‘Because of the Syrians’: neoliberalism, refugees, and blame shifting over public services mismanagement in Lebanon.

by

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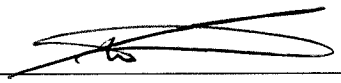

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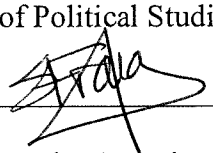

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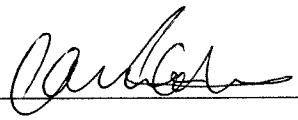

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: 'Because of the Syrians': neoliberalism, refugees, and blame shifting over public services mismanagement in Lebanon.

This research was grounded in the hypothesis that the Lebanese government promotes a certain narrative to shift the blame away from recurring issues of mismanagement of public services to promote self-beneficial neoliberal practices as solutions. The first part of this paper explores how recurring arguments framed as scientific research have linked refugees to overpopulation and thereby blaming them for resource scarcity as well as environmental degradation. The danger of these negative representations is their continued re-interpretation and ensuing instrumentalization depending on the current social climate, reinforcing negative sentiments through discourse and with social effects through policies. The concept of biopower relates discourse to refugees as the former enables certain treatment of the latter. Through the negative depiction of the Syrians present in Lebanon, the government manages to distance itself from the historical shortages in service provision regarding water, electricity and waste management using them as scapegoats. This leads to the conclusion that the discourses enabled by the presence of the Syrians lead to certain projects benefitting given political actors at the detriment of others. these public infrastructure projects have clear long-lasting effects on the service distribution for the Lebanese population as it increases the already-present social inequalities as well as not leading to suitable solutions to the problems but rather to fulfilling the interests of powerful actors on the national and international level. For the Syrian refugees the social consequences are present in the policies of the state as well as the behavior of the Lebanese population, with the two aspects mutually reinforcing each other.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘European migrant crisis’ has been used to refer to the rising numbers of people arriving in the European Union since 2015, which has also been described as the worst refugee crisis since World War II. As such, this phenomenon has also received the according coverage whether it be in media or discourses by politicians. In European news reports, migrants seem to be generally under-represented with a focus on negative events when they are talked about (Eberl et al., 2018) or on the quantitative values of their arrival, either how many they are or their supposed costs. In Germany for instance, newspapers especially popular ones such as ‘Bild Zeitung’ intensively wrote about the sexual assaults’ incidents in Cologne and Hamburg during the New Years’ celebrations of 2016 focusing on the links between the increased arrival of migrants and these crimes. At the same time, one has been able to observe the unfortunate rise of right-winged groups. Continuing with the German example, the country has seen the creation of the *Alternative für Deutschland* in 2013, a right-wing to far-right political party, and even its access to the Bundestag in 2017. Furthermore, PEGIDA, a German nationalist anti-Islam far-right political movement was founded in 2014 and has seen growing support for its cause. The Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, himself a member of national-conservative and right-wing populist Hungarian party (Fidesz) has publicly called refugees ‘Muslim invaders’ (Independent, 2018). Those are unfortunately just very few European examples of negative media portrayal of refugees and the public defense of similar sentiments through right-winged politicians that are gaining increasing power, whether in Europe or globally. This negative discourse, misportraying and scapegoating refugees for various issues, is also resonant in the rest of the world and carries its own implications.

