

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

KNOWLEDGE AND THE TRASH: THE PREDOMINANCE
OF THE EXPERT MODEL IN THE 2015 BEIRUT PROTESTS

by
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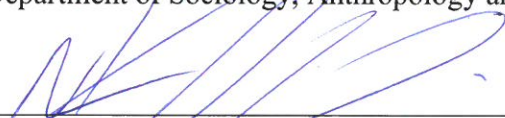
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Drawing on the concept coined by Leigh Star and Griesemer (1989), I consider the waste management problem, culminating in the protests of summer 2015, as a “boundary object” that allows focusing on local dynamics of knowledge production and dissemination. I start this study by asking: knowledge by whom, for whom and for what? In line with a phenomenological approach, I adopt a broad definition of knowledge as the commonsensical, the mundane, the scientific, the technical but also the emancipatory. I complement this definition with the concept of hegemony, and the role of intellectuals in creating the “good sense” out of the “common sense”. I explore knowledge produced through, and by the main protagonists involved in the protest movement. I try to elucidate the audience for which this knowledge was presumably intended for, and to what end. I analyze its content and the evolution of some of the concepts brought forward.

I demonstrate that the expert model of knowledge production, dissemination, and use was prevailing during the protests and argue that the evidence based activist approach adopted was in dissonance with the aura of the protests - which were a wide expression of popular socio-economic discontent. Characterized by their professionalization and claims to expertise, dominant knowledge producers focused on technical knowledge production and mobilization, and on the creation of a collective network of expertise. These expert-intellectuals sought to integrate the secular, and apolitical ‘civil society’, different from the sectarian ‘communal society’; their patterns of engagement with knowledge being part and parcel of the very system they seek to address. In a local, post-Taef, Lebanese context, outside of major party politics, and notwithstanding marginalized voices, the expert-intellectual is dominant, her skilled technical knowledge employed to address responsible individuals in ‘civil society’, influence policy and attempt to seek social change from within.

Keywords: knowledge, intellectuals, expert model, civil society, public sphere.

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ACRONYMS

AFDC	Association for Forests Development and Conservation
CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
CSO	Civil Society Organization
MOE	Ministry of the Environment
NCC	Nature Conservation Center
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIMBY	Not in my Backyard
SOLIDERE	Société Libanaise pour le Development et la Reconstruction

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

August 7th 1992. Etel Adnan is on a visit in Beirut, as the capital is striving to recover from over 15 years of fighting and looting.

In her letter to her friend Fawwaz Traboulsi, she writes:

“Piles of garbage exude a stench - and a taste - which is sour sweet, unbearable even when one drives by them with a car. One swallows rot to the point of depression and any sight of mountain or sea looks like deliverance. All this is so pathetic” (Adnan 1993)

Leonard Cohen sings:

“They sentenced me to twenty years of boredom; for trying to change the system from within”

(First we take Manhattan, Then we take Berlin)

Roles of intellectuals have been at the heart of longstanding debates. In the prestigious Reith Lecture Series in 1993, Edward Said suggested to reconsider the representations of the intellectual from a highly specialized professional to an exile on the margins of powerful institutions, and an amateur that seeks to speak truth to power and serve society (Said 2012). Throughout the modern history of Lebanon, militancy and intellectual work have often gone hand in hand. Sociologist Ahmad Beydoun recalls a group of around 50 intellectuals, mostly academics who greatly influenced Lebanese public political debate during the 1960s (Favier 2004). French researcher Agnes Favier talks about the political involvement and subsequent disintegration of a generation of intellectual activists between 1958 and 1975. In the early years after the end of the civil war, and until the mid-1990s, Lebanese intellectuals still voiced oppositional concerns to the ruling class, through the “petition of the 55” for instance, a group of academics

and journalists who were involved in militant forms of intellectual work (Favier 2004)¹.

More recently, sociologists Sari Hanafi and Rigas Arvanitis denounce the disappearance of the public intellectual in the dynamics of demise of public social science, the impoverishment of public debates in the Arab World, and the lack of engagement of academics with different audiences (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016). Such phenomena, they assert, might be Janus like, and an expression of “distrust towards universities, and more generally knowledge production, a complex and yet understudied aspect of social and political life.” (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016, 296) At a time when the region is in turmoil, Hanafi and Arvanitis also assert the importance of knowledge production and use, inspired from and engaged with the needs and desires of the Arab population (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016, 308).

A. Social Movements

Since 2011, I have been a keen observer, and sympathizer, of the worldwide movements of contention, from the Arab revolutions, to the Indignados of Southern Europe, and the American Occupy Movement. Like many of my friends, I followed these events with hope, demonstrated solidarity, and provided help and support when I could. With the curiosity of an aspiring sociologist, I also read as much as I could on the plethora of literature on the topic, and learned that these movements were somehow globally connected but that they had their own local and national specificities. Protesters took to the streets and often faced backlash and repression from police and armed forces, the severity of which varied tremendously between governments of the West and authoritarian regimes of the Arab World. While the origins, evolutions, outcomes, and opposing reactionary forces to these movements differed, their refusal of the terrible

¹ Cited in Favier in (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016, 294-295).

effects of financial capitalism, as well as their claims to freedom, social justice and new forms of participatory democracy concurred (Burawoy 2015).

1. Schools of Social Movement Theory

The existing sociological literature on social movements could be divided into three broad waves or categories. The first wave stemmed from the sociology of Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parson whose functionalism considered social movements negatively, and associated collective action with an irrational response to social change². The second wave corresponded with Marxism, where social movements were viewed as a rational response to the pursuit of interests outside of parliamentary politics. Through this wave, the theory of collective action was first presented as general and all encompassing. In later stages, it incorporated local, social and historical specificities, embodied in concepts such as Alain Touraine's historicity and the post-industrial/programmed society (Burawoy 2015). The third wave, often presented as another spectrum of theory of new social movements, focused on mobilization, resources, capacities, framing and political opportunities. For sociologists like Charles Tilly, these factors were more important in prompting social movements than interests that stirred collective action (Burawoy 2015).

In the same time, a new emerging literature, represented by Michael Burawoy (2015) for instance, contended that none of these factors fit well enough to explain, understand or interpret these new movements. Among other things, Burawoy called for the need to study these developments through the lens of a new global sociology that would examine the origins and contexts of collective action, rooted in the wider

² According to Burawoy's genealogy of social movement theory (Burawoy 2015).

societies from which it arises. Burawoy suggested a fourth wave of social movement theory that studied neoliberalism and the pervasiveness of markets into social, cultural, and political fields, and incorporated the intimate connection between movements of contestation and the unprecedented, unregulated, worldwide marketization (Burawoy 2015). While there is no uniform definition of social movements, in all cases, and for different schools, they include large groups of people, involved over time in a series of collective activity that seeks to influence public politics (Tilly, 2004), and to achieve specific social demands through a variety of tactics.

2. From Theory To Practice

In 2015, two different developments delineated my specific interest in the study of social movements, and contentious political activities: first the political breakthroughs in countries of Southern Europe after the 15M³ and second the protests against the government's failed attempt to proper waste management, which took Beirut by surprise between July and September. On one hand, I was intrigued by the ascent of Podemos, a party-movement that hailed from the circles of the Indignados in Spain. Its founding members had worked on the production of a particular discourse, infusing new meaning into words such as "caste", "people", "justice", and "democracy" (Bescansa, Errejon, Iglesias, Monedero, Dominguez and Gimenez, 2015, p.53). And in less than two years, allies and representatives of Podemos managed to run and win 5 seats in the 2014 European Parliamentary Elections as well as the mayorship of two of the country's major cities, Barcelona and Madrid, in the 2015 Spanish Local Elections (E cué 2014; Morel 2015).

³ 15M refers to the protests held on May 15, 2011 in major cities across Spain; particularly in the area around Puerta Del Sol in Madrid.

On the other hand, I was astounded by the numerous responses that arose to address the trash problems in Lebanon, including reports of environmental experts, mobilization of people who unexpectedly took to the streets, and the government's reaction to popular discontent. Among other things, I found something particularly striking on the night of October 8, which was the night of the last major protest. While the riot police was hosing a group of protesters on the corner of Weygand Street in Beirut's downtown, another group proceeded to leave Martyrs' Square from its northern entrance, heading towards Achrafieh, to attend the lavish re-opening of the Sursock Museum. The ceremony was to be held under the patronage, and in the presence of the country's economic, political, and cultural elites.

These developments centered my attention on several themes related to the concepts and ideas that circulate amongst those who contest the status quo, and to their translation into some sort of action. In Spain, it had resulted in the formation of a new political party with a new narrative. In Lebanon, people objected to the way the government had failed to solve the garbage problem and allowed trash to pile up on the streets. I could not understand why some, who were shouting slogans against the ruling class at one point, would join a high profile reception, organized by members of this same ruling class, the next. I wondered about discourses that protesters and other protagonists involved in the movement of contestation against the trash problems, used.

I wanted to find out how arguments were framed, and ideas debated, and to elucidate some of the social, economic, political and cultural factors implicated in the production, distribution, and use of knowledge for the purpose of addressing issues in waste management. In other words, I was also confronted with trying to understand the difference, or conflation, between knowledge and belief, and the mechanisms through which public opinions, expert opinions, social movements, social inequalities, and

ideologies to name a few influence politics. And so I decided to investigate the Beirut movement of contention against the trash problem from an angle that joins two perspectives: the sociology of knowledge and political sociology.

B. Research Question, Sub-Questions and Outline

I start this study by asking: knowledge by whom, for whom and for what? For the sake of clarity and precision, I limit myself to knowledge produced by and for those seeking social change or social action; in other words, those on the side of the protesters. I adopt a broad definition of knowledge as the commonsensical, the mundane, the scientific, the technical but also the emancipatory. I complement this definition with the concept of hegemony, and the role of intellectuals in creating the “good sense” out of the “common sense” (Gramsci 1999). I explore knowledge produced through, and by the main protagonists involved in the protest movement. I try to elucidate the audience, which this knowledge was presumably intended for, and to what end. I analyze its content and the evolution of some of the concepts brought forward.

Using Grounded Theory (Corbin and Strauss 1990) and allowing data collected to speak, I specify further my research question and ask whether the Beirut protests against the government’s failure to deal with waste management problems has ushered a new mode of engagement with knowledge for the sake of social action. I outline the Hirak as it unfolded and highlight rank and file’s demands as expressed in the streets. Though I approach knowledge producers and users wholly, I focus eventually on the dominant voices, underline a consolidation of the expert model of engagement with knowledge and touch on the history of environmental policymaking and waste management in Lebanon.

In more details, first, I demonstrate that the expert model of knowledge production, dissemination, and use was prevailing during the protests and argue that the evidence based activist approach adopted was in dissonance with the aura of the protests - which were a wide expression of popular socio-economic discontent. Drawing on the work of Vololona Rabeharisoa, Tiago Moreira and Madeleine Akrich and their concept of ‘evidence-based activism’ (Rabeharisoa, Moreira and Akrich 2014), I adapt it to capture activists and environmentalists’ varying forms of engagements with knowledge through and during the protests. Characterized by their professionalization and claims to expertise, dominant knowledge producers privileged an evidence-based activist approach in their attempts to solve waste management problems. Focused on technical knowledge production and mobilisation, and on the creation of a collective network of expertise, expert-intellectuals sought to integrate the secular, and apolitical ‘civil society’, different from the sectarian ‘communal society’. They also played out their techniques off and on the streets, during, and through protests and other types of directed actions.

Second, through a brief sketch of the history of environmentalist struggles in post war Lebanon, and a critique of two main contentions brought forward by these expert-intellectuals (the notion of a waste management ‘crisis’ and the impact of the public sphere), I suggest that their patterns of engagement with knowledge are part and parcel of the very system they seek to address. Although the trash protests of 2015 were more akin to a social movement, at least in their very beginnings, the expert model was not associated with “projects of emancipation, liberation, the challenging of forms of domination, the refusal of the actor to be directed, exploited, manipulated, subjected or alienated” (Wieviorka 2014). In a local, post-Taef, Lebanese context, outside of major party politics, and notwithstanding marginalized voices, the expert-intellectual is

dominant, her skilled technical knowledge employed to address responsible individuals in 'civil society', influence policy and attempt to seek social change from within.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I highlight different theories of sociology of knowledge including Marx and Habermas, Mannheim, Berger and Luckmann and Latour to articulate the theoretical framework underpinning my research question. I also look into work done on sociology of knowledge in Lebanon and the Arab World to explore possible answers. To further understand the role of intellectuals, I complement the literature on knowledge with Gramsci's concept of hegemony. The purpose of the following literature review is to define knowledge, its producers and to highlight the frameworks within which knowledge production and use is analyzed and understood.

The approach to knowledge is initially situated in the domains of philosophy and epistemology, where knowledge is studied in regards to the existential conditions in which it was produced, taking also into account the experience of the thinker. In contrast, sociology of knowledge seeks to distinguish itself from the discipline of epistemology, and to concentrate on the sociological assessment and understanding of the experience of the thinker, rather than the experience itself (Hamilton 2014). However, and because a theory of knowledge finds roots in philosophical grounds, and in the inquiries to understand meaning or quests for truth, this distinction cannot be complete. Decolonial sociology is one example; as it is an ontological and epistemological experiment as well as a sociological endeavor interested in unpacking the nature of knowledge itself, and delinking it from the practices and effects of European colonialism (Mignolo 2011).

A. Theories of Sociology of Knowledge

In the particular case I am studying, I consider sociology of knowledge as a framework to unravel social, cultural, political and economic factors that influence the production, dissemination, validation and use of knowledge. This includes understanding what contributes to differentiating scientific and valid knowledge from value judgments and norms⁴, by studying to which extent various social factors play a role in shaping, defining, creating and reproducing the relationship between knowledge and belief (Hamilton 2014). There are three main paradigms in sociology of knowledge, based originally on the different schools of classical sociology, and the works of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Each of these schools defines and treats knowledge, in a different manner, and scrutinizes the challenges of knowledge production and dissemination, and its surrounding intellectual context (Hamilton 2014). Because of the emphasis it places on the relationship between knowledge and social structure, and because of its subsequent development and elaboration by various scholars, I examine more closely the Marxist school of sociology of knowledge without dismissing relevant contributions from others.

1. Knowledge and Interests - Marx and Habermas

In Karl Marx's thought, two concepts are worth mentioning in that regard: ideology and reification. Ideology uncovers the causal relationship between social structure, and the way knowledge gets produced and transformed (Hamilton 2014). This transformation is directly related to the structures of interests but also to the values of groups producing and consuming knowledge. Reification is the specific fixation of

⁴ This is particularly relevant because I am scrutinizing experts' roles and their authoritative knowledge in the case of the *Hirak*.

knowledge in space and time (Hamilton 2014).

German sociologist and philosopher Jurgen Habermas takes the relationship between knowledge and interests further. He argues that interests determine what is to be considered as knowledge, and identifies three types of science: empirical analytical science that includes natural sciences, historical interpretative science that seeks to understand culture for instance, and systematic science of action like sociology and political science that could be ‘critically oriented’ (Hamilton 2014). Using these types of sciences as a starting point (Hamilton 2014), Habermas looks at different ways through which nature and society could be approached as objects of potential knowledge. In other words, by scrutinizing the existential conditions in which interests guide knowledge, Habermas outlines three categories of possible knowledge: knowledge as information that stems from a technical approach, knowledge as interpretation that defines norms and values, and knowledge as analysis whose objective is emancipatory and seeking to free consciousness from ideological reification.

In the case of the HIRAK, and as I proceed to show throughout this thesis, the expert model of engagement with knowledge was predominant. Looking at different categories of possible knowledge, as technical, interpretation or analysis helps delineate and further define experts and their role.

2. Mannheim’s Worldview

The issue of ideology and problems associated with its conceptualization are a recurrent theme in sociology of knowledge. To Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim, ideologies of different major groupings of society, originating from different social locations, are the source of social conflict. In his own words, he defines sociology of knowledge as:

a discipline which explores the functional dependence of each intellectual standpoint on the differentiated social group reality behind it, and in which it sets itself the task of retracing the evolution of the various standpoints (Mannheim 2013, 190).

