion

The findings indicate that Lebanon is threatened by a variety of natural and man-made disasters. Most prominent disaster risks include earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, forest fires, snowstorms, as well as wars, armed conflicts and events of aggression. It is not clear whether Lebanon is prepared for such events, however. While some agencies and

organizations have a certain degree of preparedness, the majority of the respondents indicated that Lebanon's level of preparedness is low. This can be explained by the status of disaster management on the government's agenda, which is not currently a priority. Two types of factors appear to affect the issue. The promoting factors push the issue on the formal agenda, and are represented by domestic events and international events such as the War of 2006, the Ethiopian plane crash, and building collapses. Likewise, disaster events across the globe, like the Syrian crisis and Lebanon's commitment to the international treaties have worked to place the disaster management issue on Lebanon's agenda. Alternatively, there are also blocking factors, which push disaster management away from the agenda. These factors include political concerns (sectarianism and the unstable government), economic concerns (scarcity of resources), impact of the Syrian crisis, and ideational concerns (casual attitude to disasters). The implications of these findings will be addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chapter considers the implications of the findings generated by this research. The first section presents the conclusion of the four research questions addressed in this study. The first subsection discusses the findings for the research question about the current state of disaster threats in Lebanon. The conventional wisdom that Lebanon is a disaster prone country is supported. The second research question, which considers Lebanon's level of preparedness for disaster events, is addressed in the second subsection. The preparedness of Lebanon is discussed at two levels: the level of the national government and the level of individual organizations. The conclusion is that Lebanon remains unprepared for a disaster event. The third subsection discusses the findings for the research question on the status of the issue of disaster management as it relates to the Government of Lebanon's policy agenda. The argument is that such issue has been placed on the pseudo agenda, not the formal agenda (Cobb and Elder, 1983).The fourth subsection identifies the factors that affect the status of disaster management with respect to Lebanon's formal and pseudo policy agendas.

The second section tests the applicability of the conceptual framework to the public policy in Lebanon. The conclusion about the partial applicability and the need for additional research is made. The final two sections outline general policy and research recommendations. The policy recommendations suggest how the issue of disaster management might be advanced towards Lebanon's formal agenda. The research

recommendations present future areas of consideration, which may improve our understanding of Lebanon's agenda-setting processes and the position of the DM issue herein.

A. Discussion of Conclusions

This section will discuss the implications of the findings as related to the research questions central to this study. In particular, this section will address the disaster profile of Lebanon. Then, the conclusions on the capacities of Lebanon to confront disaster event will be presented, followed by the status of disaster management issue on the agenda of the Lebanese government. Finally, the factors that account for the current status of disaster management issue on the agenda will be presented.

1. *Lebanon is a Disaster Prone Country*

Lebanon is prone to natural and man-made disasters. The data indicate that Lebanon's natural disasters fall into two main categories: rare disaster events and recurrent disaster events. The first category of disaster events appears to be linked to the geographical location of Lebanon, or more precisely, to the seismicity of the country. This means that the country faces risks related to earthquakes and tsunami. Although rare, these disaster events represent the most prominent threat for those who live in Lebanon. The second category includes disasters that strike Lebanon annually, like snowstorms, floods, erosions, fires, deforestation, as well as extreme weather and rising sea levels. These disasters are likely linked to climate change, and present a growing concern, "as this phenomenon keeps unfolding" (Respondent 3, 2013).

Lebanon is also exposed to numerous man-made disasters. These disasters can also be grouped in two categories: those connected to regional instability and the historical experiences of the country, and those connected to the gaps in existing disaster management policy. The first category includes the potential for war, conflict, aggressions, as well as the influx of Syrian refugees and its consequences. The second category includes the disaster threats that exist due to the failure of the government to take the policy steps that are necessary to mitigate and prevent disasters. As some respondents indicated, there is a threat of a chemical contamination, as well as biological, nuclear and chemical hazards (Respondent 9, 2013; Respondent 14, 2013).

Lebanon's disaster profile suggests that Lebanon needs to have a sound disaster management system, which would enable the country to assess, prevent, and mitigate disaster hazards, as well as manage the consequences of disasters. However, the potential of Lebanon's capacity to confront disaster events requires significant improvement.