Lebanon has the highest number of refugees per capita in the world and has often been praised for the number of refugees it (unwillingly) hosts. The number of Syrians in the country reached 1.5 million registered refugees with the UNHCR at a given time. Yet, as of 2019, the registrations with the UN organization decreased to 938,531 while the government claims that around half a million live in Lebanon unregistered (Amnesty, 2019). However, the Lebanese government has also been able to use this situation to their advantage by promoting the dominant discourse of blaming the presence of refugees on their territory to distance themselves from recurring problems related to unemployment in the country and lack of public provision of services (e.g., water, electricity, waste disposal, traffic, pollution, and health issues). They are thereby creating and exacerbating negative public sentiments towards migrants within the Lebanese population while their discourse also fits into the broader global narrative regarding growing populations and their strain on resources. International support also stems from the popular negative views on refugees in the West, which provides leverage power for the Lebanese government as their Western counterparts want to avoid any further migration streams to their territories. By doing so, the Lebanese state is capable of accessing international donor funds, as international institutions themselves use the overpopulation discourse. Especially, as the donor-recipient relation is based on further convergent interests, namely the introduction of 'technical' neoliberal solutions to the shortcomings of resource management. For national authorities, capitalist practices, including commodification and privatization of resources as well as the decentralization of responsibility (Kumi et al., 2013), further distancing them from the problem.

The use of the case study of Lebanon will enable this research to focus on the four interlinked factors inherent in the hegemony of this political discourse: i) the emergence and instrumentalization of dominant discourses; ii) how a government can use this to legitimize itself; iii) the reasons behind a certain depiction of refugees and iv) the status and consequences of neoliberalism. Using critical discourse analysis as the guiding methodology enables the examination of the text including content, structure and meaning; the form used to convey certain meanings as well as the social context the discourse is rooted in. Given the widespread negative discourses surrounding refugees; it is important to discover the underlying reasons and consequences of the usage of hegemonic discourses in a given context to understand whose interests are being promoted and to whose expense. On a national level, this will be uncovered by focusing on the Lebanese government and Syria refugees. Furthermore, on an international level, this will be related to international institutions condoning this instrumentalization. On both scales, this exercise will be done through the application of critical discourse analysis to official statements made by Lebanese politicians as well as officials of international institutions and complemented with the language used in institutional reports.

This research was grounded in the hypothesis that the Lebanese government promotes a certain narrative to shift the blame away from recurring issues of mismanagement of public services to promote self-beneficial neoliberal practices as solutions. This strategy, with an already questionable end goal, unfortunately, carries further implications regarding the de-humanization of refugees and their ensuing treatment. A recent article published by Al Jazeera (2019) described the parallels between the

extremely negative representations by media and politicians in Lebanon regarding Syrian refugees to the language commonly heard in Serbia about the Bosnian refugees at the end of the last century. The commonalities should serve as a warning point as to how far the consequences of these kinds of discourse can go. In order to reach a conclusion regarding the links between discourse and promotion of self-interests engrained in the world economy, this paper will follow the ensuing structure, laying the ground for the Lebanese case study the first section will give an overview of literature related to Malthusian arguments regarding overpopulation and resource scarcity as well as environmental degradation before diving into social Darwinism and its links to neo-fascism. This will then be linked to the research method, namely critical discourse analysis before giving a short overview of how the arguments presented in the literature review are present in the concepts of biopower and biopolitics. The second chapter directly introduces the case study of Lebanon by offering a critical analysis of the Lebanese political discourse regarding refugees, including its emergence and evolution, as well as its translation on an international level. The last part delves further into the Lebanese context by linking neoliberal practices through an overview of the three public infrastructure services (water, electricity and waste management) to the discourse surrounding Syrian refugees that is being promoted.

1. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND MIGRATION NARRATIVES: AN EPISTEMIC FRAMEWORK

The analysis of the emergence and instrumentalization of hegemonic political discourses includes the factors enabling the acceptance of narratives on a global and national level linking refugees and overpopulation to resource scarcity and depletion. In order to focus on all the aspects resonant to the research question, this section will include different strands of literature focusing on migration as well as environmental issues complemented by its links to critical discourse analysis as well as their convergence in the study of the concepts of biopolitics and biopower.