Mannheim sees that various forms of knowledge were actually manifestations, expressions, or parts of something else, generated in response to the needs of the class or group to which their creators belonged. He considers that positions of knowledge are often challenged by practical tasks from other classes or groups. To better explain these processes, and to avoid the concept of relativism, Mannheim introduces the concept of relationism where all ideas and beliefs are rooted in larger thought systems, patterns of belief and a dominant worldview or *Weltanschauung* (Mannheim 2013a)⁵.

Furthermore, in his seminal essay “On the Interpretation of a *Weltanschauung*”, he tells us that every cultural product in its entirety displays three distinct 'strata of meaning': objective, expressive, and documentary (Mannheim 2013b, 44). Objective meaning is the meaning of the cultural product itself. Mannheim for example describes his friend giving alms to a beggar and assigns to the act the objective meaning of ‘assistance’. Expressive meaning relates to the actual experience of the subject and the universe it exists in. Mannheim asserts:

The interpretation of expressive meaning always involves the task of grasping it authentically – just as it was meant by the subject, just as it appeared to him when his consciousness was focused on it.
(Mannheim 2013, 46)

In the case of the alms giving, this meant kindness. In Mannheim’s view, the totality of objective meaning is essential to understand expressive meaning but not necessary for documentary meaning. This third kind of meaning is seen as an evidence of the *Weltanschauung*, and is not related to the intention of the subject. Going back to

⁵ For more information, see Mannheim’s foundational essays on Sociology of Knowledge: Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge and Interpretation of a *Weltanschauung* (Mannheim 2013).

the example of the alms giving, an example of documentary meaning is the hypocrisy of the giver's act. One more idea is worth mentioning here, that Mannheim was particularly concerned with elites and social change (Hamilton 2014). His sociology of knowledge addressed their role in social action. This idea is important for my study of the Hirak where activists led on protests and initiatives while rank and file participants were on the streets expressing their grievances.

3. Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality

While Mannheim's work incorporated phenomenology - the study of the structures of direct experience and the quotidian - in his approach to sociology of knowledge, other scholars, such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, used it more extensively. Their work addresses sociology of knowledge as a discipline that "concerns itself with everything that passes for knowledge in society" (Berger and Luckmann 2011, 14-15). Though it takes for granted the mechanisms of production of the social stock knowledge, the work of Berger and Luckmann is particularly relevant to my research in the sense that it studies the distribution of social and natural knowledge, its incorporation into what is 'commonsense', and its eventual contribution to the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 2011).

In their eponym seminal work, they identify three processes: institutionalization, which is the repetition of knowledge by various actors; legitimation, which is the transmission, explanation and justification of institutionalized knowledge; and internalization of social reality, which happens through primary and secondary socialization that occur through childhood and subsequent induction into different sectors of the objective world of society respectively (Berger and Luckmann 2011). For Berger and Luckmann, objective reality of everyday life is turned into subjective reality

for the individual. Moreover, they consider that production of knowledge is geared toward producing social order: Knowledge creates norms. Berger and Luckmann's approach, which uses symbolic interactionism, reminds us of Mannheim's *Weltanschauung* (Berger and Luckmann 2011). As we have seen so far, knowledge is technical but also commonsensical.

4. Latour's Actor-Network Theory

The work of one more scholar of a particular type of sociology of knowledge is worth mentioning here to further delineate my understanding of knowledge and that is the "sociology of associations" of Bruno Latour, one of the main thinkers behind Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Latour defines sociology as the science that traces the associations and sets himself apart from the classics of sociology (Marx, Weber, and Durkheim). He refuses to take social relations as given, and believes it is the researcher's role to unravel relations between different actors, which are not necessarily all humans, and can include objects, concepts, and ideas that also have agency.

Latour along with Hermant (1998) capture the essence of his conception of ANT in a mixed media essay entitled "Paris Invisible". They show that it is impossible to capture all of Paris at once and guides readers through different maps, landscapes, and photographs of Paris highlighting traffic lights, metro stations, benches, water installations, to name a few in order to emphasize the social importance of ordinary objects that nevertheless play a role in people's going about the city. In reading and watching this visual essay, the main elements of ANT are brought forward: the importance of levels of approach in research (micro, meso and macro), the concept of representation and the fact that there are multiple realities depending on the form of representation scrutinized, and the emphasis placed on technology (Latour and Hermant

1998).

Latour explains that there are five major controversies surrounding our definition of what is social and these controversies concern the nature of groups, actions, objects, facts, and studies. He calls to waive the rigid and archaic concepts of traditional sociology and asserts the need for new tools enabling the researcher to map associations by playing with the levels of research, flattening the social world, and then connecting the dots (Latour 2005). Such connections become then traceable by studying the work done by and through different actors to stabilize the controversies listed above. The work of Latour on knowledge is specific in the sense that it does not easily blend with classical sociological theory. It also deals more with knowledge as science and technology (Latour 2005). Whilst it is important to go over the principles of ANT, as it constitutes a paradigm shift in sociology of knowledge, I will only go back to it in defining the trash protests as a boundary object and in studying the different groupings of knowledge producers.

5. Definition of Knowledge and Knowledge Use

In sum, my approach to knowledge in this case will incorporate all forms of knowledge, as statements, discourses, and acts concerning the protests and the different activities of contention addressing the trash problems, knowledge as the mundane, intellectual, commonsensical, and technical. I will look at the structures of interests and the values of groups producing and consuming knowledge. Interests will include the motivation to produce knowledge – technical, interpretative, and analytical. I will also try to uncover whether meaning that arises from specific social action or objects is part and parcel of larger systems of thought, and to study the interplay between ‘distortion’ of knowledge, its distribution and how it comes to form the basis of social action or is

transformed into a tangible outcome.

B. Sociology of Knowledge in Lebanon and the Arab World

Knowledge also includes that produced and used by academics, as those were present and active during the Hirak. The literature that explores the production of knowledge in Lebanon, understood as research, is rather new. In *Knowledge Production in the Arab World: The Impossible Promise*, Hanafi and Arvanitis (2016) assert that prior to 2006, very few papers scrutinized the situation of research in Lebanon. In exploring the landscape of research in the country, they show that some universities (including the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese University), public research centers mainly under the umbrella of the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS), and a few private research centers (mostly Non-Governmental Organizations and a handful of Research and Development Units in companies of an already modest industrial sector) constitute the pillars of research (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016).

1. Challenges to the Research Community

The research community in Lebanon is fragmented but it presents a consistent outwardly orientation, especially in its openness to international communities and collaborations (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016). Hanafi and Arvanitis also decry the lack of public engagement in research, and emphasize the need to produce knowledge that is aligned with the social and economic needs of the country. It is noteworthy to highlight here their findings on the private research centers in the country (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016, 186). They examine the recent proliferation of these centers in Palestine, Lebanon, and Egypt and attribute this proliferation to the extensive availability of funds

from the European Union, the United Nations Agency, and the United States Government Agencies (such as the United States Agency for International Development) that prefer NGOs to universities. Hanafi and Arvanitis impute this preference to the funders' fear that universities will not deliver, and to the role that personal - and not institutional - relationships, play sometimes in securing funds. This notion is relevant in the sense that it informs the role of academics.

Globalization has permeated knowledge production in the Arab World (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016) and in Lebanon, and encouraged the publication, in English, of research produced mainly by higher education institutions. In a case study examining the debate about the Arab revolutions in academic articles published between December 2010 and December 2012, Al Maghlouth (2014) identified three levels of knowledge production with decreasing influence and authority. The first level includes scholars from Ivy League university experts in circles of US foreign policy. The second level encompasses scholars with no real pronounced level of authority and who are less cited in spite of the significance of their work. The third level corresponds to peripheral knowledge producers like Arab scholars writing from the region in Arabic (Al Maghlouth, 2014). Drawing on Al Maghlouth's work, Hanafi and Arvanitis further contend that the case of the debates on the Arab revolutions illustrates how there's a "legitimacy of hegemonic Western-institutionalized standards of political and ideological normativity" (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016, 277) set in place.

The difficulty with this view, as far as my topic is concerned is twofold. On one hand, knowledge production, even if not constrained to the university, is solely associated with academic research. As I mentioned earlier, knowledge could also cover what comes to count as the mundane and the commonsensical. On the other hand, it is measured through publication in journals, and authority correlated with citation factors.

My approach will need to consider a broader scope and attempt to define - if possible - what social, political, and economic factors impute authority to an intellectual and the knowledge produced.

2. Critical Engagement of Social Scientists with The Public

Burawoy's typology of sociology (Burawoy 2005) is worth developing here to understand Hanafi and Arvanitis' argument in favor of a critical engagement of social scientists with the public. Burawoy presents an analytical, four-fold division of sociological knowledge. Public Sociology first seeks to bring sociology into conversation beyond the ivory tower, and to engage with the public in debates concerning public issues. Second, Professional Sociology is scientific, university based and located at the opposite end of Public Sociology. Policy Sociology is the third type. It related to consulting functions and is concerned with the application of professional sociology to the work of organizations, and other agencies. The fourth type is Critical Sociology that scrutinizes all other types of sociologies and provides them with moral purpose (Burawoy 2005).

In elaborating his notion of Public Sociology, Burawoy was inspired by the works of classical sociologists known for their public engagement like Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Dewey, Du Bois, and Gramsci, as well as contemporary thinkers such as Bourdieu, Touraine, Habermas, De Beauvoir, Freire, and Fanon (Burawoy 2005). Burawoy tells us that this notion is not new. It is rather academia and the engagement of academics in public debates that have changed: "There is nothing new about public sociology, what is new is the threatening context in which we now live" (Burawoy 2005). Burawoy advocates Public Sociology as a way to address the challenges of inequality, domination and commodification of our present-day societies (Burawoy

2012). Again, this relates to the degree and type of involvement of academics in the Hirak.

Hanafi and Arvanitis (2016) expand and adapt Burawoy's typology to the Arab World, where the emergence of modern social science was problematic to begin with. It occurred during colonial times and was often funded by foreign sources. Historically, this enabled its de-legitimization by the public with state and ideological groups, especially religious ones, reinforcing this process (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016). They identify two trends in Arab social science knowledge production. The first is identitarian and anticolonial while the second is developmentalist and modernist. They assert that it wasn't until recently, during the 70s, that fragmented schools of social science emerged in the Arab region. The social scientists that belonged to these schools were involved mostly in the creation of a new society (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016).

In regard to Burawoy's typology and the role of public sociology, Hanafi and Arvanitis show that social researchers in the Arab World do not often contribute to the public debate. For example, academics rarely contribute to newspapers op-eds in Lebanon. Hanafi and Arvanitis present different reasons to explain that. The system of promotions in the universities, where these academics work, does not acknowledge public participation. Appropriate newspapers are sometimes difficult to find and the idea of reconciling rigorous academic work with public commitment is not that prevalent (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016). Hanafi et al. argue anyway that the public expert is more common than the public intellectual à la Sartre (Hanafi, Knudsen and Flahive 2005). I particularly rely on this idea in studying the dominant knowledge producers of the Hirak.

For the purpose of my proposed research, and to allow for a comprehensive tracing of the evolution and the framing of debates about the topic of the trash

management issue in Lebanon, it is thus necessary to widen the range of objects studied beyond academic or journalistic publications, and to include TV coverage, protesters' claims and social media.

C. On Hegemony

In broadening the scope and including mundane, intellectual, commonsensical and technical forms of knowledge produced and consumed by various actors with different interests and values, I introduce an additional concept borrowed from political sociology. Originally attributed to Italian Communist, social and political scientist Antonio Gramsci, the concept of hegemony emerged as a result of a series of historical crises between theory and praxis.

1. The Origins of the Concept of Hegemony

In their seminal work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Argentinian political theorist Ernesto Laclau and Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe, critical of the evolution of Marxist thought, outline an elaborate intellectual history of the origins and the development of the concept from Rosa Luxemburg's pivotal contribution of "class as a symbolic unity" to Lenin's articulation of a definition that links political leadership with class alliance, and represents an array of interests, not only in relation to the access to and the control of the means of production (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) underline an inherent inconsistency in Lenin's concept where the Vanguard Party leads with an authoritarian propensity whereas the political dimensions of those who are lead appear to be quite democratic. From this inconsistency, they identify two different practices of hegemony: an authoritarian practice and a democratic practice. In the latter, the identification of social agents with a

specific social class is constantly challenged and the very identity of social classes is modified by the hegemonic task. In the former, the class nature is fixed in advance. This is the case of fascism for example that identified democratic rights with that of the bourgeoisie. In this new perspective⁶, “hegemony becomes the democratic reconstruction of a nation around a new class core” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 62). When new popular and national symbols are developed and integrated into a stable political discourse, class is thus divided into new polarization. Laclau and Mouffe suggest two essential issues for Marxism in this formulation of hegemonic practices: the difficulty of characterizing the plurality of antagonisms emerging on a field different from classes, and retaining the proletarian characteristics once the demands of the masses are incorporated in the new identity (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

2. Gramsci's Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci elaborates his concept of hegemony along these lines (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 66). Because of how they were written and later on assembled, Gramsci's writings, including his concept of hegemony, have been subject to divergent interpretations and his ideas often differently appropriated (Gramsci 1999). Sociologist Michael Burawoy offers a compelling overview of Gramsci's main contributions, especially in regard to the concept of hegemony (Burawoy 2003). Burawoy advances a four-fold definition of hegemony in the Gramscian sense. Hegemony is first a process of domination through a combination of force and consent, coercion and persuasion, political society and civil society. Gramsci refers here to Civil Society in a setting of advanced capitalism. It is the world – and institutions - situated between the economy and the state and it is not independent from the ruling class. The institutions of civil

⁶ Meaning that hegemony is no longer linked to one natural class.

society that create consent include but are not limited to the family, the school, and religious institutions while the institutions of the state, concerned with force, include for example the police, the law and the army (Burawoy 2003).

Second, hegemony is the complex relation between classes in which one dominant class presents its interests, mores, and practices as those of all other classes. Third, hegemony is a form of active revolution defined through Gramsci's comparative approach to study and analyze Italian history. By contrasting the Italian Risorgimento with the French Revolution, and Fascism with Communism or Fordism⁷, Gramsci shows that hegemony is a form of active revolution based on the relationship of one class to another, and of the different components of this class amongst each other. Fourth, hegemony is a struggle over knowledge, meaning and ideology, led by the intellectuals (Burawoy 2003). The definition of hegemony as posed by Gramsci and interpreted by Burawoy thus shows us that knowledge producers are one of its pillars.

3. The Role of the Intellectuals

Intellectuals play an essential role in Gramsci's conception of hegemony and occupy a prevalent space in his work. In the capitalist society, intellectuals are on many levels of the social sphere. They possess technical and scientific knowledge, and they are organizers. As Gramsci puts it:

The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc. It should be noted that the entrepreneur himself represents a higher level of social elaboration, already characterized by a certain directive [dirigente] and technical (i.e. intellectual) capacity: he must have a certain technical capacity,

⁷ Gramsci (1999) considered the United States were advanced economically but backwards politically. Russia was on the opposite end of the spectrum with a backward economy but developed political precocity. The Italian Risorgimento was a passive revolution while the French Revolution was a bourgeois revolution.

not only in the limited sphere of his activity and initiative but in other spheres as well, at least in those which are closest to economic production. He must be an organiser of masses of men; he must be an organiser of the “confidence” of investors in his business, of the customers for his product, etc. (Gramsci 1999, 135).

“All men are intellectuals one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals” (Gramsci 1999, 140). In other words, Gramsci considers that non-intellectuals do not exist because human activity cannot be separated from intellectual activity. However, not all men always perform an intellectual activity in a way that impacts the existing system of social relations. Intellectuals are never an autonomous social group. The intellectual strata come into being in accordance with “very concrete historical processes” (Gramsci 1999, 144). Gramsci distinguishes between two types of intellectuals: the traditional intellectuals and the organic intellectuals. The traditional intellectuals are the clergy for example and the traditional professional intellectuals characterized by a profound “esprit de corps”. They claim to be inter-class. The organic intellectuals are those who speak on behalf of a certain class and actively participate in practical life “as constructor, organizer, permanent persuader, and not just simple orator” (Gramsci 1999, 143). Intellectuals play a role in creating and disseminating consent.