2. *Lebanon Remains Unprepared for Major Disaster Events*

This study also concludes that Lebanon remains largely unprepared for major disaster events. The research revealed that the national government suffers from several constraints. These constraints can be grouped in the following categories: administrative problems (lack of planning, budgeting and documentation of the response actions and lessons learned), problems in response (lack of coordination and clear leadership), policy problems (lack of a comprehensive National Disaster Response Plan), and other problems (inability to focus on disaster preparedness due to other on-going problems in the country). These constraints inhibit the government of Lebanon from developing the capacities needed

to deal with disaster events. Consequently, the government's low level of preparedness leads to a decrease in the Lebanon's overall level of disaster preparedness (Respondent 23, 2013).

The problems of disaster preparedness can be resolved through policy change. This means that a policy document, which specifies all aspects of disaster management, should be adopted. The document would serve to two major purposes. First, it would clarify the mandates of the disaster management agencies, reducing redundancy and the duplication of work. Second, it would establish a centralized disaster management body, which would ensure coordination before, during, and after a disaster occurs. Such document, however, is not likely to be adopted unless disaster management issue is placed on the government's formal agenda.

3. *Disaster Management Issue is on the Lebanese Government's Pseudo Agenda*

As the agenda-setting perspective suggests, the non-priority agenda items are placed on the pseudo agenda, with no intention to be substantially resolved (Cobb and Elder, 1983). Due to their non-priority status, the disaster issue is situated on the Lebanese government's pseudo agenda. This conclusion is supported by several respondents. These respondents mentioned that although included on the agenda of the government, disaster management issue is clearly not among the policy priorities of the Government. The non-priority status of the disaster management issue is also supported by the vague status of the National Disaster Response Plan. The Plan, which was elaborated by a special committee, has recently been approved as a reference document for the disaster management actors and policy makers. However, the plan has yet to be formally adopted by the government. This means that the disaster issue seems to be important enough for the government to consider,

but not to be important enough to try to resolve the problem through the adoption of national legislation or a policy-level document. Since the disaster management issue is not a governmental priority, it is safe to conclude that this issue is, at best, on the government's institutional pseudo agenda.

4. *Triggers Affecting the Agenda Status of Disaster Management Issue in Lebanon*

The fact that the disaster management issue is situated on the institutional pseudo agenda suggests that there are factors that have kept the issue off the government's formal agenda. This study identified two categories of triggers related to the issue of disaster management: promoting triggers and blocking triggers. In accordance with the agenda-setting model, the promoting triggers advance issues towards the formal agenda. In contrast, the blocking triggers work to keep issues off the formal agenda.

a. Promoting triggers

Promoting triggers can take a variety of forms in Lebanon. For example, several focusing events have attracted the government's attention towards the disaster management issue. These events have been domestic in origin (the War of 2006, Ethiopian plane crash, and building collapses), regional in origin (Syrian refugee crisis), and international in origin (tsunamis and earthquakes in Japan and Indonesia, as well as the earthquake in Haiti). In addition, the disaster management issue has been given additional attention due to Lebanon's obligation, vis-à-vis the international community, to prioritize disaster management. Both the focusing events and the external pressures have worked to promote the placement of the disaster management issue on Lebanon's formal agenda. However, the

fact that the national strategy has yet to be adopted implies that there are forces that keep

disaster management issue off the formal agenda.

b. Blocking triggers

There are several triggers that block the placement of the disaster management

issue on the Lebanese government's formal agenda. The first negative trigger is resource

scarcity. In the absence of financial means, the Lebanese government must prioritize the

issues that are to be included on the agenda, favoring current "visible" problems over

potential ones. Disasters that may, or may not happen are not the primary focus of the

government (Respondent 16, 2013; Respondent 18, 2013), as it has to deal with "tangible"

issues like the Syrian refugee crisis.

The second negative trigger, ideational constraints, is presented as culture,

knowledge, and the "climate of times" (Cobb and Elder 1981). In Lebanon, the cultural

dimension of the ideational constraint was identified as the reactive Lebanese mentality. Due

to repeated exposure to disasters, those who live in Lebanon appear to have developed a

casual attitude towards disasters. They only start acting after the disaster strikes (Respondent

7, 2013). This attitude towards disasters also affects the government and keeps the disaster

issue off the formal agenda (Respondent 15, 2013; Respondent 16, 2013).