1.1 Malthusian view: Overpopulation, resource scarcity and refugees

According to Armiero and Tucker (2017), the debate surrounding overpopulation and resource scarcity has been following a continuity that can be based on Malthus' arguments made in 1798 in his 'Essay on the Principle of Population'. This author argue that populations grow exponentially while resources will only expand arithmetically leading to a food productivity crisis if left unattended (Marquette, 1997: 2). The idea of growing populations versus fixed land resources has been adopted by neo-malthusians, such as Ehrlich and Meadows in the 1970s, who although they incorporated the factor of technological progress still based their research on this basic assumption while reaching the same conclusion of needing to limit the expansion of population (Panayotou, 2000:12). Even contemporary discussions have still been informed by these conclusions, seen for instance by development policies regarding water in the Middle East and North Africa where this resource has been framed as increasingly 'scarce' due to population pressure (Roudi-Fahimi et al., 2002). Furthermore, Malthus' narrative regarding the negative effects of aiding citizen segments that are in need as it would

only further the growth of population thereby increasing the problem of available resources, has also been directly related to the discourse surrounding the presence of refugees (Dziewulska and Ostrowska, 2016). Several authors have argued in favor of anti-immigration policies based on an environmental justification, all using Malthus' idea as a premise to their arguments. Hardin (1974) uses the imagery of a lifeboat to depict every nation, going as far as describing the poor as falling out of their overcrowded lifeboats and swimming in the water in the hope of being admitted to a rich lifeboat. His rationale is solely based on overpopulation, as he claims that one can admit refugees under specific conditions, yet in that case, birth right should be reduced by a similar amount. Similarly, Daly (2004 in Neumayer, 2006) claims that he is not anti-immigrant rather anti-immigration as one cannot disregard the detrimental effects of overpopulation on resources. This is complemented by Chapman (2006) who bluntly states that restrictive immigration based on environmental degradation is ethically justified as large populations have a damaging effect on natural systems due to the generalized increased consumption it entails.

However, there have also been contestations of this line of arguments although they have not wielded the same influence on present-day academic and policy discussions. Boserup (Marquette, 1997) for instance focuses on the same factors as Malthus did, yet by turning the linear relation around she concludes that a growing population would actually have a positive impact on technology thereby increasing available food resources (Marquette,1997). Related to neoclassical economics, the argument believes technological innovation could alleviate or even cancel the consequences of population growth as it enables further intensification of resource usage without necessarily leading to degradation (Jolly, 1994: 66).

1.2 Environmental degradation

Further aggravating the resonance of overpopulation as prying on supposedly scarce resources, a contemporary debate also focuses on the role of refugees and poverty in the deterioration of the environment and the resources within it. Related to the previous section, refugees are in a first instance blamed for environmental degradation by claiming that their mere presence causes overpopulation and its related negative effects on nature (Hartmann, 2004). The influence this narrative has wielded on a global level is reflected in official documents by international institutions documenting the presence of refugees. Another argument in favor of this rhetoric is based on the narrative that refugees due to their supposed short-term presence in a host country will be 'exceptional resource users' as they do not consider themselves as future stakeholders in their current environment (Martin, 2005). However, Hartmann (2013) refutes this view as he dismisses any direct correlation between the number of people in a country and the negative state of the environment as a result. Another group of scholars such as George, Blaikie and Lappé also discredit population growth as a cause of resource degradation, claiming the latter is a result of structural issues (Panayotou, 2000). Socioeconomic structures affect the interaction between population and environment as the lack of resources and technology forces the under-privileged to over-use the land thereby further increasing the existent poverty, creating a vicious circle (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987). Population growth is then a symptom of inequality and poverty, the latter then being the root cause of environmental degradation. As such, the solution would not be population control but rather poverty alleviation through a more equitable

distribution of resources (Jolly, 1994: 76). Focusing on the alleged deterioration of the environment by refugees, the political debate is led by the concept of 'greenwashing' of the anti-immigration discourse, thereby, rendering it apolitical as it focuses on 'scientific' concepts of neutral nature (Armiero, 2012).