Gramsci (1999) reiterates that groups of intellectuals, exercising the intellectual function, are historically formed, in connection with all social groups but usually and especially with the dominant social group. One of the most important aims of intellectuals is to “conquer ideologically the traditional intellectuals” (Gramsci 1999, 142). The more the group elaborates its own organic intellectuals, the faster and more efficient this conquest becomes. In relationship to knowledge, Gramsci thus identifies a continuous struggle between “common sense”, which is often articulated by the traditional intellectuals and can also be referred to as tradition, and the “good sense”,

which is articulated by the organic intellectuals in relation to their class needs⁸.

Burawoy asserts that Gramsci does not propose a clear counter-hegemonic strategy but that he suggests that the unique experience of the working class could provide the grounds for the emergence of a socialist alternative to capitalist hegemony. Organic intellectuals of the working class could thus create the “good sense” out of the “common sense” (Burawoy 2003).

Through his own work on public sociology and sociology as social movement, Burawoy himself has called on sociologists to play the role of organic intellectuals in search for some “good sense” (Burawoy 2005; Burawoy n.d.). Moreover, Gramsci highlights two ways through which counter-hegemonic forces seek to become hegemonic and they are: the "war of maneuver" and the "war of position". The former consists in physically pressuring the coercive apparatus of political society while the latter is about resisting consent through culture and the production of alternative knowledge, and alternative institutions (Gramsci 1999).

British Cultural Theorist Raymond Williams makes an additional distinction here between different types of culture and knowledge. He affirms that hegemony is a central system of practices, meanings, and values that are dominant and effective:

That is why hegemony is not to be understood at the level of mere opinion or mere manipulation. It is a whole body of practices and expectations; our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of the nature of man and of his world. It is a set of meanings and values, which, as they are experienced as practices, appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society” (Williams 2005, 43).

Williams moves away from hegemony as a concept that allows for the mere distortion of knowledge. He clarifies this further by capturing the concept of selective

⁸ Gramsci elaborates on that notion in the chapter entitled “The Study of Philosophy” (Gramsci 1999).

tradition, which refers to what is retained, in the context of a dominant culture, as the significant past including the “alternative senses of the world” (Williams 2005, 44) that are tolerated within this dominant culture. He also juxtaposes the notions of oppositional, residual, and emergent cultures and reminds us that the dominant culture is alert and conscious in its selection and organization of the different forms of social life and culture that it chooses to accommodate (Williams 2005, 44).

There were different groups of intellectuals, in the Gramscian sense, in the protests held in Beirut to contest the government’s waste. In this study, I will focus mostly on those who were on the side of the protesters. Including those who opposed the protests exceeds the scope of this research and of course, every time I use the term “intellectual”, I refer to its full Gramscian definition.

4. Hegemony and Discourse

Drawing on the work of numerous linguists, sociologists, philosophers and political theorists, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) develop Gramsci’s concept of hegemony in a way that elucidates how knowledge gets produced and translated to impact historical legacies. They introduce Foucault’s concept of discourse into their discussion of hegemony and assert that one needs to understand the “category of articulation” to understand hegemony and its effect on system⁹s of meaning. Articulation, they tell us, “is a practice and not a given relational complex” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 93). It entails that the articulated elements are present in separate forms that can be identified. For example, the elements articulated in a hegemonic practice are diverse, and can include social categories, political parties, trade unions or even ethnic communities.

⁹ Laclau and Mouffe do not distinguish between linguistic and behavioral practices.

Laclau and Mouffe continue and declare that identity is not fixed but rather subject to continual change and that meaning is derived from and contingent on cultural production and not on a pre-existing fixed essence. Even “Society and social agents lack any essence and their regularities merely consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 98). Therefore these forms of fixation are purposely guided and their meanings exist only within their context. Inspired by Lacan’s concept of “points de capiton”, Laclau and Mouffe confirm that there are nodal points that stabilize the whole system of meaning and around which meanings of all other signifiers (words, objects, behaviors, etc.) can be fixed. In this context¹⁰, Laclau and Mouffe provide a comprehensive definition of the practice of articulation: it is “the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 115). These nodal points offer stability and in the same time, can enable the denial of this stability because they lack a stable meaning, fixed in time and place (Laclau 1996).

It is worth mentioning here one more relevant concept introduced by Laclau and Mouffe. Systems of meanings are not sutured wholes. They are characterized by antagonisms that are considered as the basis of and the limits of the social world. Antagonisms are defined by their negativity and therefore deny any final configuration of society (it is a rejection of Marxist determinism). Antagonisms occur when a new signifier, external to the reigning discourse, makes its way in and disrupts a system of meanings. Through the practice of articulation, this signifier can re-arrange identities and enable the creation of a new hegemonic order. While they reject the centrality of the

¹⁰ Laclau and Mouffe (1985, 105) provide interesting definitions. Articulation is a practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. Discourse is a structured totality resulting from articulation. Moments are differential positions articulated within a discourse. Elements are differences that can be identified as separate in an articulation.

working class, Laclau and Mouffe do not give up on class struggle. On the contrary, they perceive the relations of productions as the locus of several antagonisms which if articulated can lead to revolutionary struggles (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* 1985, 115). An example of antagonism along these lines would be a workers' pay cut in a factory.

As we have seen in this chapter, and in line with the phenomenological approach, I adopted a broad definition of knowledge, from commonsensical to rigorously technical, conditioned by interests but also related to an even wider worldview. Intellectuals, in the Gramscian sense, are knowledge producers and users; and they play a substantial role in the concept of hegemony. They contribute to presenting the mores and values of the ruling class as those of everyone else or they counterpoise them. In Lebanon, and the Arab World, the critical engagement of intellectuals from the academy with the public has receded. It will thus be interesting to understand who is engaging with the public instead and through which models.

In line with my research question, pondering whether the HIRAK ushered a new mode of knowledge production, dissemination, and use or whether the expert model prevailed during the protests, the purpose of this chapter has been three things. First to define knowledge, to highlight its producers and to introduce some of the frameworks within which its production and use is analyzed, interpreted and understood.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Drawing on the concept coined by Leigh Star and Griesemer (1989), I consider the waste management problem, culminating in the protests of summer 2015, as a “boundary object” that allows focusing on local dynamics of knowledge production and dissemination. I use grounded theory; outline the different sources of data and their analysis and address limitations and challenges.

A. The Trash Issue as a Boundary Object

A "boundary object", is a situation that can highlight the role of different artifacts – reports, documents, representations, articles, op-eds, slogans, etc. – as well as social, political and cultural factors in the production, distribution and use of knowledge for social action or a particular type of outcome. It is a situation where the genealogy of an idea, and the relationship between knowledge and belief can be studied because it includes the approach and the involvement of different disciplines, perspectives, and actors such as environmentalists, NGOs, government commission, and the public at large to name a few. My interest lays in scrutinizing the public debate, articulations and discourses that arose as a product of all of these junctures.

I am not looking into conducting a technical analysis of the different solutions proposed. I am interested instead in an empirical investigation of the ideas exchanged, negotiated, and used to engage with protesters, and the public at large, but also to push forward a specific agenda, aiming at proposing solutions for the trash problem at hand. I ask: Did this movement usher a new mode of knowledge production, dissemination, and

use or was the expert model prevailing during the protests? Who were the dominant knowledge producers? What were the ideas they put forward and discussed? And what were the effects on policy - the solving of the waste management problems - and on the evolution of the protests as movements of contestation, contentious politics and environmentalism?

While there might have been contentious activities starting July 2015 and continuing past October 2015, most of the major protests happened between August 22 and October 8. I consider the short-lived, two-month long, wave of protests against the government's waste management policies as an event and not a process in itself. This perspective aligns with the notion of boundary object as a situation that allows to account for the implication of numerous actors, factors, ideas, that can be, in contrast, the result of processes themselves.

B. Grounded Theory and the Data

To answer my research question, I use Grounded Theory and rely on two main unobtrusive modes of data collection: participant observation, and texts from publicly available material addressing the trash issue. Grounded theory is an inductive methodology (Corbin and Strauss 1990) that allows data collection, analysis and the elaboration of the main arguments and key concepts to inform, influence and refine one another. I limit my time frame to the months of July 2015 to October 2015 but I include a few later documents, which serve to better illustrate my argument.

1. Sources and Challenges

In regard to participant observation, it is relevant here to make three explanatory statements. First, I have been actively taking part in protests in Lebanon

since 2011 and the protests organized to object to the waste management problems were no exception. Between August 8 and October 8 2015, I attended, as a participant, all of the major protests and many of the smaller activities and conferences that were being held across Beirut. Ideally, protest ethnography and interviews with rank and file participants would have been an ideal methodology to help answer my research questions. However, the evolution of protests was unpredictable, and by the time I wrote my proposal, the movement of contestation had already dwindled in size and scope. In lieu of ethnography, I chose to rely on personal notes and photographs I had scribbled and taken during the protests, and on informal conversations I had with activists and friends during the summer of 2015.

Second, there are advantages but also limitations to this method. The advantages are related to the fact that I collected data without intruding into the lives of protesters or disturbing any ongoing processes. My presence as a participant did not produce any sort of reactivity, usually generated when a researcher is conducting ethnography or interviews with her research subjects. This feature, unobtrusiveness, is well aligned with the phenomenological approach to knowledge that I adopt and allows insights that might otherwise have been very difficult to untangle. On the other hand, the limitations are many. My documentation was unguided by specific research questions, and inclined to protesters. In retrospect, I would have conducted research differently, in line with the inquiries and the topics I am presently interested in pursuing.

Third, while I was going over my notes and documents from the protests, I did not seek to abridge or code the data. In line with the phenomenological approach I adopted, I tried instead to capture the essence of what I had recorded to better understand meanings and actions. I resorted here to data triangulation, the recourse to

different sources, to assess, negate or confirm my findings. I approached the data wholly but for concerns of precision, I ended up focusing on the dominant voices, which were the activists and the environmental experts.

2. Sources of Data Other Than Participant Observation

The different sources were in that case texts from publicly available material that included but were not limited to: Facebook posts on the pages of the major collective in the protests – the “You Stink” collective and on the profiles of key figures involved, newspaper articles, TV coverage, interviews and TV programs, abstracts and recordings from conferences, academic or long form analytical papers, and reports from NGOs. In sum, I collected texts to complement the notes I had taken while the movement of protests was ongoing. My participant observation coupled with the texts collected provided me with a perspective to interpret different actions, discourses and their associated meanings.

Local TV stations, notably LBCI and Al Jadeed, were active in their coverage of the Hirak. Over the course of several days, these two TV stations recorded dozens of hours of live footage and interviews with participants. These recordings show that protesters expressed social, political, and economic grievances. A total of 20 hours of footage covering most but not all of the protests mentioned above was retrieved from Al Jadeed¹¹. Missing dates were September 19 and 20 and the footage shot during daytime, on August 22 and 23, was also incomplete. Al Jadeed’s channel on YouTube provided additional videos to fill in those gaps. Notes were recorded from a total of 13 hours of footage. The seven remaining hours were politicians, journalists, and well-known

¹¹ Sample of convenience because of the possibility of reaching out to the director of Archives at Al Jadeed.

activists were commenting on the Hirak from the station's studio were excluded.

Several challenges complicated the task at hand, including the fact that I dealt with sound bites sometimes. Reporters often asked inconsistent questions and rather than being facilitators or enablers, they would often interrupt speakers and try to influence the course and content of their answers. Clarifications and the need to unpack protesters' claims seemed sometimes necessary and were obviously impossible to achieve. Some interviewees were featured more than once and it is only their first appearance that was taken into account. Two more limitations are worth mentioning here. Some people avoided talking to Al Jadeed TV specifically while others avoided talking to any camera altogether. Overall, 170 interviews and short statements were transcribed. Individuals' spoken contributions ranged from 20-second statements to sometimes four or five minutes' worth of detailed explanations.

In regards to Facebook posts, photographs and videos, I consulted the pages of the "You Stink" collective which reached over 300,000 likes, and included the following intellectuals: Sociologist Ahmad Beydoun, Historian Fawwaz Traboulsi, Journalist Khaled Saghie, Political Scientist and columnist Samer Frangie, and Novelist Elias Khoury as well as environmentalist experts Paul Abi Rached and Ziad Abi Chaker. My choice of rested on two main criteria of selections: their involvement in key debates happening offline between activists and other individuals involved in the protests, and their contribution to the public debate in the media.

Newspaper editorials, analysis pieces, op-eds, and front-page headlines were retrieved in three steps. I first used a keyword search on the indexed database Lebanon News Reports and Index. The keywords included: Garbage (and its synonym Trash),

Landfill, Environment, Protest (and its synonym Manifestation)¹². My notes and observations from the protests as well as the recommendations of the indexer of the database influenced my choice of these keywords.

This yielded a result of 325 articles from Newspapers Assafir, Daily Star and from Executive Magazine and Commerce du Levant. The second step was to run the same keyword search on the website of Al-Nahar newspaper and Al-Akhbar. This keyword search yielded 420 articles. In line with my grounded theory approach, I retained 40 articles that corresponded to the themes I had already outlined from my participant observation. These themes were organized in three categories: demands of protesters and unfolding of protests; tactics and suggestions of environmental experts and activists and public space. In addition to the newspaper selection, I included 18 academic or long form articles written about the trash protests and collected from several sites such as activists' personal blogs, MERIP, Bidayat or Jadaliyya.

C. Analysis

My analysis of the documents and texts collected was more structured than that of my participant observation. I looked for content and relational patterns: identifying main themes, key words and paragraphs and looking for arrays of relations between them (Berg 2001). Content analysis is defined "any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Holsti 1968, 598). I coded the selected documents. Of note, coding was mostly open, in the sense that different concepts were identified independently from each other but that they also each allowed identifying further concepts that stemmed from them.

Concepts were considered the basic units of analysis and when they related to

¹² In arabic: مظاهرة; احتجاجية وقفة; البيئة; النفايات مكب; زباله/قمامة

similar phenomena, they were grouped in categories or overarching themes¹³. In order to constantly challenge personal thoughts against the data, and to account for precision and consistency, continuous comparisons were made between concepts and data from the primary sources and the notes of my participant observation (Berg 2001). Finally, and because this is a case study of a boundary object with theoretical underpinnings relating to the concepts of hegemony, broader structural conditions were brought into the analysis. I would like to make one note concerning the limitations of my content analysis methodology. I could not account for all of the material produced – and there was a lot. I had to make an analytical choice in my selection of texts and in dealing with data derived from multiple sources by limiting myself to those clearly addressing the themes extracted from my participant observation and which I mention above (demands of protesters and unfolding of protests; tactics and suggestions of environmental experts and activists and public space).

Along the lines of the discourse theory developed by Laclau and Mouffe, I also considered a discourse analysis of the texts and to try and identify articulations and antagonisms if revealed. Probing the trash protests as a boundary object allows for an analysis of discursive practices in specific social, political, economic and cultural settings. It is important to note that the study of discourse in the Arabic Language was no doubt challenging but it enabled me to account for imports under globalization (Van Leuween 2005, 12), and to think of the importance of social and cultural history in looking into its evolution (Van Leuween 2005, 12).

Moreover, I retained that through language discourses are a “manifestation of

¹³ Of note, coding can be open (different concepts are identified independently from each other), axial (different concepts are identified independently from each other but they also each allow to identify further concepts that stem from them) or selective (one concept, used as a starting point, from which others are selectively identified) (Berg 2011).

social action” (Chilton 2005, 19) and because social action is closely related to our interpretation of social reality, then the critical analysis of discourse reveals what we perceive as social reality (Chilton 2005, 22). This of course cannot be wholly understood if it is not coupled with the study of socio-economic and political conditions and philosophical questions about will, agency, and ethical responsibility (Chilton 2005) and these count as part of the limitations and challenges I had to mindfully account for.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNFOLDING OF THE HIRAK AND PROTESTERS' DEMANDS

First, let us explore what happened in the protests between the months of July and October 2015, the origins of the trash problems, the different collectives involved and the grievances of the protesters.