The third negative trigger, structural constraints (social structure, political context, or

institutional structure), were identified in two forms in Lebanon. One is coupled with the

ideational constraint, reflecting the core setting of the Lebanese political system, which is

based on sectarianism. The sectarian system cannot be separated from politics in Lebanon.

In this case, a hybrid negative trigger is formed, as a combination of the ideational (religion

as a part of culture) and structural (politics) constraints. This hybrid constraint inhibits the disaster management issue from being considered, because the two main structures concerned belong to different religious sects, provoking constant clash of interest. Policy makers must choose either to have a new conflict over the disaster management issue, or to postpone its resolution until better times. Considering Lebanon's complex political setting, which is about balancing different sectarian interests, it seems unlikely that the disaster management issue will be placed on the formal agenda of the government of Lebanon in the foreseeable future.

Another negative trigger is the unstable nature of the Lebanese government. Every time the Prime Minster is changed, a new agenda is developed for consideration, with no follow-up on the status of issues from the previous agenda (Respondent 6, 2013). The disaster management issue, which was on the agenda of the Mikati Government, does not seem to be included on the agenda of the new government, even though the issue remains unresolved. It appeared that once again, the new government has decided to focus on other issues.[8]

Finally, the Syrian refugee crisis has an impact on the placement of the disaster management issue on Lebanon's policy agenda. On the one hand, this crisis draws the government's attention towards man-made disasters, and seems to contribute to the placement of the disaster management on the policy agenda (Respondent 1, 2013). At the same time, the scope of the Syrian crisis is such that the Government is not able to concentrate on disaster management as a separate and distinct agenda issue. In addition, the

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[8] The Government of PM Tamam Salam has been announced on February 15, 2014. The National Response Plan has not been signed yet.

government is not able to take steps to develop and adopt a comprehensive disaster management plan, because it must respond to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis. In this case, the refugee crisis appears to work as a negative trigger (Respondent 5, 2013). So, as the crisis unfolds, its impact on disaster management as an agenda item also continues, keeping the issue in limbo, neither fully on, nor fully off, the government's agenda.

The conclusions presented so far covered several aspects of agenda-setting. These conclusions, however, do not allow us to understand whether the agenda-setting process in Lebanon reflects the theoretical predictions contained in the literature. To clarify whether the agenda of the Government of Lebanon is set according to the literature on the subject, research data will be compared to the conceptual framework.

B. Applicability of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework consists of three basic components. These components are: factors that promote the issue on the policy agenda; factors that block the issue placement on the policy agenda, and factors that push issues off the policy agenda. The interactions of these factors define the process of agenda-setting within the public policy context.

Both issue promoting and issue blocking factors seem to affect the agenda-setting process in Lebanon. Among the promoting factors, two factors appear to play a crucial role for the issue placement: the international pressure, as well as the ability to gain the attention of the local policy makers. Coupled together, they increase the chances of the issue to secure a place on the agenda of the government of Lebanon.

At the same time, the issue placement is complicated by the contextual blocking factors, which hinder issue placement at three levels: economic, ideational and structural. In other words, issues requiring significant investments might not be considered by the Government of Lebanon due to the lack of public funds. Besides, issues posing a serious, albeit potential danger for the society (disaster management), might lose in the issue competition process to the issues posing visible and on-going concern, as the ideational constraint suggests. Such is the case with the on-going Syrian crisis.

Added to this are structural constraints, which were identified in two forms. The first form is merged with the ideational constraint (the religious diversity of the Lebanese society) and linked to the confessional politics of Lebanon. This means that the issues endangering compromise among the principal political-religious parties have little, if any, chances to be placed on the agenda. The second form is linked to the failure of the government of Lebanon to be "agenda-consistent" in case of the changes in the Cabinet. In other words, if the issue is not resolved by the government, which included it on the agenda, there is no guarantee that the issue will secure a spot on the agenda of the subsequent government.

Both promoting and blocking factors provide insights on how the agenda of the Lebanese government is being set. Issue advocates and policy entrepreneurs might take these factors into account while promoting policy issues on the agenda. At the same time, even if the issue is on the agenda, there might still be factors that push the issue off the agenda, as the conceptual framework suggests.