Relating refugees to poverty as commonly seen entails a further aspect of the linkages between their presence and negative environmental effects, is the claim that poverty does not allow for any long-term environmental considerations (Martin, 2005). The nexus between poverty and degrading the environment has been commonly adopted even by international institutions focusing on sustainability since the 1980s as seen for instance in the Brundtland report. It states 'many parts of the world are caught in a vicious downward spiral: poor people are forced to overuse environmental resources to survive from day to day, and the impoverishment of their environment further impoverishes them, making their survival ever more uncertain and difficult' (WCED 1987: 27 in Gray and Moseley, 2005). By focusing on the supposed effects of a certain populations, whether refugees, poor inhabitants or the equation of the former with the latter, the narrative stereotypes a certain group as a burden if not direct threat to the well-being of their resources and therefore survival further de-politicizing any discussion around this topic (Armiero and Tucker, 2017 and Gray and Moseley, 2005).

1.3 Back to the roots: from social Darwinism to neo-fascism

Social Darwinism is a social theory that emerged in the late 19th century and can broadly be defined as the stratification of the population-based upon genetically inherited qualities. As such, its authors, Spencer for instance, applies the evolutionary concept of natural selection in the form of 'survival of the fittest' to human society. It was often described in combination with the concept of eugenics coined by Sir Galton,

which aims to improve the genetic makeup of a given society by promoting the genetic group seen as superior. Inherent in the latter concept is a desire for population control, a supposed need to do something about undesirable individuals. This discourse was especially aimed at lower socio-economic classes as well as immigrants. (Halliday, 1971) Focusing on the latter, it then enabled a tendency towards restrictive immigration policies based on the classification of the potential migrants based on their genetic desirability. The wish for the social engineering of society was complemented by the fear of 'race suicide', whose proponents claimed an inversion of Darwin's survival of the fittest. According to them, 'higher races' procreate at lower rates than 'lower races' which would eventually lead to the disappearance of the preferred race. Minister of Foreign Affairs Bassil used the argument of genetic racial differences declaring Lebanese belonging superior based on genetics (Open Democracy, 2019). This resulted in the youth faction of his Free Patriotic Movement to feel entitled to descend on shops employing Syrian labor, an incident which will later be further discussed in the context of the case study.

While the application of what generally falls under social Darwinism on social science declined by the 1930s, its concepts of classification of migrants according to their desirability has lingered on (CMS; 2019). The US Senate, for instance, approved the S.744 immigration. Reform bill in June 2013 which envisioned a merit-based point system based on skills, employment history and education criteria on which to determine the allocation of some visas (American Immigration Council, 2015). Furthermore, during negotiations at the European Union level regarding the admission of refugees several central European countries such as Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, refused to take in any refugees from the Middle East that were not

of Christian faith (Washington Post, 2015). Another example of the focus on the various desirability of certain refugees is resonant in the argument of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), the right-winged German political party, who argue that the recent migration wave cannot positively affect Germany's aging population as there is a need for highly-qualified employees which is unlikely to be filled by the refugees (Heckmann, 2016).

Even the seemingly absurd idea of 'racial suicide' is still being used as justification for anti-immigration sentiments in Europe. The fear of being overwhelmed culturally and demographically by Muslims in aging European nations has found expression for instance in Thilo Sarrazin's book 'Germany Abolishes Himself', published in 2010 and based on the very argument of procreation rates (Die Zeit, 2018). Walter Laqueur even uses the term 'Eurabia' to describe a Europe at risk of becoming Muslim-dominated due to the breeding patterns of Muslim immigrants unwilling to assimilate (The Economist, 2007). Further examples include the French writer Renaud Camus and his theory of the 'Great Replacement' based on the argument that due to massive immigration and a higher fecundity, non-European populations would be numerically superior to 'original' Europeans in Europe and thereafter imposing their culture and religion (Le Monde, 2019). This view has also been promoted by the Austrian Identitarian Movement in Austria, represented by its leader Martin Sellner, who staged a protest against 'The Great Replacement' and calling for remigration and de-Islamization (Politico, 2019). Both the French writer and the Austrian political leader are well-established figures in their home countries wielding influence in political circles as well as in the population, while they are claimed to have served as an ideological basis for the Australian perpetrator of the New Zealand mosque attack.