A. Context

The summer of 2015 was hot and damp, and time and again, Lebanon was facing a renewed trash problem. Since July, mounted piles of garbage blocked most of Beirut and Mount Lebanon's streets. On August 22nd, I covered my nose and mouth with my hands not to inhale the unbearable stench as I left my house heading towards the city's downtown. I was to join the dozen friends and colleagues and peers protesting the government's incapacity to collect the country's rubbish.

1. Origins of the Trash Problems

This was not novel. In reality, waste management problems had been dragging since the end of the Civil War. From 1993 onwards, successive governments contracted then newly established waste management companies Sukleen and Sukomi, part of Averda Group, owned by tycoon businessman Mayssara Sukkar, to dispose of waste in Greater Beirut and Mount Lebanon. In the beginning, and until a permanent solution could be devised, a few acres of land in the southern region of Naameh were turned into a temporary landfill that would become, until its closure on 17 July 2015, the dumpsite of garbage produced by nearly half of the Lebanese population, living in the Greater

Beirut and Mount Lebanon areas. Over the course of 18 years, the temporary turned permanent and the landfill received 15 million tons of garbage instead of the initial two millions it was supposed to take in (AFP 2015).

For two decades, Sukleen and Sukomi's contracts had constantly been renewed and their partnership with the government preserved through an intricate and unexplored network of relationships with the country's ruling class. In 2010, during a heated discussion in the Council of Ministers, Saad el Hariri, then Prime Minister and a close friend of Sukkar had even threatened: "you either renew these contracts or you drown in your own trash" (Zbeeb 2012). When, on the fatidic date of 17 July 2015, Sukleen's latest contract extension expired, and the Naameh Landfill closed, Hariri's premonitory statement was fulfilled. In the midst of the unbearable summer heat and humidity, hundreds of tons of garbage quickly started piling up on every street corner.

A few days later, on July 21st, a handful of activists gathered in Beirut to protest. They had founded a collective called "You Stink", and through networks established mostly on social media platforms such as Facebook, started calling for mobilization. Two initial protests – very modest in the number of their participants – were held on August 8 and August 15, 2015. As garbage accumulated on sidewalks and under bridges, preparations and coordination between "You Stink" and other formal and informal groups - many that had come together on the spur of the moment, others that were already actively involved in various causes reunited - were intensified before the protest planned for August 22, 2015.

The "You Stink" collective identified itself as "a Lebanese grassroots movement created as a response to the government's inability to solve the ongoing trash crisis in a sustainable way" (You Stink 2015). Its aims were entirely centered on the rising garbage problem. "You Stink" defined its goal as pushing for sustainable

solutions, focused on a municipality-level system as suggested by environmental experts. Apart from that, their demands included the resignation of the Minister of the Environment Mohammad el Mashnouk, holding accountable the Minister of Interior Nouhad el Mashnouk and others who would then go on to shoot and aggress protesters during different rallies, and calling for parliamentary elections, the last of which were supposed to be held in 2013 (You Stink 2015).

2. Timeline of Protests and Activities

As I met my friends in Riad El Solh square on August 22nd, none of us, or the emerging organizing collectives, who had called for the rally, anticipated the turnout and the impact of what happened. What started as a contestation of the government's corrupt waste management policies unexpectedly turned into something different? Many expressed it by saying, "I am here today because this movement is not about the trash issue, it is about everything" (Al Jadeed TV 2015), the Hiraq¹⁴, or movement in Arabic, arose as the product of circumstances that were not only tied to the issue of waste management.

Lebanon had been in the realm of the free-market and globalized economy since the 1950s, with a dominant tertiary sector including trade, banking and service industries. This structure was remodeled and reinstated at the end of the civil war and carried with it new waves of privatizations (including waste management, education and healthcare), state debt speculation, increasing financialization of the economy, deregulation and fiscal changes, and cooption of organized labor (Traboulsi 2015). It

¹⁴ Al Hiraq al Watani (the national movement) was the name used in the media to refer to the series of protests and contentious activities during summer 2015. Hiraq also came to refer to the organizing collectives. According to Hassan El Zein (2015) in his book on the protest movement *w ma adraka ma el Hiraq*, it was journalist George Salibi on Al Jadeed TV that first coined the term on the night of August 22nd, 2015.

was championed by late Rafik Hariri who was Prime Minister from 1992 until 2000 and then briefly in 2004-2005, and incorporated many warlords and militia leaders into the government (Traboulsi 2015). From the initial major protest held on August 22nd until the HIRAK started to dwindle both in size and momentum on October 8, it became obvious that protesters had come to Riad El Solh and Martyrs' Squares in downtown Beirut to express all sorts of grievances (Al Jadeed TV 2015).

During that time, there were 7 major protests held in Martyrs' Square and Riad El Solh Square in Downtown Beirut, and daily events and interventions organized by the different collectives that had come together alongside the "You Stink" Collective¹⁵. The turnout on the first two protests (on August 22 and 23) was unexpected. People gathered in Riad El Solh Square in Beirut starting 6PM. Both protests continued well into the night and split between Riad El Solh and Martyrs' Square when police assaulted¹⁶ protesters. While people continued to flock to these squares over the next few days, "You Stink" called for redeployment and the organization of a major protest one week later. On August 29, the largest protest was held in Martyrs' Square with an estimated number of 80,000-100,000 protesters according to the organizers (You Stink), and tens of thousands according to various press accounts. The press called this rally a "National Wedding". On September 9 and 16, more protests were held in Martyrs'

¹⁵ For more details on the events of the protests as they unfolded, the institutional origins of waste management problems, and the tactics the government deployed, see Ziad Abu Rish's *Garbage Politics*, in *Middle East Research and Information Project MER 277*, 45(winter 2015) (Abu Rish 2015).

¹⁶ There were young men clashing with the police on the evenings of August 22nd and 23rd. They were referred to as infiltrators (*Mondasseen*) by members of You Stink. On the other hand, leftist activists considered that they were from marginalized groups oppressed by the sectarian regime. For more information, see Nakhal, Jana in *Al Adab* online magazine (Nakhal 2015).

Square during and after the sessions of the renewed national dialogue¹⁷.

On September 19, another activity of contentious nature, “Souk Abou Rakhoussa”¹⁸, was held in Riad El Solh Square following Head of Beirut Traders Association Nicolas Chammas’ statement against protesters. A few days earlier, during a press conference, Chammas had declared that there were “remnants of Marxism and Communism that were rejected by Russia and China that sought to ignite a class war in Lebanon” but “that the liberal economy would never be destroyed God forbid”. He also asserted that the Beirut Central District, the pride of Lebanese, was for everyone and that “those phonies will not be allowed to transform it to a cheap (Abou Rakhoussa), undignified and shameful market” (Chammas 2015). As a result, a group of protesters with leftist inclinations called to hold an “Abou Rakhoussa market” in the heart of Beirut’s downtown. And so a popular market, with makeshift stands selling products as cheap as LBP500¹⁹, spontaneously came together on September 19, in Riad El Solh Square.

On September 20, a march was organized from Bourj Hammoud to Martyrs’ Square then Nejme Square in an attempt to rally more people and encourage them to join the protest. On October 8, and after a long break on the occasion of Eid Al Adha, a final major protest was held in Martyrs’ Square, where it would become visible that the Hirak was almost finished. That night ended with a handful of protesters encircled by

¹⁷ Since 2008, and after the violent May clashes, the main Lebanese parties instigated the National Dialogue process chaired by President Suleiman. The main political leaders of the country asserted that this dialogue could provide a platform to discuss complex issues that require national consensus.

¹⁸ The Market of Abou Rakhoussa; Abou Rakhoussa is a colloquial term that means cheap.

¹⁹ Approximately every LBP1,500 is \$1.

the water trucks of the riot police²⁰, hosing them down at the corner of Rue Weygand²¹.

B. Main Groups of the Hirak and Their Strategies of Intervention

Besides the unorganized protesters that spontaneously took to the streets, there were a few organized collectives, coalitions of environmentalists, NGOs and other groups that were involved. They were composed mostly of young, educated, urban, and middle-class activists²². The main groups can be defined as follow:

1. You Stink

You Stink (tol'it rihetkon) was the most prominent collective. Composed mostly of activists involved in previous Non-governmental and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs and CSOs) working in Lebanon, and other countries of the region from Tunisia and Turkey²³. You Stink spearheaded most of the mobilization efforts calling on people to take their grievances to the street. These activists were mostly educated, young men who lived in urban settings (Abi Yaghi, Catusse and Younes 2016). Their tactics utilized social media outlets (they were very active on Facebook), and methods of direct and indirect nonviolent action inspired by the work of American Political Scientist Gene Sharp (Sharp 1973)²⁴. They also relied heavily on the work of

²⁰ For more information on the tactics the government deployed to deflect the protests, see Lamia Moghnie and Moe Ali Nayel in “The Protests in Lebanon Three Months After, A reading of police coercive strategies, emerging social movements and achievements” in *New Politics*; available from <http://newpol.org/content/protests-lebanon-three-months-after> (Moghnie and Nayel 2015).

²¹ Participant Observation.

²² Participant Observation.

²³ Individuals from You Stink worked with NGOs in the Arab region.

²⁴ Participant Observation

volunteers for the organization of protests (especially on the major protest of August 29), whereby decision-making was concentrated in the hands of a few activists²⁵ and the rest of participants were called to volunteer in the campaign to help with “organizational tasks” (Kerbage 2016). If volunteers couldn’t help with these tasks, You Stink asked artists, designers, musicians that wanted to get involved to help with their “creativity”²⁶.

2. We Want Accountability

We Want Accountability (Badna Nhassib) was the second most prominent collective, present on the ground and in the realms of social media with close to 50,000 likes on Facebook²⁷. It included left-leaning members with close affinities to numerous political parties such as the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party, the People’s Movement (Harakat Al-Sha’ab), and part of the youth organization of the Lebanese Communist Party (Ittihad ash- shahab al-dimoqrati) (Abi Yaghi *et al.* 2016). This collective also organized numerous activities ranging from symbolic protests to talks and conferences²⁸.

3. Smaller Collectives and Other Groups

Other collectives involved in the Hirak were The People Want (ach-cha‘ab yourid) that included individuals with leftist affinities, feminist groups, university student clubs, local grassroots movements, and small political parties like the Socialist

²⁵ Participant Observation. August 29, 2015.

²⁶ You Stink, Facebook Post on You Stink Page, posted August 25, 2015.

²⁷ www.facebook.com/BadnaNhaseb/

²⁸ A more detailed listing of the activities of We want accountability can be found on their Facebook page (www.facebook.com/BadnaNhaseb).

Forum²⁹; To the Streets ('ash-shara'a) mostly activists from the political party Democratic Left Movement (Al yassar al dimoqrati)³⁰, as Thawrat 22 aab (August 22 revolution) or Chabeb 22 aab (August 22 Youth) that included activists and journalists with left leaning inclinations (Abi Yaghi *et al.* 2016).

These aforementioned collectives emerged from and constituted themselves through the Hirak and organized activities in areas Greater Beirut mostly. As the Hirak progressed, regional campaigns sprung throughout different localities that were being considered by the government as sites for potential landfills. These included Barja south of Beirut, Baalbek, Akkar with the campaign of Akkar mana mazbaleh - Akkar is not a Dumpsite, and Naameh where the temporary landfill operated for years opposed by Al-Hamla al-ahliya li 'iqfal matmar ann-na'meh - The Communal Campaign to close the Naameh Landfill³¹. The Communal Campaign to close the Naameh Landfill existed prior to the Hirak, and had led many efforts to protest the negative effects of the Naameh landfill on the residents of the region.

4. Pre-established Groups and Participating NGOs

Apart from these impromptu collectives, there were pre-established organizations (mostly NGOs) and networks that took part in the Hirak. Of these I mention three: The Lebanese Eco-movement, the Legal Agenda, and Offre-Joie. In 2012, numerous NGOs working on issues related to the environment joined together to establish the Lebanese Eco-movement with the purpose to “save our cultural and natural

²⁹ Participant Observation.

³⁰ Participant Observation.

³¹ Participant Observation.

heritage”³². The movement now regroupes around 60 environmental NGOs. The Legal Agenda is an NGO registered and based in Beirut that works towards improving the understanding of the law by ordinary citizens. The Legal Agenda advocates the use of legal means as a tool to enhance public accountability and secure the rights of marginalized groups. Offre-Joie is a “politically and religiously independent Lebanese non-governmental humanitarian organisation.”

Representatives from all of these groups gathered and met regularly at the offices of the Legal Agenda in Badaro. They constituted a core committee in charge of decision-making and follow-up on the Hirak as it progressed, looking into protest organization, setting deadlines for the authorities, drafting memos, press announcements, etc. (El Zein 2015). This core committee also included political activists, present in their capacity as individuals, such as former Labor and Telecommunications Minister Dr. Charbel Nahas, and former Head of the Union Coordination Committee³³ and present Secretary General of the Communist Party Hanna Gharib, which has been fighting for the rights of teachers and for salary increases.

The Lebanese Minister Akram Chehayeb, who was appointed by the government to head a committee to propose solutions to the waste management issue, invited the Hirak to join in on the negotiations³⁴. An environmental commission was

³² The founders of these NGOs are respectively Environmentalist Paul Abi Rached, Lawyer Nizar Saghieh and Lawyer Melhem Khalaf. For more information, see their respective websites: <http://www.Lebanonecomovement.org/>; <http://www.legal-agenda.com/mannahnou.php>; <http://www.offrejoie.org/about>.

³³ This committee led a two-year long (2012-2014) struggle in the form of protests, rallies, and strikes to pressure parliament to pass a law that would revise and increase the ranks and salaries scales of teachers and public servants - to no avail.

³⁴ <http://www.lorientlejour.com/article/942146/chehayeb-appelle-les-associations-et-les-experts-a-lui-proposer-des-solutions.html>

formed part of the Hirak's core committee, including Melhem Khalaf from Offre-Joie, Nizar Saghieh from The Legal Agenda, Charbel Nahas, and Paul Abi Rached from the Lebanese Eco-movement. This commission consulted with additional environmentalist experts³⁵ who had been already using various platforms online (social media outlets) and offline (through their presence in the protests and their connections with activists from various collectives) to push for specific solutions³⁶ to the waste management problems revolving around sorting and recycling at the source³⁷. I will go back to the notion of experts in the next chapter.

C. Protesters' Claims/Grievances

The Hirak emerged at a time when the regional conjuncture had changed tremendously since 2011, especially with the repercussions of the Syrian Crisis on Lebanon, and Hezbollah's direct involvement in it.

1. Socio-Economic Grievances

Protesters said they were deprived of their basic social, political, civil, and personal rights in Lebanon. They asserted their right to proper shelter and decent housing, with affordable access to electricity and water provided by the state. They said they lacked a clean, safe and healthy living environment. Many, like this woman for

³⁵ like Naji Kodeih, an environmentalist expert and toxicologist, or Ziad Abi Chaker, the CEO of Cedar Environmental, an environmental consulting company that proposes services to municipalities and industries.

³⁶ Participant Observation.

³⁷ See for example Abi Chaker's Campaign on sorting "Sar Lezem Rassak Yifroz - يفرز راسك لازم صار" or the subsequent Campaign "Zero Waste Lebanon". <https://www.facebook.com/RassakYifroz/>.

example, objected the new rent law³⁸ that would deprive families from shelter:

I am at the protest because of the new rent law. This law will make one million Lebanese refugees in their own country. This terrible rent law is unfair to one million Lebanese families.³⁹

Moreover, protesters suffered from joblessness⁴⁰ and claimed their right to employment and decent pay. Forced migration was brought up with many pointing out to the increasing difficulty for Lebanese to make it abroad, be it in the Gulf or in the Western World⁴¹. On another note, parents and youth together expressed their right to education, both in schools and in higher education. They demanded quality public education and deplored, as this woman, the outrageous costs of higher education in Lebanon and the degradation of the public university:

Which university will I then send my children to when they turn 18?
Now this scares me more than bullets.⁴²

In 1970, Lebanon counted 40,000 students enrolled in universities across the country. This number today is 190,000 students. While those from the Lebanese

³⁸ The Lebanese Parliament issued a law to liberalize old rent contracts in June 2014. Since then, various committees and informal groups pushing to protect the rights of tenants in Lebanon have been opposing this new rent law by organizing protests and appealing against the law. In 2015, the parliament's administration and justice committee introduced several amendments to the law but confusion remains as to its implementation.