Among these reasons are selective agenda-setting, lack of "legitimization", cost of policy change, divergent voice, seeming resolution, increased education level, as well as

"zero-sum" theory. None of these factors was found to be relevant for the Lebanese context so far due to the nature of the case study selected. In particular, given the fact that the disaster management issue is not on the formal agenda of the government of Lebanon to majority of the respondents, the discussion of the factors that might push it off the formal agenda becomes irrelevant.

Despite these limitations, the agenda-setting perspective was found to be relevant to the Lebanese public policy, since it does shed light on the process of the government agenda-setting in Lebanon. In line with the literature on the subject, the study found promoting and blocking factors, that help to explain the agenda-setting process in Lebanon. That being said, the applicability of factors that move issues off the agenda was not assessed. This was mainly due to the fact that the disaster management issue, which is at the core of this research, was found to be placed on the pseudo agenda of the government. Clearly, more research is needed to evaluate the applicability of the discussed components in the Lebanese public policy context. This can be done in two ways. First, other issues could be chosen as case studies and tested against the conceptual framework. Second, the issue of disaster management could be placed on the formal agenda, and tested against the third component of the framework. Since the disaster management issue is the one under consideration in this research, we now turn our discussion to the policy recommendations on how to move this issue to the formal agenda of the government of Lebanon.

C. Policy Recommendations

This study concludes that two types of triggers affect the issue of disaster management in Lebanon. These triggers cause the disaster management issue to be stuck on

the government's pseudo agenda, where non-priority agenda issues are placed. Thus, the movement of the disaster management issue from the pseudo agenda of the government to the formal one constitutes a true challenge, which could be addressed through a number of recommendations discussed in the next sections.

1. *Promote the Disaster Management Issue Through Increased Awareness*

It is possible to move an issue from the public agenda to the formal agenda (Pralle, 2009). To do so, however, the issue should already be on the public agenda. For disaster management to become an issue on Lebanon's public agenda, the public should be made more aware of the disaster issue. Indeed, several respondents mentioned ignorance and the lack of awareness as reasons why the issue cannot be promoted to the formal agenda (Respondent 5, 2013; Respondent 9, 2013; Respondent 15, 2013; Respondent 21, 2013). The logic behind raising the public's awareness about the disaster issue is simple. If the public becomes aware of disaster threats, it may take an interest in the disaster issue and demand government action. The elevated interest from the society, as well as the citizens' demands for a well-conceived disaster management system, may serve as a positive trigger that would enable the disaster management issue to be moved to the formal agenda.

If the citizens were more aware of existing disaster risks, they might demand risk assessments, and additional protection from the government (Respondent 4, 2013). The majority of the respondents mentioned that NGOs and local governments could conduct such campaigns because of their proximity to the public. NGOs could undertake awareness campaigns in their fields of expertise, with the involvement of the corresponding ministry and government officials (Respondent 6, 2013). Some NGOs could take the roles of disaster

management "watchdogs", similar to that of Greenpeace in environmental issues, and raise

awareness on disaster threats that exist in different regions of the country (Respondent 19,

2013). Municipalities could also play an active role in raising awareness (Respondent 17,

2013), as well as advising the national government on potential disaster scenarios

(Respondent 2, 2013). Finally, citizens must increase their own awareness about the disaster

issue (Respondent 4, 2013; Respondent 6, 2013). When asked whether the citizens are

capable of initiating any policy changes in Lebanon, Respondent 22 (2013) referred to the

Arab Spring, and stated that if the people go out in the streets and know what they want,

they will get it. This is the case of Lebanon, because: "it is a democracy, after all."

2. *Establish a National Platform on Disaster Management*

The disaster management issue might also be promoted to the formal agenda by

merging the activities of civil society organizations, private organizations, and international

organizations into a comprehensive advocacy initiative. This leads us to the idea of a

national platform on disaster management, which is described as "a nationally owned and

led forum or committee of multi-stakeholders" (United Nations International Strategy for

Disaster Risk Reduction 2007). The National Platform would create a dialogue between the

main disaster management actors and stakeholders, and help promote the inclusion of the

disaster management into development programs in accordance with the Hyogo Framework

for Action. The goal of such a platform would be to contribute to the establishment of a

national disaster management system, which would start with the adoption of a

comprehensive national strategy on disaster management.

The platform could be built on existing disaster management structures, which would include line ministries, disaster management authorities, scientific and academic community, NGOs, the National Society of the Red Cross or Red Crescent, the private sector, and other sectors closely related to disaster management. When necessary, United Nations agencies could also be invited to participate (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2007). This platform would advocate for the adoption of the National Disaster Response Plan.