Eugenics has also been coupled with a desire to preserve the environment, reflected in a far-right movement that can broadly be caught under the term of ‘eco-fascism’. Often coupled with a belief in Malthusian population growth, they are convinced that immigration has been a major cause of overpopulation and therefore environmental degradation (NewStatesman, 2018) and propose genocidal solutions (The Guardian, 2019). Some proponents of this controversial, to say the least, stance have even managed to stir debate in the Sierra Club, an environmental organization of the United States known for its sought-after political endorsements in local elections. As such, while the organization has officially refrained from declaring a public stance on immigration, some of its members have been issuing statements related to the need of curbing the numbers of immigrants to ensure the safety of the environment (New York Times, 2004). A major proponent in contemporary eco-fascist circles is a Finnish writer Pentti Linkola who introduced the idea of ‘lifeboat ethics’, namely that due to the current situation some people should simply be allowed to die (The Guardian, 2019).

As previously mentioned, European news outlets have been biased in their coverage of the so-called European migrant crisis, focusing on negative events involving them or their quantitative values (Eberl et al., 2018). For instance, according to a study published by the Italian Journalists Association, 44% of the news were about incoming migration flows while 16% reported on crimes committed by asylum seekers (Carnegie, 2018). This has led to a wide-spread fear of refugees in the continent, ranging from the aforementioned fear of being overwhelmed by Islam to the recurring idea of linking terrorism and economic burden to the presence of refugees. (PEW, 2016) Some of these tendencies of partiality have also been adopted in the political discourse across Europe. However, there has been a wide variation between different member nations of the

European Union as well as between the EU and national discourse. Angela Merkel for instance coined the phrase ‘wir schaffen das’ (‘we can do it’) in 2015 to symbolize her pursuit of a welcoming migration policy despite the erosion of the promised control of the migration flows into Germany. She made the conscious choice to re-iterate this slogan in 2016, at the ‘peak’ of the refugee movements towards Europe. Yet, the opposition movement has also gained increased momentum through the rising acceptance of movements such as the right-winged AfD or the anti-Islam PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West). Furthermore, the current political climate in Germany required a coalition that forced Merkel to agree to the curbing of the number of refugee intake as demanded by the CSU (DW, 2017). The chancellor has however refused to rely on negative rhetoric on refugees, rather focusing on achieving positive outcomes for both Germany and the migrants. On the other hand, several countries of Central Europe, including Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, took negative stances against migration especially in re-distribution discussions on the European level, claiming cultural or religious incompatibilities. This rhetoric was used also by mainstream political figures and was unfortunately not confined to right-winged groups. (Kluknavska, 2016) A UN representative also accused UK politicians to use ‘deliberately invidious’ language when describing migrants thereby exerting a negative influence on the public debate (The Guardian, 2017). The widespread usage of negative discourse related to migrants shows the potential of instrumentalization of their presence by catering through the supposed or real negative popular sentiments regarding refugees. This can be further proven by the acceleration of this trend ahead of the European Parliament elections of 2019, which unfortunately led

to a rise in votes for right-winged parties by the elder voting population (LSE Blog, 2019).

Similar to the persistent effects of social Darwinism on policies, the latest negative political discourse surrounding refugees has unfortunately been spreading across Europe. They are linked through the concept of re-contextualization, namely these negative views have always been around just finding different ways and justifications to exert their influence based on the necessity of the context at that time. Their increased usage in political discourse forms a distinct intersubjective reality between citizens and politicians while further leading to social effects through a newly reinforced shared knowledge about migration (Van Dijk, 2018). In sum, the danger of these negative representations is their continued re-interpretation and ensuing instrumentalization depending on the current social climate, reinforcing negative sentiments through discourse and with social effects through policies.