³⁹ Video Al Jadeed, September 9, 2015. Martyrs' Square. Beirut.

⁴⁰ In May 2015, and according to the Lebanese Ministry of Labour 25% of the Lebanese population were unemployed; 36% of the youth. According to the World Bank this percentage was on the rise. 220,000 Lebanese, most of them unskilled youth, were expected to become unemployed by end of 2015. *Source*: Oxfam discussion paper. Lebanon: Looking ahead in times of Crisis (Oxfam 2015).

⁴¹ This idea makes way to interesting questions on the role of remittances in sustaining the Lebanese economy and the livelihood of many Lebanese homes, the changes as a result of the 2008 global economic crisis, and the growing obstacles facing Lebanese looking for jobs abroad.

⁴² Video Al Jadeed, August 23, 2015. Riad Al Solh Square. Beirut.

University accounted for 50 % of all such students in 1970, this percentage fell to 38% in 2011 (Chaaban 2015)⁴³.

Protesters also talked about people dying at the doorstep of hospitals and upheld their right to healthcare and health coverage as well as social welfare and social security coverage for the elderly. Furthermore, the right to the city (Beirut and Tripoli were mentioned on several occasions), reclaiming the commons, the coast and the seaside fronts were too part of protesters' requests. They emphasized that they were against corruption and that they were affected by the national debt. Numerous groups of protesters proclaimed specific rights including revisiting the ranks and salaries scale, women's rights to pass on the Lebanese Nationality, and implementing Law 220/2000 which concerns people with disabilities and which states, amongst other things, that firms with more than 60 employees must reserve 3% of jobs for them⁴⁴.

The civil war constituted a turning point in the protesters' discourse about their grievances. For the older generation who lived through the years 1975-1990, warlords started the war and took over the reins of rule 40 years ago. They are still in power today and it is their practices and the system they have established that are responsible for the degradation of the quality of living of Lebanese. In Martyrs' Square, an old man affirms:

40 years and everything is the same. They are the same. And we live in corruption, humiliation and sectarianism. The people are all here. The sectarian tension is created at the level of the politicians.⁴⁵

Some of the younger generation of the protesters regards the post-war era as

⁴³ In 1960, there were 4 private universities in Lebanon. The number rose to 43 after the end of the Lebanese Civil War (more specifically 1995-2002).

⁴⁴ From Al Jadeed Footage.

⁴⁵ Video Al Jadeed, September 9, 2015. Martyrs' Square. Beirut.

the starting point. Warlords consolidated their power in the early 90s and Lebanon and Lebanese have been the prey of a system set up 25 years ago. The contrast between 25 years and 40 years is interesting and denotes certain continuity between generations. The older and the younger generation of protesters perceive the government (or part of it for some) as constituted by previous warlords who were consecutively belligerents then peace-builders since 1975. It would be pertinent to correlate protesters' claims with the way peace and post-war Lebanon's social, economic and political system was contrived.

2. Political Grievances

When it came to political grievances, protesters lamented the lack of democracy and insisted on their right to choose their own representatives. On the other hand, many conceded the failure of political representation in Lebanon - as several put it "politicians do not represent the people anymore" – and condemned the destruction of state institutions. They said they suffered because of nepotism, favoritism and clientelism. An older man said that the public sector has been eroded:

We work for them and they take everything. I have four children they're supposed to be working in the public sector but really they're not. They're working for the politicians. I despise all of them."⁴⁶

Several others cited the difficulty of registering their children in public schools or of joining the army and the armed forces without having to pull strings in that case too. Sectarianism was mentioned on numerous occasions. It is important to note that protesters do not dismiss religion or political parties. They do say however that sectarianism, as practiced by politicians, creates artificial rifts and dissent in society, and paralyzes decision-making processes. They go on to confirm that Lebanese are

⁴⁶ Video Al Jadeed. (2015). Riad Al Solh Square, Beirut, August 23.

united and that it is the ruling class that tries to sow discord amongst them⁴⁷. Protesters also very frequently cited human rights values when they were interviewed. They refused humiliation and inequality and asked for dignity, freedom, equality and social justice⁴⁸.

3. Protesters' Socio-Economic Locations

As Abi Yaghi, Catusse and Younes have shown (2016), most activists in the different collectives and NGOs were young, educated, urban, and middle-class. Generally, other protesters belonged to two different social groups: An educated middle and upper middle class that is quite vocal and visible around and after the protest held on the 29th of August, and lower income groups present mostly around August 22nd and 23rd (Abi Yaghi *et al.* 2016). Lower income groups were easy to identify as they clearly articulated socio-economics demands and correlated their participation in the Hirak with their inability to cope with an increasingly unbearable situation⁴⁹. Many stated their monthly income (situated for some around LBP 750,000). Others talked about the difficulty of buying or renting a house and the financial impossibility of getting married and starting their own family.

The transcribed statements from TV footage, coupled with my participant

⁴⁷ Of the 170 statements transcribed, there was no mention of secularism or the secular state per say. Religious officials, functions and religious institutions were not cited either. Protesters declared wanting a civic state (*dawla madania*) and not a secular state. The right to security and a safe homeland (*watan*) were also part of the protesters' demands. The analysis of such implications exceeds the scope of this thesis.

⁴⁸ Prior to 2102, and according to the World Bank (World Bank, Global Poverty Working Group) an estimated 27.4% of the Lebanese population lived below the poverty line (with less than \$2 per day); 37% with less than \$4 per day). Source: Oxfam discussion paper. Lebanon: Looking ahead in times of Crisis (Oxfam 2015).

⁴⁹ Participant observation.

observation reflected three things: (1) many protesters were participating in such contestation activities for the first time⁵⁰, (2) for the most, they were not members in organized NGOs or collectives and (3) came from specific regions in Lebanon⁵¹. There seemed to be less involvement from areas with a major Christian populace, such as Metn and Kesserwan, compared to other areas⁵².

In sum, there was contingency and dependence in the Hirak. The evolution of such mobilization was possible but could not have been predicted or prepared ahead of time. The Hirak itself stemmed from the waste management problems and the accumulation of garbage in the streets. The collectives themselves were formed through and part of the Hirak and protesters found a platform to express their socio-economic grievances. Other than the impromptu collectives, pre-established organizations (mostly NGOs) and networks took part in the Hirak too, including the Lebanese Eco-movement, the Legal Agenda, and Offre-Joie whose representatives, key members of the Hirak's self-appointed core committee⁵³, would go on to negotiate waste management issues with the government's special committee headed by Lebanese Minister Akram

⁵⁰ Outside of traditional party politics mobilization.

⁵¹ These included - in alphabetical order and as cited by the protesters themselves: Akkar, Arqoub, Baalbek, Basta, Bint Jbeil, Brih, the Cedars, Chiyah, Chhim, Chouf area and the Jabal, Dahieh area, Damour area and surroundings, Haret Hreik, Hermel, Iqlim Al Kharroub, Iqlim Al Tuffah, Kesserwan, Minieh, Naameh and the surroundings, Qana, Ras el Nabaa, Sabtieh, Shebaa Farms, Tebbaneh, Tripoli area. The two regions that were predominant were the North, and the Chouf. The government's suggestion to open two new landfills in Akkar and in the Chouf could have prompted significant participation from these areas in the *Hirak*.

⁵² Based on participant observation. As a whole, and in addition to this, it seemed that rural representation was larger than urban representation but this of course warrants further study and observation.

⁵³ Though many committees of NGOs and even social movements are self-appointed, I mention this to highlight the prevalence of an expert approach in decision making in the *Hirak*.

Chehayeb.

The Hirak's core committee would bring forward the recommendation of environmentalist experts to push for specific solutions to the waste management problems. As I have shown in this chapter, the protesters' initial claims related to socio-economic grievances, not only to the trash, and most certainly not to the different technical arrangements of waste management. In the following chapter, I detail the notion of expert, as it constituted itself through the Hirak and shed light on their suggestions to solve the waste management problems, referred to during the summer of 2015 as the 'trash crisis'.

CHAPTER V

CONSOLIDATION OF THE EXPERT MODEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH KNOWLEDGE

Intellectuals of the HIRAK diagnosed waste management problems, suggested solutions and tried to motivate people to join them either in protesting or in implementing these solutions.

A. Frame Perspective

As I mentioned earlier, social movements literature focuses on mobilization, resources, capacities, framing and political opportunities. I borrow the concept of framing (Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford 1986) to introduce how I grouped knowledge producers, their ideas, and types of knowledge produced and disseminated. This approach stems from the school of symbolic interactionism and takes Goffman's frame analytic perspective as its conceptual theoretical framework (Snow *et al.* 1986). Goffman, who wrote in the tradition of Karl Mannheim⁵⁴ used the idea of frames to label various types of interpretations where individuals locate, identify, and label various events, assign them meaning, organize experience and inspire action⁵⁵.

In this specific case, framing allows us to analyze how people understood situations and activities and to identify categories for such analysis. Since we have seen protesters as well as groups of activists who organized on the spur of the moment in collectives, framing allows accounting for the frames projected by intellectuals.

⁵⁴ See for example Trevino, Javier. *Goffman's Legacy*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2003. (Trevino 2003; Scheff 2015).

⁵⁵ See for example, Goffman, Erving. (1959). *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Random House.

Whether they were part of collectives or not, intellectuals here are considered in the Gramscian sense, i.e. those who played a role in creating and disseminating knowledge, present on various levels of the social sphere, and possessing technical and scientific knowledge and the potential capacity to rally and organize.

Founders of framing theory in social movements, Benford and Snow (2000) introduce three types of core framing tasks: diagnostic to identify a problem and indicate what causes it, prognostic to predict the desired turn of events by suggesting solutions to the problem, and motivational to promote the desire and willingness to participate (Benford and Snow 2000). Reminding us of Mannheim's notion of *Weltanschauung*, they assert that there needs to be a relationship between frames and the larger belief system or worldview, or else frames risk to be dismissed (Benford and Snow 2000). The processes through which frames are developed can be discursive, strategic or contested⁵⁶.

B. Definition of the Expert Model of Engagement with Knowledge

So how exactly did the intellectuals of the HiraK diagnose the trash problems, what solutions did they suggest and how did they encourage others to participate in their undertakings? As I will show, the expert model of engagement with knowledge was prevailing during the protests and other activities of contention, where intellectuals, characterized by their professionalization and claims to expertise, privileged an

⁵⁶ While there's no doubt that there were narratives and tactics contesting the movement of protests against the government's handling of waste management problems, the study and analysis of such narratives and tactics once again exceed the scope of this thesis and will not be considered.

evidence-based activist approach (Rabeharisoa *et al.* 2014)⁵⁷.

1. Evidence Based Activism and Expertise

Evidence based activism is a concept coined by Vololona Rabeharisoa, Tiago Moreira and Madeleine Akrich in their study of organizations dealing with science and seeking to advocate and push for certain causes that are presented as the outcomes of their activities and not their trigger (Rabeharisoa *et al.* 2014). These organizations embed themselves in networks of expertise, sometimes cooperating with authorities and other professionals. Their work is counterpoised to social movements, as it leads them “to adopt a ‘reformist’ rather than a purely confrontational perspective.” (Rabeharisoa *et al.* 2014, 6)

Expertise is the faculty of individuals or groups, who possess certain skills, knowledge, or experience to make claims, express opinions and suggest propositions concerning a specific issue at hand. The credibility of experts is validated by virtue of their know-how, training and education. Experts use that to provide evidence that their propositions stand true; hence the notion of evidence based activism as mediated through them. As Rabeharisoa, Moreira and Akrich have shown, evidence-based activism unravels on the one hand “the articulation between knowledge and politics”, which is the mode of operation of such form of activism, and the “work necessary to perform this articulation”, which entails building networks, collaborating and attempting to reform from within (Rabeharisoa *et al.* 2014,.5).

I adapt and expand this notion to capture activists and environmentalists’

⁵⁷ Drawing on Vololona Rabeharisoa, Tiago Moreira and Madeleine Akrich, concept of ‘evidence-based activism’, I adapt it here to capture activists and environmentalists’ varying forms of engagements with knowledge through and during the protests.

varying forms of engagement with knowledge. Focused on technical knowledge production and mobilization, and on the creation of a collective network of expertise, expert-intellectuals sought to integrate the secular, and apolitical ‘civil society’, different from the sectarian ‘communal society’. As shown through their discourses, members of political parties and people whom they cast as sectarian were not part of their audience⁵⁸. They also played out their techniques off and on the streets, during, and through protests and other types of directed actions.

C. Dominant Groups of Experts

The Hirak highlighted two different dominant groups of actors engaging with knowledge: the environmentalists and the professional civil society activists⁵⁹.

1. Environmentalists

The environmentalists consisted mostly of members, co-founders, and presidents of environmentalist NGOs - some of which are part of the network Lebanese Eco-Movement⁶⁰ - and independent experts, most of which run their own consulting private companies.

⁵⁸ Participant observation.

⁵⁹ The definition attributed to Civil Society here is that of the World Bank, developed by a number of leading research centers: “the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) therefore refer to a wide of array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations”. It excludes political parties. From “Defining Civil Society” available from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/0,,contentMDK:20101499~menuPK:244752~pagePK:220503~piPK:220476~theSitePK:228717,00.html>.

⁶⁰ Others like Greenline who are not.

Paul Abi Rached, Naji Kodeih, Naji Chamieh and Ziad Abi Chaker are representatives of such groups in Latour's sense of the word. Their expertise stems from their professional experience in NGOs that deal with environmental issues⁶¹, in private companies that deliver environmental solutions⁶² and/or from their credentialed education as environmental engineers or toxicologists⁶³. In terms of expertise, Ajwad Ayash, one of the main organizers of the Campaign to close the Naameh Landfill, an environmentalist campaign par excellence, did not enjoy the same level of authority. Because he did not enjoy the same credentials, he is not referred to as 'expert' and when interviewed or invited to speak part of a panel, he's usually there in his capacity as activist or as a member of the Campaign.

Environmentalists sought an articulation of their technical knowledge with politics, i.e. to turn their ideas into words or acts that would influence actions taken in regard to the waste management problem, and to bring that knowledge together with that of protesters. Relying on reducing, recycling, sorting at the sources and advocating for decentralization and the liberation of funds allocated to the municipalities, the environmentalist experts rejected incinerators and the need for landfills, and encouraged citizens to adopt individually responsible and eco-conscious behaviors. On July 26, 27 and 28, 2015, Paul Abi Rached for example presents an initial plan with such features. During one of the early protests, he takes the stage and claims the following:

⁶¹ Like Naji Abi Rached, the co-founder and president of T.E.R.R.E. Liban an NGO founded in 1995 and that works on environmental education from the promotion of behavior change, and environmental solutions for sustainable development. <http://www.terreliban.org/english/corporate/A-propos-de/T.E.R.R.E.Liban-Association.html>.

⁶² like Naji Chamieh from Sustainable Environmental Solutions or Ziad Abi Chaker from Cedar Environmental.

⁶³ Chamieh and Abi Chaker are engineers while Kodeih is a toxicologist

Until today, until this very moment, they keep saying the Naameh Landfill has closed, we want to open a new landfill. Do you accept such proposition? (...) There's another option. There are companies that said we want to take the garbage to incinerators and produce electricity. Let me explain. If we burn one ton of paper, it will give us \$100 worth of electricity but if we take it to the Wadi Chahrour recycling plant, it will give us \$600 worth of paper. So which is better? The electricity or the paper plan?"⁶⁴

Experts also provided examples that prove that their suggested strategies could be efficient, ranging from Abi Chaker's Zero Waste philosophy⁶⁵ to Abi Rached's recycling success story with paper recycling and the color coded sorting method with green for organic waste, red for non-organic and white for paper and paper products⁶⁶. Practically on the ground, this translated into the propagation of a major slogan, 'no to incinerators, no to landfills, yes to sorting at the source, in many variations'⁶⁷.