Lebanon already has the capacities to establish such a platform. There are ministries that are directly involved in disaster management activities, there is a body that has specific disaster management responsibilities, and there is a scientific and academic community that is open for disaster management cooperation. There are also several domestic and international nongovernmental organizations that are already involved in disaster management activities throughout Lebanon. A National Platform would bring these actors together for an open dialogue and enable them to exert pressure that may be enough to place the disaster management issue on the government's formal agenda.

3. *Develop Academic Curricula for Disaster Management*

At present, there are almost no disaster management courses offered by Lebanese academic institutions. Even the basic disciplines, like geology and geophysics, which are crucial for the disaster studies, are taught only at the American University of Beirut (Disaster Risk Assessment in Lebanon 2010). Therefore, there is a need to expand the number of undergraduate and graduate programs that offer courses related to the study of disaster management. A variety of courses could be included in the academic curricula,

including disaster risk reduction and resilience, emergency and crisis management, crisis planning, and hazard risk mitigation.

The above-mentioned courses may focus on three major directions of disaster management. The first direction would include academic courses for future researchers working on the disaster issue. Primary focus of these courses would be the theoretical and practical aspects of the disaster issue in Lebanon. The second direction of courses will target those who wish to work on the technical aspects of disaster management. Courses that relate to this direction might include disaster risk reduction and mitigation, emergency and relief, or post-disaster response and recovery. The third direction of courses would include courses for future policy makers with the focus on disaster management. Passing these courses would allow the graduates to be involved in the expert groups or committees, which develop policy documents or draft laws related to the disaster issue in Lebanon. More importantly, due to the immediate involvement in the policymaking processes, those who choose the third direction of courses may be the most effective in advancing the disaster management issue onto the government's formal agenda.

4. *Promote Practical Research through Specialized Disaster Management Institute*

Policy issues related to disaster management may also be promoted to the formal agenda through the encouragement of scientific research. This would be analogous to the events that lead to the passage of Law No. 174, Tobacco Control and Regulation of Tobacco Products' Manufacturing, Packaging and Advertising, which was adopted by the Parliament of Lebanon in September 2012. This law was adopted as a result of an advocacy campaign based on scientific research done by the Tobacco Control Research Group at the American

University of Beirut. The research findings proved that smoking was the leading cause of death in Lebanon. These findings were submitted to Members of Parliament and Government Ministers. The research proved that implementation of the law would save Lebanon more than $300,000,000 a year (Lebanon This Week, 2012).

The example of Lebanon's anti-smoking law indicates that research can help to promote issues towards the government's formal agenda. Regarding disaster management, steps have already been taken in this direction. For example, the American University of Beirut created the Earthquake Preparedness Initiative (EPI) in 2014. This initiative is devoted to the social and scientific studies of disasters, with the special focus on earthquakes. If supported, the Initiative might develop into a potent research institution, which would organize conferences, seminars, as well as offer educational programs on various areas of disaster management, much like the Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction (UCL). One of its primary goals should be to undertake research that explores the full range of hazards that exist in Lebanon, and whether there is need for Lebanon to adopt a comprehensive disaster management strategy.

5. *Alternative Ways to Address the Issue of Disaster Management.*

Policy recommendations discussed so far aimed at the placement of the disaster management issue on the formal agenda of the Lebanese government for further consideration and resolution. Although these recommendations might seem sound and logical, they might not be an effective way to address the issue of disaster management in Lebanon due to the limited capacities of the central government to develop and implement

public policy. Alternative ways to deal with this issue without the involvement of the government should also be considered.

The problems in disaster management can be addressed at the level of municipalities. In particular, each municipality can develop and implement its own emergency plan, given the level of awareness on the local disaster hazards and needs. These plans might include the hazards maps for each municipality, and the actors and their main responsibilities before, during and after the disaster. The plans might involve all the actors available within the municipality: the NGOs, the private sector organizations, public agencies, like the Civil Defense, the Internal Security Forces or the military units of LAF, as well as citizens. Acknowledging the fact that some municipalities might need support in terms of the awareness raising within the local population, as well as the preparation of the drafts of the plan, the involvement of the international NGOs, specializing in the humanitarian assistance or disaster prevention, response and relief, might play an important role.