1.4 Critical Discourse Analysis: Hegemonic Narratives Towards Refugees

As stated above for the purpose of this research, critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be applied as a research method. The latter is based on a social approach to discourse, especially the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of domination (Van Dijk in Wodak and Meyer, 2001). As such, the ensuing authors which include Foucault, Fairclough, Van Dijk, Habermas as well as Laclau and Mouffe agree on the existence of a link between discursive and social practices which both influence each other. While they could be divided between those who see discourse solely as an instrument of power and control versus those who believe in discourse as an instrument of the social

construction of reality, together they offer a comprehensive picture of critical discourse analysis (Van Leeuwen, 1993: 193).

The former include Foucault, who depicts discourse as a vehicle for the exercise of power through the production of knowledge and therefore aims to reveal the role of discourse in the (re)production of social inequalities. His analysis partly focuses on which actors are included or excluded in the production of discourse, and sees the latter as an arena within which different participants do not have the same market power (Stahl, 2004). As such, he defines discourses as manifestations of a power that he calls the 'regime of truth' (Love, 1989). This concept relates to what type of discourse is commonly accepted in a society, thereby linking the power to accepted forms of knowledge which become a truth with political and economic consequences (Rabinow, 1991). This then makes 'the truth' context-specific as it is directly connected to the power relations from which it arises. Foucault described this as 'a circular relation to systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which redirect it' (Foucault, 1976: 112). A further focus enabled by a Foucauldian reading of discourses relates to the importance of terminology used, as power is reflected in the choice of terms that affect the discourse (Stahl, 2004). Fairclough (1992) goes as far as stating 'discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or 'constitute' them…'. He therefore also calls for intertextual analyses (1995) to understand how messages are received and assimilated before being transformed between the local and the global level. His concept of discursive practice involves an examination of the thought behind the production of the text and its effect on the recipients (1992b:73). As such, he aims to discover the effects of discourse related to other social realms, namely the intentions and consequences of

the discursive aspects of power relations and inequalities as they constitute discourses and are reinforced by discourse (1992b: 75).

Yet, while he differentiates between discursive and non-discursive dimensions of social practice dialectically related, further authors such as Van Dijk as well as Laclau and Mouffe understand any social practice as being discursive (Jorgensens and Phillips, 2011). Van Dijk's (1995) analysis of 'elite racism' is similar to Foucault in its conception of power as it views discourse as a powerful form that could affect individuals or whole groups as it might even lead to changing mindsets. He focuses on institutions as a locus of power that can shape opinions and knowledge about social affairs through the discourse they produce. Elite power is defined in terms of the type or amount of power elites have over the actions and minds of people through explicit or implicit control such as decision-making and discourse genres (Van Dijk, 1993: 44). They have access to special symbolic resources as they have preferential access to the production of public opinion. Focusing on the idea of social cognition, the author links micro-interactions and macro-processes such as discursive practice as he sees the internalization of certain opinions as linking the individual and the society. (Van Dijk, 1993: 55). Power elites, such as Lebanese politicians, thereby have access to sociocultural discourse not solely by having the power to act but also by having access to public discourse (1995: 44-45). A central concept in this analysis are the notions of contexts and groups. Racism, as analyzed by Van Dijk, is a social system based on a dominant group. Social cognitions are reinforced in individuals when they are part of a group that exists in a specific context. Discourse and its inherent depiction of social phenomena, in this case another group, could not exist in the same way in any other environment. Furthermore, the group dynamic present in societies is important as it