Moreover, environmentalist experts were not isolated actors. They built on existing networks and strived to create new ones to push their suggestions forward. On

⁶⁴ Initial plan presented by Paul Abi Rached, On July 26, 27 and 28 2015. For more info, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnDoWN0Zcoc>.

⁶⁵ See for example the documentary produced by Abi Chaker on how to turn the Garbage Crisis from curse to blessing (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC-k7aj2Ip0&feature=youtu.be>) or more recently his project on Beit Mery as a Zero Waste municipality using his company's services.

⁶⁶ Participant observation. Also, see Abi Rached plan's for the *Hirak* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnDoWN0Zcoc>.

⁶⁷ There was also another prevalent slogan 'x region is not a dump', termed as an expression of Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) type of contention. Marwan Kraidy equates the "You Stink" movement with a NIMBY type of movement where the nation is a metaphor for the backyard; an assertion that can be easily contested by the fact that the You Stink movement objected to the government's solution that entailed exporting the trash abroad (Kraidy 2016). Drawing on Paul Kingston's work on Greening Sectarianism, Marie Noelle Yaghi *et al.* also mention NIMBY type of movements where demands to solve waste management problems are enmeshed in social, political, cultural, economic, and sectarian considerations resulting in local clashes and contention, refusing that a certain area becomes soiled with trash, dumpsites and landfills at the expense of its inhabitants and for the benefit of others (Kingston 2013b; Abi Yaghi *et al.* 2016).

the streets, they coupled with the professional civil society activists from the You Stink and other collectives and participated in the core committee of the Hirak to which I will come back to later in this chapter. In meeting rooms, they took part in negotiating with the government Minister Akram Chehayeb's⁶⁸ plan for waste management.

a. A Case Study: the AUB NCC Taskforce

Another example of how experts were not isolated actors is the pertinent American University of Beirut (AUB) Task Force on Solid Waste Management. On the initiative of Chemistry Professor and director of the AUB Nature Conservation Center (NCC) Dr. Najat Saliba, some sixty AUB professors and a dozen of students and staff with a broad array of expertise related to waste management and its problems, joined forces to form a university-wide task force during the summer of 2015. The Task Force met regularly to address the trash problems and to suggest solutions. It organized several workshops with municipality representatives to evaluate their readiness in regard to waste management and to train them⁶⁹.

The Task Force also drafted a roadmap document that outlines technical guidance towards sustainable waste management strategies and met with Minister Chehayeb, agreeing with him to collaborate on the advising of rural municipalities. In October 2016, NCC and the Task force finally launched the roadmap report in Arabic

⁶⁸ Chehayeb plays a central role in environmental networks since the 1990s. I will develop this idea in the next chapter. After much ado, this plan was finally passed in March 2016 and included a temporary solution that spans 4 years and revolves around the establishment of two landfills, in Burj Hammoud and Costa Brava, while the government develops a long-term waste management plan based on decentralization. This opened the call for bidding through the Council for Development and Reconstruction. Contracts were awarded in July 2016 to Jihad Al Arab Company for the two landfills as well as for the sorting and treatment of waste. The collection and transport of waste remained with Sukleen.

⁶⁹ Participant Observation

including recommendations for addressing the trash problems in rural areas (excluding Beirut and other densely populated regions as the report states) (AUB Task Force 2016). The strategy adopted in the report⁷⁰ was very similar to the recommendations upheld in the streets including reducing, reusing, recycling, composting, and recovering waste and - with a slight difference - the recourse to landfills⁷¹.

It is worth noting here that the workshop model to address complex economic, societal and political problems is common in the expert model of engagement with knowledge. As Kosmatopoulos has shown, the workshop is a tool to achieve a certain goal in a specific configuration of time, space, and learning and validated because of academic credentials and moral superiority (Kosmatopoulos 2014). Furthermore, the workshop entails the reproduction of a professionalized and polarized arena of experts versus ignorant public; in this case environmental experts who sought to educate citizens on responsible eco-conscious behaviors and also AUB experts who addressed municipality representatives (Kosmatopoulos 2014).

Finally, the objection to the privatization of waste management services was rarely part of the discourse of environmentalist experts. Their call for decentralization could provide those entrepreneurial among them with opportunities for consulting work projects and contracts. An example that illustrates this point is Abi Chaker's contract

⁷⁰ AUB Task Force. Guide to Municipal Solid Waste Management. Published on Jan 27, 2016. Available online at https://issuu.com/ibsar-aub/docs/guide_to_municipal_solid_waste_mana.

⁷¹ Chehayeb agreed that Lebanese municipalities could manage their own waste as long as they respected the conditions of his waste management plan including the capacity, available land and resources and environmental standards needed to do so. (<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2016/Aug-30/369628-capable-municipalities-can-manage-their-own-waste-chehayeb.ashx>)

with the municipality of Beit Mery⁷² in line with minister Chehayeb's agreement for municipalities to manage their own waste if they were deemed capable. If waste management remains centralized, those environmental experts would be deprived of work opportunities because they would not have the capacity to compete in bids and offer services of waste collection and treatment. It would also seem very unlikely that larger companies like Averda would resort to outsource and seek out their expertise.

2. Professional Civil Society Activists

The professional civil society activists were the other dominant group of actors engaging with knowledge in the Hirak. As I mentioned earlier, they were mostly young, male, urban, and educated activists involved in previous Non-governmental and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs and CSOs) working in Lebanon, and other countries of the region from Tunisia and Turkey. Their training, involvements in previous protests and past experience in other activists' movements validate their expertise.

When they are not employed by NGOs, their education and practice are often in the fields of legal work, media, design and art professions, and/or research⁷³. Representatives of this group in Latour's sense of the word are founders of the You Stink movement (for instance, human rights lawyers and activists Marwan Maalouf and Wadih el Asmar, bloggers and Media practitioners Assaad Thebian and Imad Bazzi, and Theater director and Actor Lucien Bou Rjeily).

⁷² <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2016/Nov-09/380285-beit-mery-first-zero-waste-municipality.ashx>.

⁷³ Participant observation. Reminiscent of Bourdieu's notion of the new intellectuals in La distinction and Sean Nixon and Paul Du Gay's cultural intermediary as professions involving information and knowledge intensive forms of work that became essential to economic and cultural life (Nixon and Du Gay 2002). This requires more research for discussion and analysis and exceeds the scope of this thesis.

The professional civil society activists also articulated technical knowledge with politics. While protesters claims were an expression of popular discontent with clear socio-economic grievances, activists placed a clear emphasis on the trash problem and the government's incapacity and unwillingness to deal with problems⁷⁴. Their actions to address the trash issue, reminiscent of Gene Sharp's 198 methods of nonviolent action⁷⁵, ranged from issuing formal statements to symbolic public acts, non-violent raids on the ministry of the environment, the occupation of public space as an end for and by itself, and using the media to document violent state reactions and motivate people to join in on protests (Sharp 1973)⁷⁶.

The Hirak for example sought to reach Nejmeh Square several times for the purpose of occupying the square. After the protests had dwindled in size and momentum, activists also launched the day of the "White Ribbon" on October 28th, 2015, calling on all supporters to wear a white ribbon to signal their objection to the country's state of affairs and the government's incapacity to deal with the trash. The professional civil society activists networked with the environmentalist experts and other NGO experts that operate along the same framework - like the Legal Agenda's team - to form a core committee to oversee the development and evolution of the Hirak, meeting regularly as I previously mentioned.

a. Public Space/Public Sphere

⁷⁴ Participant Observation.

⁷⁵ According to Nicolas Dot Pouillard, some members of You Stink were close to the Otpor movement inspired by Gene Sharp's writings on nonviolent action as a theoretical basis for their campaigns to topple Milosevic in Serbia (Dot Pouillard 2015).

⁷⁶ Activists of numerous collectives mentioned Gene Sharp's books during the protests (participant observation).

Hanafi and Arvanitis assert that intellectuals, as academic-activists, need a space, a Habermasian public sphere, to thrive. In the transformation of the Hamra area in Ras Beirut from a militant intellectual sphere during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s to a globalized shopping area, they debate that the disappearance of “lively political public space” could explain the disengagement of academics from public intellectual life (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016, 294). During the HIRAK, many academics, journalists, writers, artists in their capacity as professional civil activists used to meet in cafes in Hamra, in art centers, and in the offices of NGOs such as Legal Agenda or Beyond Reform and Development. On other occasions, professional artists or academic experts with the skill set to address environmental issues or governance problems from a purely technical perspective spoke to highly cultured audiences. One such example is Homeworks 7 Forum, organized by Ashkal Alwan, the Lebanese Association for the plastic Arts, and during which many panels and talks tackled the HIRAK and the trash problems⁷⁷.

The possibility of a reconstitution of a Habermasian Public Sphere as a platform to enhance intellectuals’ engagement with the public at large, and potentially influencing spheres of decision-making is debatable. In the weeks following the last major protest, a group of activists launched “Massahat Niqash” – space for discussion, “an initiative to create spaces open to all people for debate in the streets, squares, neighborhoods, regions, and other public spaces, in order to discuss, listen, and think together about public affairs.”⁷⁸

Attendance to the first event organized on November 22nd in Martyrs’ Square

⁷⁷ See for instance panel with journalist Khaled Saghieh, activist Leen Hashem, artist Roger Outa, moderated by AUB professor and political scientist Samer Frangieh.

⁷⁸ Facebook Page of *Massahat Niqash*.

was timid. Participation did not pick up much in subsequent events held in conjunction with Beirut Madinati, “a volunteer-led campaign to elect a municipal council of qualified, politically unaffiliated individuals in the Lebanese May 2016 municipal elections”⁷⁹. Through Massahat Niqash, the use of public space for the purpose of public debates does not appear organic. The social relations of those who call for such events to the local dynamics of the streets, neighborhoods or public squares they want to occupy, often seems limited to that of activists or committed researchers to their subjects. It is, as Kosmatopoulos says, an approach of “small techniques over big questions” (Kosmatopoulos 2014).

In adopting a historical perspective on the matter, Marxist scholar Fawwaz Traboulsi questions the contribution of the public sphere to the democratic process in the Arab World (Traboulsi 2005). He notes that with every new trend of knowledge production in our region, old ways are often cast as obsolete where the use of experts’ discourse to suggest ready-made solutions to technical problems is not uncommon. The Habermasian public sphere is, as Nancy Fraser posits, “the theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through medium of talk”⁸⁰. According to Habermas, Fraser and Traboulsi, its birth coincided with the rise of capitalism and the formation of a bourgeois public standing in contrast with absolutist states in 18th century Europe.

The emergence of such public sphere in the Arab World was initiated by the expansion of peripheral capitalism during the last decade of the Ottoman Empire. It was characterized by urban development, the planning and arrangement of public and semi-

⁷⁹ <http://beirutmadinati.com/about-beirut-madinati/?lang=en>.

⁸⁰ Nancy Fraser (1992, 110) Cited in (Traboulsi, Public Spheres and Urban Space: A Critical Comparative Approach 2005).

public spaces (like the Sanayeh Garden for instance), and the Arab Nahda. However, colonial, national, and identitarian issues, like Europe's protection of minorities, and the transformation of clans into political formations, interrupted this growth (Traboulsi 2005). Traboulsi thus asks whether all public spaces are necessarily public spheres and whether they are truly contributive to the democratic process.

b. Civil/Communal

The Hirak has been almost exclusively associated with the term 'Madani' meaning civil in English, referring to the predominance of civil society. One slogan proclaimed during the protests was the controversial "all means all"⁸¹ referring to the responsibility of all political parties in leading the country to an exacerbation of trash and other problems⁸². This slogan also delineates the public the Hirak sought to address, a non-politicized, secular, modern and civil public known as 'al mujtama' al madani' that stands in opposition to 'al mujtama al ahli', the communal society, based on primordial ties, that regroups people who are sectarian or involved in political parties.

In line with the phenomenological approach that I adopted, and which aims at capturing the essence of knowledge production and use through and during the Hirak all the while focusing on the dominant voices, it is worth noting here that throughout the period of the Hirak, there were 'deliberate exercises in public sociology'. On the one hand, and in contrast with the NCC initiative and workshop to build the capacity of municipality to deal with their own waste, the Department of Sociology, Anthropology

⁸¹ In Arabic, this was used as "كلن يعني كلن".

⁸² For an explanation of what "All means All" in the Hirak, see Abbass Saad (activist) for Al Modon (<http://www.almodon.com/society/2016/7/30/كلن-والحراك-الأحزاب>) and Hasan Krayem for Annahar (<http://newspaper.annahar.com/article/270987-كلن-يعني-كلن-لماذا>).

and Media Studies at AUB, along with the Asfari Institute for Civil Society organized a series of conferences and panel discussions bringing together activists and academics and drawing large publics. This series, entitled ‘the Intersectionality of the Hirak’ addressed, à la Burawoy, a wide range of topics and issues around the Hirak ranging from a presentation of the different collectives to feminism, reclaiming the commons, mainstream media’s coverage of the protests, and the role of the Left, and was an occasion for many academics to test ideas.

On the other hand, there were numerous voices within the Hirak that did not conform to the expert model of engagement with knowledge. From graffiti on the ‘wall of shame’ erected in front of the Serail⁸³ to prevent protesters from crossing the barbwire separating the Serail from Riad Al Solh Square, to rap songs, and drawings by artists like Jana Traboulsi on the nature of the State⁸⁴, where the ‘political’ is not equated with ‘policing’, ‘policy-making’ or technical consensual governing particularly in the case of waste management issues (Swyngedouw 2009, 605).

D. Experts and the Elites

In “Reproducing Sectarianism, Advocacy Networks and the Politics of Civil Society in Postwar Lebanon”, Political Scientist and Policy Studies scholar Paul Kingston too asserts that the emergence of civil society had been directly linked to penetration of capitalist markets and that this emergence in the developing world had

⁸³ Headquarters of the Council of Ministers in Riad El Solh square.

⁸⁴ For more info, see *Bidayat*, an Arabic Quarterly Magazine, Issue 12, Fall 2015. This issue covered special topics related to the *Hirak* with articles by Journalist and activist Hassan El Zein, Academic and Activist Bassel Saleh, Journalist and novelist Sahar Mandour, Historian and Academic Ziad Abu Rish, Artist Jana Traboulsi and the lyrics of a rap song ‘we and the trash are neighbors’ written on the occasion of the Hirak by Bou Nasserine Al Touffar and Al Rass.

been unequal and uneven, complicated further by considerations such as communal, ethnic, regional and sectarian ties (Kingston 2013b). Because of the historical processes that have led to the entrenchment of sectarianism in Lebanon's political life - sectarianism understood in its cultural, social, political and economic dimensions - elite networking, and the co-opting of state institutions continue to privilege informal sectarian processes over more 'secular' ones related to civil society institutions (Kingston 2013b).

1. Environmental NGOs and Elite Co-Option

In the environmental NGOs sector in the post-war era, Kingston says that there's been a proliferation of associations that have all been co-opted by elites for two purposes: either to use them to limit challenges to their economic ambitions or to act as mechanisms that facilitate their hold over certain territories. Kingston also shows how powerful NGOs and networks operating outside these mechanisms have been neutralized. Embedding themselves within the system allowed many of these NGOs to achieve certain notable successes. To illustrate his argument, he mentions explicitly the forest fire prevention program that the Association for Forests Development and Conservation helped design and implement to protect, among others, the forests of the Chouf, with the help of their prominent co-founder who was none other than Minister of the Environment Akram Chehayeb (Kingston 2013a).

In sum, Kingston does not seek to delegitimize the work of NGOs and other CSOs on the contrary. On the whole, and when it comes to policy making, NGOs succeed in changing certain policies or pushing for the adoption of new ones, while also shooting themselves in the foot. He concludes by saying that:

Efforts to promote new rights-based directions in the postwar

Lebanese state formation have ultimately been stymied by the institutions and the political forces that combine to entrench and reproduce over time the country's sectarian political system (Kingston 2013b, 19).