The elaboration and further implementation of the municipality emergency plans might be helpful in the following ways. First, the plans would be practical due to their direct link to the local disaster hazards and risks. Second, they would skip the potentially long process of debates, discussions and approvals required at the national government level. Third, the municipality plans are unlikely to provoke the "clash of interests", since most of the municipalities in Lebanon are ethnically and religiously homogenous. Fourth, the costs of the implementation of the plans could be elaborated in collaboration with the international NGOs, which will increase the credibility of the donors towards the plan. Finally, although the plans would be developed without the involvement of the national government, they can be later on incorporated in the National Disaster Response Plan or any other comprehensive

document on disaster management, once the government of Lebanon includes the issue of disaster management on its formal agenda.

D. Research Recommendations

According to Brutus et al. (2013), research recommendations "are forward looking, pointing to theoretical and methodological areas where further development is required or desirable" (p. 49). In other words, research recommendations serve as guidelines for the researchers, who seek to explore the issue under consideration in more detail. This thesis is focused on two areas of research: 1) Lebanon's agenda-setting process; and 2) Lebanon's disaster environment. Thus, the following recommendations fall within these two areas.

1. Focus on Agenda-setting Process in Lebanon

This thesis explores agenda-setting within Lebanon. The focus of the research, however, has been limited to the context of disaster management. As such, the findings of this study should be generalized with caution, as additional research is needed before we can fully understand Lebanon's agenda-setting process. Future studies should move beyond the context of disaster management and seek to address alternative policy issues, the actors involved in the agenda-setting process, and the factors that affect the agenda-setting process.

a. Issue Studies

The first area of research could focus on alternative policy issues. Particular attention might be paid to the ways issues have been promoted to the formal agenda, which will improve our understanding about the formal agenda-setting process. To measure the

agenda dynamics in Lebanon, the formal agenda of the acting Government can be compared

to the one of the former Government. This research would help to determine how the policy

priorities in Lebanon have changed over time. The issues that are on the pseudo agenda

should also be studied to identify the promoting and blocking triggers that affect those

issues. This research will enable the researcher to make recommendations to promote the

issues on the formal agenda.

Future research could also explore why issues might be denied access to the

government's formal agenda. In particular, the focus of such research could be directed

towards understanding the definitional dimensions of individual issues (Cobb and Elder

1983). Considering the importance of the issue definition in the issue placement process

(Daviter 2007, Rochefort and Cobb 1993), these studies would help to define problems in

issue definition, and may lead to insights into how issues can be re-defined to facilitate their

placement on the formal agenda. Finally, separate attention might be paid to the issues that

fall off the formal agenda before they were substantially resolved. For example, to what

extent was their removal the result of issue competition or "zero-sum" theory effect

(Hilgartner and Bosk 1989; Zhu 1992), reduction in attention (Downs 1972; Kingdon 1995),

failure of legitimization (Cook 1981), high implementation costs (Down 1972; Kingdon

1995), perceived resolution (Kingdon 1995), emergence of convergent voice (Cook and

Skogan 1991), or increased education level (McCombs and Zhu 1995).

b. Agenda-Setting Actors

A second area of research could focus on the actors involved in Lebanon's agenda-

setting process. This thesis only tangentially referred to such actors, mainly within the

context of keeping the disaster management issue off the formal agenda. Therefore, additional research is needed to identify the main participants involved in the agenda-setting process, whether inside or outside of the government (Kingdon 1995), and their roles in promoting or blocking the placement of an issue on the formal policy agenda.

Research could also be undertaken to define the roles that entrepreneurs play within the Lebanese public policy context, as well as the ways in which entrepreneurs affect policy-making. Special attention could be paid to the roles of the key participants, for example, the President, the Prime Minister, Ministers, other public officials, as well as Parliament as a unitary actor. Finally, the ways in which, civil society organizations, international organizations, and the general public affect agenda-setting process could also be explored.

c. Factors that Affect the Placement of an Issue on the Formal Agenda

Given the variety of factors that influence whether an issue is placed on the agenda, research could be undertaken to identify whether other factors affect Lebanon's agenda-setting process. At the same time, to improve our understanding on the role of the known contextual factors (Cobb and Elder 1981), future research could also address the extent to which political and social constraints affect the agenda-setting process. Such studies could identify the main policy coalitions, their participants, as well as their areas of policy interests. One of the major blocking triggers identified is the ideational constraint, which referred to the local mentality and culture. Further research could also explore the extent to which this constraint affects the placement of other issues on the formal agenda. Among the promoting triggers, the external factor, or the role of the international community in the Lebanon's agenda-setting process may be worthy of additional consideration. Such studies

could focus on the nature of the strategies used by the international community to place an issue on the formal agenda and the extent to which international policy trends affect Lebanese domestic policy.