leads to a group being able to dominate the discourse about a minority group (Van Dijk, 1993) that is as a result left out of the discourse negotiation. Consequently, discourse becomes a strategy of the elite to legitimize their negative presentation of the other. Their dominance is mainly enacted and legitimated through text and talk by the process of social cognition of group members. Discourses can, therefore, be defined as a site for power struggles, in which the dominant can reinforce their power. However, one should always remember that the context specificity is also due to groups and power affecting discourses while discourse also affects social cognition of group members: a permanent bottom-up and top-down linkage (Van Dijk in Wodak and Meyer, 2001). His focus on the privileged access to sociocultural discourse can be related to Habermas' concept of the public sphere which includes his analysis of contemporary mass media, increasingly important in this day and age. Habermas' analysis also includes the concept of power; however, discourse is depicted as a speech freed from power in what he terms an 'ideal speech' situation that will establish normative or ethical truths (Love, 1989). This is to be achieved in a democratic society ruled by equality and freedom. Within the latter, everyone has equal participation which will eventually lead to a consensus as the best argument, guided by the principle of a greater good, will un-coercively convince the participants. The importance of Habermas' work lies in its ability to uncover the shortcoming of real speech situations in comparison to the principles of the 'ideal speech' situation (Stahl, 2004). The public sphere then becomes the location of the formation of the supposed ideal-speech situation as it relates to the 'space' in which all citizens come together to reach an agreement on matters discussed. He focuses on the adverse effect of mass media on the public sphere. According to his argument, the mass media creates the impression of a public debate leading to a consensus while instead

they generate a pre-fabricated agreement thereby forming public opinion rather than offering a space for discussion (Jeffries, 2010).

Laclau and Mouffe also look at group formation claiming that while individuals have several possibly conflicting positions in society, they form groups thereby reducing the possibilities of identification with others (Jorgensens and Phillipps, 2011). This can only be achieved through the exclusion of alternative interpretations, thereby creating a group against 'others'. The group can only come into existence thanks to discursive practices as the authors believe society is created through discourse, the latter giving meaning to the existence of society. Hence, the establishment of entities, the relational discourses, identities, and social space, always only exist against something they are not. Their theory is therefore based on nodal points organizing discourse, master signifiers organizing identity and myths organizing society while assuming that any meaning is never fixed. Floating signifiers account for elements that are particularly prone to different ascriptions of meaning. However, hegemonic interventions can lead to a seemingly objective meaning, even of floating signifiers, in which the concept of power that led to the meanings becomes invisible (Jorgensens and Phillips, 2011). This conception is echoed in Fairclough's 'genre' (Fairclough, 1995: 14) which describes a conventionalized use of language associated with a particular activity.

Taken together, the authors offer a comprehensive analysis of discourse, specifically public discourse, focusing on various focal points to consider when practicing critical discourse analysis. Relevant to the aim of this paper is the purpose ascribed to discourse analysis by Laclau and Mouffe (Jorgensens and Phillipps, 2011:41), but inherent also in

all practitioners of CDA, namely the deconstruction of structures taken for granted in order to discover the political processes underlying the organization of the world and their social consequences. The concept of power is discernible in all the previously mentioned theories but manifests itself in different ways. Firstly, through the participation criteria (inclusion/exclusion), which is then reflected in specific terminology and certain 'translations' of discourses across scales. This can be reinforced by the ability of institutions to create a specific discourse. Most importantly, all previously mentioned manifestations of power lead to the establishment of specific normative truths through the creation of discourse. As such, power enables the impression of dominant discourses becoming hegemonic objectivity (Laclau and Mouffe) or a genre (Fairclough). This is reinforced by the analysis of group dynamics, a sense of us versus them, especially present in the theories of Laclau and Mouffe, Van Dijk and Fairclough but inherent in the power analysis of exclusion of Foucault and the faulty ideal-speech conception of Habermas. In summary, the body of literature constituting critical discourse analysis offers the main concepts of power in access, group dynamics and hegemonic objectivity to understand the emergence of social practices and their social consequences. It is important to remember that all the analyses of all the presented theories are based on context-specificity.

As such, one needs to discover what is considered valid knowledge at a certain time and place, how it emerged and how it is passed on to recipients and adopted by further actors, its instrumentalization including what functions it plays for its constituting subjects and lastly its social consequences in the form of policies affecting society

(Jäger and Maier, 2009:34). In other words, this could be summed up as hegemonic discourse, its emergence and diffusion, its instrumentalization and its consequences.