Kingston thus contends that civil society organizations reproduce sectarianism by working through and alongside these sectarian informal networks and processes. In trying to address problems created by the ruling class, CSOs contribute to helping the regime reproduce itself through them.

2. Achievements of the Hirak

Though an ultimate solution to waste management was not reached, experts and activists contended that their achievements were many. They asserted that the Hirak succeeded in closing the Naameh Landfill⁸⁵, cancelling the first round of bids organized prior to the Chehayeb plan and awarded to six different companies from different sects, and replacing as head of the government's task force of the waste plan Minister of the Environment Mohammad Al Machnouk by Agriculture Minister Akram Chehayeb (Herzog 2016). But when Akram Chehayeb, a veteran of the post-war Ministry of the Environment, was involved in the previous waste management issues in 1998 as we will see in the next chapter, when 40 protesters seem to have been enough to close the Naameh Landfill and tens of thousands achieved little on the Hirak's biggest protest on September 9, and when Sukleen has been replaced with the company of contractor and president of Araco group of companies, Jihad Al Arab, a question remains: did the expert model and evidence based activist approach help, a la Kingston, reproduce the ruling class too?

To conclude, experts' voices dominated the Hirak. Adopting an evidence based

⁸⁵ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jul-17/307104-activists-to-act-as-human-shields-in-naameh-landfill-closure.ashx>

approach, environmentalists diagnosed waste management problems to suggest individually responsible solutions while roles of public spaces and the importance of public spheres constituted a major underpinning for the tactics employed by the professional civil society activists. Kingston has also shown that experts' work has long been entangled in that of the elite. In the following chapter, I examine more closely the role of environmental experts and the evolution of the environmentalist movements in Lebanon in the post-civil war years.

CHAPTER VI

WASTE EATS YOUR HISTORIES⁸⁶: ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY MAKING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Since the 1990s, activists groups and environmentalists have been addressing environment related issues - including trash problems - while trying to push for the shaping and implementation of new policies. Throughout this time, NGOs have helped the regime reproduce itself, while those operating outside the mechanisms of economic, cultural, social, and political sectarianism have been offset (Kingston 2013b).

A comprehensive, historical sketch of the environmentalist movement exceeds the scope of the thesis but I wish, in this chapter, to make three inferences that show that in 2015, the expert model of engagement with knowledge seeking to tackle environmental issues in Lebanon is part and parcel of the very system it seeks to address. First, that Akram Chehayeb who was appointed by the Government of Tamam Salam to negotiate the waste management problems in 2015 was also the ‘main architect’ of the Ministry of the Environment and its embedding in a network of experts during the 1990s; Second, that experts were on both sides of the problem with the HIRAK and against it; and third, that experts and the conditions that allowed them to pose at some point veritable challenges to the hegemony of the ruling class were marginalized.

A. Akram Chehayeb and the Ministry of Environment

During the 1990s, there was a global trend to care for environmental issues illustrated by the number of international conferences held and the availability of funds

⁸⁶ Expression coined by artist Jessica Khazrik during her exhibit at the Sursock National Museum in October 2016.

as well as donor agencies' willingness and interests to support green initiatives. Looking to "soak up on donor aid"⁸⁷ in a post war environmentally devastated country, Lebanon created its own Ministry of the Environment (MOE) in 1993 (Kingston 2013b). Because it was a ministry of secondary importance, unlike more 'sovereign ministries', the MOE presented certain political actors with an opportunity to join forces with a nascent environmental movement. This allowed these political actors and the NGOs to amplify their own voices within the ministry and the government. As Kingston put it:

The country quickly developed from scratch some of the necessary conditions needed to promote the emergence of a defined and focused environmental policy domain—a growing coterie of environmental activists, civil society networks, discourses, and national environmental institutions, in addition to external donor support (Kingston 2013b, 133).

Political elites and members of the ruling class also created their own environmental NGOs, encouraged by the availability of external donor capital. They were thus making use of global hegemonic forms of power at the local level, engaging with NGOs and CSOs to the benefit of their interests, and in parallel with environmental concerns (Kingston 2013b).

1. Chehayeb Builds the Ministry with His NGOs

A member of the predominantly Druze Progressive Socialist Party under the leadership of Walid Joumblatt, Akram Chehayeb was appointed to the MOE in 1996. Chehayeb who was previously high school science teacher, active participant in numerous environmental activities, and president of the NGO Association for Forests Development and Conservation (AFDC) was welcomed favorably by NGOs (Kingston 2013b).

⁸⁷ Makdisi, Karim (Makdisi 2008) cited in (Kingston 2013a, 133).

With funding from the UNDP, he helped build the MOE, recruiting qualified staff with credentialed education and connections to the different environmental associations, building institutionalized mechanisms to enhance outreach of the ministry, and promoting a national dialogue on the environment. During his tenure, the MOE scored notable achievements like repatriating toxic waste in 1996, and Joubblatt's closure of his quarries (Kingston 2013b)⁸⁸.

Kingston contends that the MOE under Chehayeb morphed into a platform for advocacy and meeting space for NGOs rather than into an arm of the executive. Chehayeb even called upon NGOs to participate in the formulation of plans and policies related to several environmental issues. On one incident, during the discussion in parliament of a law proposal to privatize coastal areas, Chehayeb even left his seat to go out and join protesting NGOs⁸⁹ (Kingston 2013b). On the whole, Chehayeb leveraged his connections with 'civil society', in line with his interests and those represented by his party's political capital. While his presence in government provided NGOs with political opportunities, it continued to be rooted in and an extension of the country's political, economic, and sectarian elites. Chehayeb's limits were thus "politics"⁹⁰ and this could not have been truer than in the government's waste management policies⁹¹.

⁸⁸ This closure further confirms Kingston's argument that some environmentalist NGOs' work operated in parallel with political considerations and interests of the elite.

⁸⁹ Kingston makes no assertions but alludes that Chehayeb was an 'activist' of some sort.

⁹⁰ As expressed by Abdullah Zakhia, a leading environmental lawyer and activist (Kingston 2013b, 156).

⁹¹ For a detailed description of how 'political dynamics', including the accumulation of resources and profits and the intermittent cycles of local resistance, contributed to policy immobilism in the case of waste management, see Kingston (2013b, 136-139).

2. Chehayeb and the Hirak

As we have seen, during the Hirak, the You Stink collective asked for the resignation of Minister of the Environment Mohammad Al Mashnouk. In August 2015, facing a political impasse, and seeking to address, at least in form, some of the protesters' demands, the Salam cabinet requested from Agriculture Minister Akram Chehayeb to replace Mashnouk in leading the government's task force and efforts to solve the waste management problems that had been looming over the country. In taking over this task, Chehayeb and his team worked on elaborating the "Chehayeb Plan" that started first with de-centralisation but was aborted soon after because of the different Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) movements that rejected landfills in Srar Akkar and in Majd el Anjar in the Bekaa⁹².

The Plan then suggested the exportation of the trash under the Basel Convention, a UN treaty that regulates trash exports that Lebanon had ratified in 1994. This move was also aborted because of issue of legality with the selected contracting companies. Finally, in March 2016, and through the Ministry of Interior, the Chehayeb plan was approved as a temporary solution for four years, with two landfills in Costa Brava and Borj Hammoud, and the promise to prepare for decentralization⁹³.

3. Other Institutions Involved In Waste Management

Waste management in Lebanon has always been a chronic problem for several reasons: high-density population in the Greater Beirut Area, a production of garbage in

⁹² Kingston contends that local grievances were triggered by political elites for waste management and other "broader, non-waste management-related political purposes" (Kingston 2013b, 139).

⁹³ For more details, see Bassam Al Kantar for Green Area <http://greenarea.me/ar/165886/شبه-الى-الكرة-أعيدت-لماذا-النفايات-ملف/>

very high quantities, and limited availability of land fit for landfills (Sadek and El-Fadel 2000). The practice of random waste dumping along the seashore and on street sides was prevalent throughout the years of the Lebanese Civil War. It resulted, amongst other things, in the creation of the Normandy Landfill, situated between present-day Zaituna Bay and Beirut's new waterfront (Sadek and El-Fadel 2000) in the city's downtown area.

a. Council for Development and Reconstruction

While it was previously the responsibility of the municipalities, when the war ended, the Council of Ministers assigned the task of waste management to the Lebanese Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) - (in 1992 to be exact)⁹⁴. Initially founded during the 1970s, the CDR's prerogatives grew over the years to include, starting the 1990s, the planning, supervision and implementation of major policies and projects. Consisting of four members, its executive arm makes all decisions, which can only be overruled by the Council of Ministers. The CDR is also in charge of overseeing SOLIDERE – Société Libanaise pour le Development et la Reconstruction, the private real estate holding company (SOLIDERE) established to develop and reconstruct Beirut at the end of the war (Sadek and El-Fadel 2000).

In 1993, the CDR awarded the bid for waste management in the country to Sukleen, founded initially in 1964 by Mayssara Khalil Sukkar (Sadek and El-Fadel 2000), an engineer close to the Hariri family. A few years later, in 1997, the first garbage "crisis" breaks out when the Bourj Hammoud site is closed following violent public protests. An emergency solution, consisting of using two landfills, and which

⁹⁴ <http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/party/social-movement-responding-lebanese-garbage-crisis>

lasts until July 2015, is implemented through then Minister of the environment Akram Chehayeb⁹⁵. During that whole time, the government did not put forward a long term and sustainable solution for waste management. It continued instead to reinstate Sukleen as the sole company responsible for garbage collection, treatment and disposal at the site of two landfills it was in charge of providing (in Naameh and Bsalim).

b. The Chehayeb Network

Environmentalists experts and professional civil society activists, joined forces during the Hirak in an attempt to address these persistent waste management problems. The role of the CDR and major contractors companies such as Sukleen or Al Arab and their relationships to the country's elite were bypassed in their approach. Instead, the impasse had been reduced, in discourse, to the rejection by experts of the propositions made by the Chehayeb's task force. This task force included nine experts in addition to minister Chehayeb and those were: President of AFDC Sawsan Bou Fakhreddine; green activist, journalist, and managing editor at Green Area (an online platform for environmental research and publication) Bassam Al Kantar; Senior UNDP advisor Manal Moussallem; UNDP project manager Nicolas Gharib; Head of UNDP's energy and environment unit in Lebanon Edgar Chehab; Director of the AUB Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management Unit Farouk Merhebi; Judge and director general of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdallah Ahmad; Chehayeb's special advisor at the ministry of agriculture Nabil Bou Ghanem and CDR's Head of the Department of Planning and Programming Ibrahim Chahrour.

⁹⁵ Lebanese Support's Civil Society Knowledge Management provides an interesting and comprehensive timeline of waste management policies, available at: <http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/party/social-movement-responding-lebanese-garbage-crisis>

4. The Battle of Experts, Landfills or Recycling at the Source⁹⁶

The Hirak was the site of contention of experts as well. The Government, through its own experts, pushed for the adoption of landfills and incinerators on the claim that it enables the production of energy from garbage. Experts from the Hirak contended that such practice would be impossible because of the composition of our national trash. They put forward other methods such as sorting at the source and encouraging the recycling industry, on the claim that it would help produce jobs, reinvigorate the economy, and result in the productions of goods for sale.

There were experts with and against the Hirak. Thus, the policy impasse was also in that, on both sides of the Hirak, the expert model of engagement with knowledge prevailed. Kingston coins the term “Chehayeb Network” (Kingston 2013b, 165), to mark the minister’s capacity to bridge the gap between civil and political society, but also to refer to the workings of political hegemony in the country that promotes environmental causes alongside NGOs but only when it is inscribed within the systems dictated by the elites.

In an interview he gave to the publication of the Legal Agenda, Hirak expert Naji Kodeih, who at one point during his career was a consultant to the MOE, argues:

The battle of experts can pose a serious challenge [to the court of public opinion]. We are more trusting of their words because they talk in the name of authoritative science, or so we believe. However, the experts of our battle today in Lebanon are not all alike. The government’s experts are the same ones who in the past justified and defended the choices that led to failure and corruption in the management of the garbage issue that we now witness, and those choices were made by a government consisting of the same people. Is it not Akram Chehayeb who produced the 1997 plan that precipitated the current crises, and who now asks us to trust him in his new plan,

⁹⁶ For more technical information on this see Maalouf, Habib in Assafir Feb 23, 2016, 8. ‘Reduce before sorting at the source.’ Columnist and writer Amer Mohsen discusses similar arguments in Al Akhbar, April 7, 2016. How to build a case from nothing.

which resembles all other plans produced by post-Taif governments?”
(Ghamroun and Mehanna 2015)

The conclusion of the interview, written by experts on the law working with the Legal Agenda, further confirms Kodeih’s assertions:

Hence, the public protest movement today must embrace experts like Naji Kodeih in order to achieve a beneficial balance between popular pressure, and sectorial expertise in proposals and projects that may one day rise to become an alternative program of governance. This balance, or this coming together of scientific knowledge and political action, remains to some extent absent (at least in sectors other than the environment). Without such collaboration, the government’s self-declared monopoly of the truth (based on expert opinion) will go unchallenged in these areas (Ghamroun and Mehanna 2015).

The expert model of engagement with knowledge is thus contested, and in the same time validated, by its own proponents that contend that expertise ought to be endowed with moral considerations. As Kosmatopoulos has shown, this is problematic as it entails, in addition to professionalisation and internationalisation, a selection process of what counts as political through silencing of other struggles (Kosmatopoulos 2014).

The omnipresence of experts in environmental issues is also not without reminding us of a more global process where environmental research and activism is increasingly centered on techno-politics and social scientific consensus whereas Swyngedouw argues:

Disagreement is allowed, but only with respect to the choice of technologies, the mix of organizational fixes, the detail of the managerial adjustments and the urgency of their timing and implementation” (Swyngedouw 2009, 611).

While in societies of the global north, such approaches denote the rise of a post-political and post-democratic condition (Swyngedouw 2009), in Lebanon they have been the result of different processes led mostly by availability of foreign funding (Makdisi 2012).

5. *Political Trajectories and Crisis*

So how does silencing occur? Apart from the trash, one other word seemed to be on every one's mouth during the summer of 2015, and that word is 'crisis'⁹⁷. The "buzzword of our times", "universalized and universalizing" (Kosmatopoulos 2014, 479), a crisis is a paroxysmal situation, in which existing pejorative conditions worsen to an untenable point. But 'crisis' is also "the primary enabling blind spot for the production of knowledge"⁹⁸. In our expert model's engagement of knowledge, crisis allows the confirmation of the workings of the economy and the social, political, and cultural structures, systems, and institutions. It also validates the approach of 'working from within' à la Kingston.

a. Dissonance with Socio-Economic Discontent

Instead of adopting a radical approach that is more akin to contentious social movement activities, experts ask, "what went wrong?" and seek to diagnose the problem and fix it. In a local, post-Taef, Lebanese context in 2015, outside of major party politics, and notwithstanding marginalized voices, the expert-intellectual is dominant, her skilled technical knowledge employed to address responsible individuals in 'civil society', influence policy and attempt to seek social change. This model of engagement with knowledge was in dissonance with the aura of the protests - which were a wide expression of popular socio-economic discontent.

As one exasperated young man put it during one of the very first protests:

⁹⁷ The waste management problems starting July 2015 and the piling up of garbage on the streets has been dubbed "trash crisis"; an expression commonly and widely used by the public, media, scholars, activists, practitioners, etc.

⁹⁸ Roitman, J. (2013). *Anti-crisis*. Duke University Press, cited in (Kosmatopoulos 2014).