2. *Disaster issue*

Given that this thesis is concerned with Lebanon's agenda-setting process, issues related to disaster management were only discussed in the broadest of terms. This means that issues related to disaster management are fruitful grounds for additional research. In particular, the DM actors and structures in Lebanon were discussed in general terms only. Clearly, a more detailed examination is needed to define all of the actors involved in this policy domain. In addition, the thesis reviews the status of the disaster management issue within the context of the agenda of the Lebanon's central government.

To have a comprehensive understanding of the status of the disaster management issue in Lebanon, future research could also explore the status of the DM as an issue on the agendas of other public institutions, for instance, the formal agenda of Parliament or specific ministries. In addition, the factors identified in this thesis as affecting the issue of disaster management should not be regarded as exhaustive. Future research may identify other factors – positive or negative – that affect the status of the disaster management as an issue of policy concern. Given that this thesis did not cover the legislative basis of the disaster management, further research could provide a comprehensive overview of the legal instruments used to regulate disaster management in Lebanon. Finally, to improve our understanding about disaster management in the MENA region, a comparative analysis of the disaster management systems and strategies used in other counties could be conducted.

APPENDIX I

Recruitment Script

This script was used when contacting the organizations/ individuals for the purpose of scheduling an appointment to conduct the interview for the topic under research

Hello,
My name is Anna Nersesyants. I am a Graduate student at the American University of Beirut, Public Administration Program. As part of my Thesis dissertation, I am conducting a research about agenda-setting in Lebanon, on the example of the disaster management issue. Through my research, I found that your organization/ you are involved in the disaster management/ policy making in Lebanon. I am contacting to schedule an appointment for an interview. The interview will be 45 minutes long and will be strictly about the disaster issue in Lebanon. Your participation is entirely voluntary and no personally identifying information will be collected.

Do you have any questions about this research study?
If you are interested in taking part in this study, when would be a good time for you to conduct the interview?

In case they are not interested: Thank you for your time. If you have any questions later, you may reach me by email at atn02@aub.edu.lb or by phone at 76 69 49 59. If you know someone who would be interested in the study, please provide them with my contact information.

Thank you and have a good day

APPENDIX II

American University of Beirut
Faculty of Arts and Science - Department of Political Studies and Public Administration
Graduate Program in Public Administration

Consent Document

Setting the Policy Agenda: Disaster Management in Lebanon

Principal Investigator: Dr. Thomas Haase
Student Investigator: Anna Nersesyants

We are asking you to participate in a research study. Please read the information below and feel free to ask any questions that you may have. This research is about how the issue of disaster management can be put on the agenda of the Lebanese Government and be potentially resolved. You are invited to give information that will be valuable contribution to this research.

1. The research is being conducted with the goal of completing a Masters' thesis by the student researcher Anna Nersesyants, who can be reached at atn02@aub.edu.lb or via phone at 76-694959. The research is under the supervision of the Primary Investigator (PI) Dr. Thomas Haase, who can be reached at th30@aub.edu.lb and 01-350000 ext. 4344; his office is located at the AUB campus, Jessup-204D. For further inquiries you can contact the Institutional Review Board of the University at irb@aub.edu.lb and 01-350000 ext. 5445.
2. In this study, you will be asked to answer several questions in an interview that will be recorded on a digital recorder, transcribed and analyzed. The recorded interview will not exceed one hour (60 minutes) in length. The digital material will be destroyed after the completion of the analysis upon your request.
3. Your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you. You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time for any reason. The study involves no benefits or risks to your person and to your privacy. Your name or other identifiers will not be attached to your answers so that your confidentiality can be maintained. The keys that link the interview subject to the data provided will be available to the PI only.
4. Your participation is voluntary and refusal to participate does not involve any penalty. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer. A copy of this consent document and the interview is available to you if you so choose. This document will be kept in the locked drawer in the PSPA department and will not be retrieved during the data analysis to avoid disclosure of your identity.
5. You were recruited for this study by direct contact through personal connection to the researchers or through the contact information available in public domain. The research looks forward to recruiting 35 interviewees.