I have been working non-stop for 4 days, day and night. I have not seen my family yet. I have 2 kids. I get paid LBP 1,700,000 monthly and on some months I don't even get paid. I didn't get paid for the last 3 months. My colleagues are telling me that it's good I came here for all of us. I am in a political party. I have no fear. I am in Hezbollah. I come from Dahieh and I support Hezbollah. Today, Dahieh, Hezbollah, Amal movement and all the regions are one people. We are not here for the trash. We don't even see our kids. We live in this country but in the same time we are alienated. My son followed me and he was crying because he hasn't seen me in 4 days but I did not want to bring him with me here, he is only 4. I don't want him to get hurt and I don't want to bear the responsibility of that. We can't breathe anymore. I work as a nurse in a hospital. In other words, if you are a minister, or a member of parliament, and you get sick, we will treat you. We don't want the PM, or the government or the parliament. I am with the resistance but everything that is MP or minister I'm against them. We are stupid because we vote for them. I will not vote anymore. They are trying to portray the people of Tariq el Jdideh as Daesh and us as the Syrian Army. Well, we are Lebanese. We are against terrorism. We are against the Israelis. My friend is from Tariq el Jdideh and when he came and visited me in Hay el Sellom, he told me I am afraid to visit you. When he came down and visited he was surprised. He said we're the same.⁹⁹

Beyond the notion of working from within, Michael Burawoy draws on Gramsci's ideas on hegemony and explains what happens in the context of 'hegemonic crises'. He asserts that three factors contribute to configurations of state and society while shaping political trajectories, and these are: the historic legacies, the balance of class forces, and the national models as carried by intellectuals (Burawoy 2003).

Class struggles occur on a backdrop of historical legacies. Economic crises are opportunities for the dominant class to reconfirm hegemony while political crises (or organic, hegemonic crises), often developing through class struggle, are turning points in national histories (Burawoy 2003). The result of hegemonic crises is either an irreversible division in the dominant classes or a disastrous confirmation of power between the dominant and subordinate classes. Burawoy continues to tell us that during hegemony crises, "legacies and structures lose their resilience", "the future has a

⁹⁹ Al Jadeed Footage. (2015). Riad Al Solh, August 22.

surprising openness” (Burawoy 2003, 235) and all alternative trajectories are possible. Democracy might lead way to fascism or socialism and vice-versa. History in a specific country is of course not isolated. Transformations in other countries, which present new challenges or ideologies, can sometimes disturb - along with hegemonic crises - historical legacies.

b. Trends in Environmentalism and Voices on the Margins

Throughout the years, environmentalist activism evolved in Lebanon and was characterized by two trends prior to the Lebanese Civil War. The first trend was elitist, rather technical, rooted in conceptions of liberal civil society and active mostly around the 1960s. The second was akin to a broad popular social movement that joined environmentalist concerns with social and political demands. Led by Cleric Musa As-Sadr, it was set in the communities of the ‘Deprived’ in South Lebanon and the Beqaa (Makdisi 2012). A third, yet fleeting, tendency emerged during the Civil War, responding to the war’s humanitarian and environmental catastrophes, but died soon after, under the pressures of a renewed and acute liberalization of the economy, sectarianism and donor-controlled agenda (Makdisi 2012). The environmentalist movements from the 1970s had not resulted in a “self-consciously coordinated national movement across sectarian lines” but there were isolated attempts, voices on the margins, to curb the post-war policies that were destroying the environment (Makdisi 2012, 23).

From sand mining, to land reclamation, toxic waste, and poisonous landfills,

Maher Abi Samra's 1995 documentary "Building on Waves"¹⁰⁰ captures these struggles. The mixed media projects of artist Jessica Khazrik¹⁰¹ who strived to unearth the work of SEDRA, a collective of three scientists formed in 1993 to challenge Horizon 2000 project - Late PM Rafik Hariri's plans for the reconstruction of Beirut- do so too. SEDRA¹⁰² was formed when ecotoxicologist and pharmacist Dr. Pierre Malychef, Chemist Dr. Milad Jarjou'i, and hydrologist and nuclear engineer Dr. Wilson Rizk when they were assigned to investigate the case of toxic waste trade from Italy to Lebanon¹⁰³. Following seven years of investigation and collection of scientific evidence - photographs, samples, tests, documents - the case was shelved, Malychef beaten, arrested and accused of being a false witness by the prosecutors of the Lebanese State. Malychef's pharmacy had also been previously blown up¹⁰⁴.

Environmentalist NGOs and experts who posed a tough challenge to the ruling class were thus fiercely combated. As of this writing, the expert model had not yet succeeded in pushing for a sustainable solution to the trash problems, and sand mining is disfiguring Al Ramlet Al Baida, the last public beach left in Beirut. Waste

¹⁰⁰ This film was shown in 1996 for the first time in Lebanon. It was screened again by the Civil Campaign to Protect the Dalieh of Raoucheh in November 2015 in Masrah Al Madina, shortly after the *Hirak* had started to dwindle. Original Arabic title: «الموج على إعمار».

¹⁰¹ See for instance *Beirut's Theatre Slides Into an Island of Trash*, commissioned by TandemWorks for the publication *Hammoud Badawi*, November 2015 or *Waste eats your histories*, a collection of 140 photographs commissioned for The Sursock Museum's Let's Talk about the Weather exhibit, in August 2016; all part of *Blue Barrel Grove* (2014-ongoing), a project by Khazrik and her collective "The Society of False Witnesses" re-investigating the history waste management problems and their current re-appearance.

¹⁰² SEDRA scientists are also featured in Abi Samra's film.

¹⁰³ Heavily contaminated barrels that contained industrial waste (medication, plastics, etc.)

¹⁰⁴ As highlighted in the work of artist Jessica Khazrik.

management ‘crises’ and environmental concerns like sand mining seem perpetual with no end in sight. While the experts of the Hirak did question the validity, efficacy and legitimacy of the ‘Chehayeb Network’, their approach did not consider broader structural conditions. Kingston (2013b) imputes this to the disappearance of a ‘discursive practice’ after Hariri’s hegemonic reconstruction plans waned. In 'the Great Transformation', Hungarian American economist Polanyi (1944) addressed the dangers of unprecedented commodification, including nature. He was not wrong when he warned there would be great human and environmental costs in including people and nature in the market economy.

In sum, we have seen in this chapter a brief overview of the evolution of the environmentalist movements in post war Lebanon and their interaction with the ministry of the environment and other governmental and private institutions. I touched on Chehayeb’s role in the ministry during the 1990s and his role in the Hirak and talked about the involvement of the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) in waste management. I also highlighted the battle of experts that has reduced the framing of the Hirak to a technical disagreement over the best technical arrangements, endowed with moral superiority and needed to deal with Beirut and Mount Lebanon’s waste. In other words, I have tried to show that the expert model seeking to tackle environmental issues in Lebanon, and more particularly the waste management problems, is part and parcel of the very system it seeks to address.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Even if it was short-lived, the Hirak was undoubtedly a liberating experience for participants, protesters, and observers alike. It opened Pandora's Box in the midst of Beirut's commercial and political center, where the executive, the legislative but also the conspicuous consumerists meet.

A. Protesters' Grievances and Policy Impasse

From August to October 2015, tens of thousands of people flocked, almost daily, to Riad Al Solh and Martyr's Square to express their socio-economic grievances: poverty, unemployment, demands for a new Ranks and Salaries Scale, forced migration, degradation of housing rights with the passing of a new rent law, evictions, real estate speculation, lack of infrastructure, scarcity of water, electricity problems and water cuts, traffic congestion, and the degradation of public education and healthcare. Protesters also contested political problems that exacerbated their living conditions. As scholar and journalist Nahla Chahhal put it, the trash is metaphorical for the state of politics in this country, "Beirut and its residents drowned in their own garbage and politicians didn't really care"¹⁰⁵. They decried the country's political deadlock, the impact of sectarianism on what remained of state provided services, the prolongation of the parliament's mandate twice, and the uninspiring landscape of existing political parties. In sum, protesters asked for their social, economic, political and judicial rights including the rights of women to pass on the Lebanese nationality to their offspring.

¹⁰⁵ During her talk at HomeWorks 7.

The expert model of engagement with knowledge for the purpose of achieving social action, in this case particularly solving the trash problems, was predominant. Environmentalists and professional civil society activists addressed waste management problems through the articulation of their technical knowledge with politics and the building of networks on and off the streets. As of this writing, garbage still piles up on the streets. The regions of Aley and Chouf are still excluded from Chehayeb's suggested four-year-temporary solution.

As I have discussed, there are many reasons to the policy impasse. Experts did not impute much importance to the role that institutions like the CDR or major contractors' companies like Sukleen and Al Arab could play. There was also a battle between experts on both sides, with and against the HIRAK, questioning the validity of technical knowledge. On the other hand, I suggested that Minister Akram Chehayeb's long history of involvement with the Ministry of the Environment and Environmental NGOs was pivotal. During the 1990s, he sought to build a network of NGOs around the ministry and was perceived as a figure capable of bridging between civil and political society. But there were limits to this capacity, epitomized perhaps in the fierceness with which the ruling class is willing to protect its interests. NGOs seeking to challenge the very foundations of the system were offset, sometimes violently as in the case of Pierre Malychef and the tragedy of toxic waste buried in Lebanon's mountains and close to water springs.

In 2015, this mode of engagement with knowledge is embedded in the very system it seeks to address. The conditions that allowed experts in the past to pose veritable challenges to the hegemony of the ruling class were marginalized. Kingston for example mentions the disappearance of a common discursive target that of Rafic Hariri's plan for the reconstruction (Kingston 2013b). Although the trash protests of

2015 were more akin to a social movement, at least in their very beginnings, the expert model was not associated with “projects of emancipation, liberation, the challenging of forms of domination, the refusal of the actor to be directed, exploited, manipulated, subjected or alienated” (Wieviorka 2014). In this neoliberal day and age, Polanyi’s writings resonate: waste management problems, landfills, land reclamations, sand mining, and other environmental concern could be seen and understood as a result of the commodification of nature.

B. Areas for Future Reflections

Three ideas emerging from this thesis could make way to future research and pertinent deliberation: the rejection of an older generation of intellectuals and the nature of knowledge; the conditions needed to strengthen the engagement of social scientists with the public; and the exercise of public sociology by non-sociologists outside of the realms and confines of academia.

1. The Knowledge Production of Ahmad Beydoun

During the last decade, a new café-culture emerged in Hamra where globalized and neoliberal consumerism took over leftist and third-worldist utopias of the 1960s. According to French Sociologist Nicolas Dot Pouillard (2013), the culture that remains is incapable of stepping outside of the hedonist café. It has taken the form of a disenchanted melancholia, more aesthetic than political, and it concerns itself mostly with defending past heritage instead of drawing future visions (Dot-Pouillard 2013). In Pouillard’s view, the young generation of committed intellectuals that spend their time in those cafés strives to find its own political temporality. Nostalgia seems like the only means to overcome the failures of past progressive and leftist movements. Pouillard

argues that youth in general seem to subscribe to two inclinations: postmodern dismissing the ideological and political metanarrative and nostalgic holding on to an ideological and political discourse in discordance with the present. He contends that the difference between the two categories is also symbolic and aesthetic. In terms of public or semi-public space, the apolitical postmodern youth invests commercial, globalized cafes, pubs and restaurants that look like they could very well be in New York, Paris or Barcelona while the nostalgic leftist youth crowds in bars rooted in remembrance of radical culture (Dot-Pouillard 2013).

Apart from those real-life spheres, there are also virtual ones. During the Hirak, heated debates took place online between journalists, academics and artists and public intellectual and sociologist Ahmad Beydoun was the subject of one of them. On the morning following October 8, when groups of protesters clashed with police on rue Weygand and started throwing rocks towards the facade of Hotel Le Gray, Beydoun wrote a Facebook post warning about the transformation of the Hirak into chaos but also invoking the kind of courage needed to speak truth about the Hirak in the first place¹⁰⁶. Beydoun's words triggered a cascade of responses, as he was fiercely attacked by a younger generation of scholars and intellectuals who posted commentaries criticizing, and without naming him in most cases, not only Beydoun's ideas but also what he allegedly represents: an old authoritarian intellectual.

Using satirical terms, revolving around the themes of a 'generational struggle' and 'we told you so', these commentaries denounced Beydoun's alleged patriarchal and condescending attitude towards activists and people in general. Hashtags, like "You have your language and we have ours" and "You have guardianship and we have

¹⁰⁶ Beydoun, Ahmad. Facebook Post. October 9, 2015. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/abeydoun2/posts/10153057340150776>

liberation”, were also launched to “liberate the Arabic language from its patriarchal gatekeepers” as “incidentally, Fusha is the last remaining weapon of this authoritarian regime” and “to be terrorized by the fact that we might make a mistake in Arabic is one of the oppressive tools used against us (the younger generation) since our schooldays”. “Do not be afraid of mistakes”, says one post, “Reclaim the language from its gatekeepers”.¹⁰⁷

Other posts vilified courage by attributing new meaning to the status of cowardice present among the supporters of the HIRAK and rebuking concepts of metanarratives, authority, leadership, and the existence of truth:

They (people in the HIRAK) no longer believe in the courage needed for a critique that imagines that a handful of youth and a two-month-old HIRAK can level up to the government; nor in the courage needed for a critique that considers itself oppressed by a HIRAK that lacks intellectual, cultural and mediatic authority. They (people in the HIRAK) are cowards because they resolutely realize that they do not hold the truth and this allows them, and with flagrant cowardice, to say “we made a mistake” and to walk away from the HIRAK without resorting to the drama of self-critique.”¹⁰⁸

According to these intellectuals, the HIRAK was also “A revolution against blatant patriarchal critique” revealed through and by the HIRAK itself. The rejection of older intellectuals and their ideas, a rejection also reproduced offline during the HIRAK and after, raises questions relating to the reasons of such disallowance and to its implications on knowledge production and the subsequent nature of knowledge-collective and or cumulative. As Traboulsi put it:

Intellectual production changes course with every “intellectual fashion” globally imposed, frequently blocking any attempt to critically assess the previous “fashion,” which is generally castigated as obsolete or unfit for coping with new international developments or the new world order. The result is invariably repeated beginnings with

¹⁰⁷ All quotes here from Alya Karame’s Facebook posts.

¹⁰⁸ Samer Frangieh’s Facebook post.

little or no accumulation of knowledge as elements of social reality are constantly redefined, redesigned and sometimes simply renamed (Traboulsi 2005).

The rejection of the older generation of intellectual and former modes of knowledge production and knowledge produced is thus not without reminding us of Traboulsi's critique of the tabula rasa approach to the production of social knowledge that changes according to the whims of global intellectual trends and destroys the possibility of accumulation of knowledge.

2. For A Public Sociology

As I have mentioned, the reconstitution of a Habermasian Public Sphere, during the Hirak and the campaign led by Beirut Madinati, as a platform to enhance sociologists' engagement with the public at large, and potentially influencing spheres of decision-making is debatable. Limiting oneself to civil society (moujtama' al madani) as one's discursive audience complicates things further as it ignores the communal society (moujtama' al ahli) composed of family associations, and politicized sectarian and ethnic groups.

When the intellectual, like Ahmad Beydoun, has been cast as obsolete and oppressive, replaced by the expert academic – activist – artist, endowed with authority conferred upon him or her by virtue of training and/or education, the mode of interaction of academic-experts with the public becomes debatable as well. Academic-experts no longer engage to test and reconsider well established theories and practice (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016), they are there to teach, educate, raise awareness or build capacities as we have seen in the example of workshops held by AUB's NCC.

The engagement of academic intellectuals with the public is thus challenged on many levels: internal because of the increasing marketization of the university and its

transformation, personal because of the academics' own reluctance (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2016), external because of the historical characteristics of a public sphere in the Arab World (Traboulsi 2005), and last but not least because of dispossession, commodification and the mounting aggression on public spaces in Lebanon. Researching possible conditions that could enhance the possibility of public sociology would thus encompass all these fields.

The last point I would like to make concerns the possibilities of pushing further the boundaries of public sociology. During the course of my research, I have discovered wonderful resources and information, bringing social sciences into the study of trash, in unexpected places like in the practice of Artist Jessika Khazrik or in Maher Abi Samra's documentary filmmaking inspired from cinema verite. For example, Khazrik's work with her art collective 'the Society of False Witnesses' explores the historical distortion of facts of hard science through culture, politics, and the economy. American Sociologist Robert Nisbet made a compelling argument towards "sociology as art form" (Nisbet 1976) in which he presents a new approach to sociology. I suggest it would be interesting to look for "art forms as sociology" that expands the boundaries of public sociology and engages with wider audiences on issues of utmost public importance and concern.

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