Do you voluntarily consent to take part in this study?
YES ( )   Date: Time:
Signature:

Do you agree for this interview to be digitally recorded?
YES ( )   Date: Time:
Signature:

APPENDIX III

Interview Questions

Background

1) **Can you identify the various disaster risks that you believe exist within Lebanon?**

    a. Which of these do you believe is the most problematic today?

    b. Which of these do you believe will be the most problematic in 10 years?

    c. Which of these do you believe will be the most problematic in 50 years?

National Policy

2) **To what extent do you believe that Lebanon's national government is prepared for disasters?**
    a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

3) **What are the strengths and weaknesses of <u>national</u> disaster management policy?**

    a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

4) **What do you believe should be the role of the <u>national</u> government with respect to disaster management issues?**

    a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

5) **What do you recommend should be done to get the <u>national</u> government to take disaster management issues more seriously?**

    a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

Local Policy

6) **To what extent do you believe that Lebanon's local governments are prepared for disasters?**
    a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

7) **What are the strengths and weaknesses of <u>local</u> disaster management policy?**

    a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

8) **What do you believe should be the role of the <u>local</u> governments with respect to disaster management issues?**

    a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

9) **What do you recommend should be done to get the <u>local</u> governments to take disaster management issues more seriously?**

    a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

<u>**Other Institutions**</u>

10) To what extent do you believe that Lebanon's non-profit and non-governmental organizations are prepared for disasters?

   a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

11) What are the strengths and weaknesses of disaster management programs undertaken by non-profit and non-governmental organizations?

   a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

12) What do you believe should be the role of the non-profit and non-governmental organizations with respect to disaster management issues?

   a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

13) What do you recommend should be done to get non-profit and non-governmental organizations to take disaster management issues more seriously?

   a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

<u>**Citizens**</u>

14) To what extent do you believe Lebanon's citizens are prepared for disasters?

   a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

15) What do you believe should be the role of citizens with respect to disaster management issues?

   a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

16) What do you recommend should be done to get citizens to take disaster management issues more seriously?

   a. Using examples, please explain why you believe this to be the case.

<u>**Policy Agenda**</u>

17) Is disaster management an issue that is currently being considered by the national government?
   a. If yes, please explain why the issue is being currently considered.

   b. If no, please explain why it is not being currently considered.

18) Has disaster management been an issue previously considered by the national government?

   a. If yes, please explain why the issue was previously considered.

   b. If no, please explain why the issue has not been previously considered.

19) Will disaster management ever be an issue that will be considered by the national government?
   a. If yes, please explain what should be done to have the issue considered.

   b. If no, please explain why the issue will never be considered.

APPENDIX IV

Self-Administered Questionnaire

Kindly provide the information requested below:

1. Gender   **M**   **F**

2. Your age   _____

3. Years of professional experience   _____

4. Highest Level of education

   - o Secondary School
   - o Technical Institution
   - o Bachelor of Arts/Sciences
   - o Master of Arts/Sciences
   - o Ph.D
   - o Other

5. Where did you receive your last degree

   _____

6. Concentration/Emphasis of your last degree   _____

7. Title of your current position   _____

8. Number of years in the current position   _____

9. Number of years of experience in Disaster Management _____

APPENDIX V

List of Respondents

No. of Respondent	Basic Interview Details
1	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, March 20, 2013
2	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, March 28, 2013
3	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 3, 2013
4	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 4, 2013
5	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 4, 2013
6	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 5, 2013
7	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 10, 2013
8	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 11, 2013
9	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 15, 2013
10	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 18, 2013
11	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 18, 2013
12	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Jdeideh, Lebanon, April 19, 2013
13	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 22, 2013
14	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Baabdat, Lebanon, April 23, 2013
15	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 23, 2013
16	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 25, 2013
17	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 26, 2013
18	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, April 30, 2013
19	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, May 6, 2013
20	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, May 8, 2013
21	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, May 8, 2013
22	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, May 9, 2013
23	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, June 11, 2013
24	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Beirut, Lebanon, July 31, 2013

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