1.5 Biopower and Biopolitics

Biopower represents an important concept that enables further linking of issues regarding refugees and infrastructure. A term coined by Foucault, it refers to the intervention of the government as a form of authority on human lives. The state then adds the preventive control over bodies within its nation to its previous disciplinary measures to 'abnormal' citizens. As such, sovereign power extended not only over the death of bodies but also over the control of the life of these same individuals (Muller, 2004). A deriving concept, also based on Foucauldian thought, is biopolitics which refers to the control of entire populations rather than individual bodies. This can further be summed as governmentality, namely performing an activity such as policies intending to shape and affect the behavior of people.

Biopower as governmentality can firstly be discerned in the very existence of the concept of citizenship, for instance in its expression through passports. The right to owning a proof of citizenship and further rights attached to this belonging enables the existence of a given nation-state. However, in order to exist the idea of being a part of a nation can only exist in parallel to other bodies or individuals not being a part of it. In other words, to be able to be included within a nation, others have to be excluded from it, a phenomenon described as exclusive inclusion by Agamben (Zembylas, 2010). Moreover, their depiction as a threat through public discourses to national well-being or even national existence, re-iterated through media, further promotes the idea of their exclusion from any rights attached to belonging as their inclusion threatens ours as

described above in the binary categorization of us versus them. This constitutes the first point to understanding the extreme exclusion of refugees as they are presented as threats to the national survival and framing them as such elicits a desire for their segregation from the population. Furthermore, the commonly accepted current theoretical separation of biological life from political life, as well as the necessary exclusion, leads to a commonly accepted state of exceptions. The main example of the latter are refugee camps whose conditions then become commonly accepted as a consequence of bounded membership even, or especially, in its expression as violence against the Other.

The concepts of bounded membership and its related rights can also be directly applied to infrastructures related to the delivery of public services. Infrastructure has a two-fold role in biopolitics. Firstly, and directly related to the notion of limited membership within the nation, is the provision of services. As such, the state by deciding on where and thereby who to provide with access to water, electricity and waste disposal further reinforces the boundaries of the deserving members of the society. In India, state agencies, especially in urban areas, do not consider poor citizens as equally deserving, yet under-privileged settlers demand these services not because of their quality but to be able to claim participation as a member of the nation (Anand, 2017). Secondly, the exclusion of the refugees from access to these services is justified by their depiction as over-burdening the system thereby posing a threat to the national well-being as it is supposedly happing at the direct detriment of the national citizens. The latter was termed socio-technicality by Bakker (2012) who focuses on the instrumentalization of water-related technologies within political agendas. Her argument of using water projects in a biopolitical way, as control is found in formal regulation, can be extended

to any public service. Infrastructural projects then have political effects (Larkin, 2013), especially as they reproduce national cohesion at the expense of the Other (Aradau, 2010).

All these previously mentioned themes will be applied to the case study of Lebanon in the ensuing chapters. As such, through the application of critical discourse analysis will shed light on the usage of concepts such as Malthus's view, environmental degradation, social Darwinism and eco-fascism in regards to refugees in a given context and the ensuing policies, closely linked to the notions of biopower and biopolitics.

2 Refugees and the institutionalizing and scaling of discourses

Based on the above-mentioned authors' descriptions of discourse and its study, any available secondary data can subsequently be read for meaning. The actual analysis can be divided into 3 parts (Grant et al. in Bryman, 2012: 538): the examination of the text in itself including the content, structure, and meaning; the form used to convey certain meanings and beliefs and lastly the social context in which the discourse is taken place. The latter is related to other non-discursive elements inherent in this method. Lebanese political discourse as available through public speeches, interviews, and official statements will reflect the creation of a hegemonic discourse linking poverty, refugees and infrastructure degradation. Official reports by international institutions will be used as samples to discover the existing global narratives related to the Malthusian argument of 'overpopulation' and resource scarcity as well as the supposed links between poverty, refugees and environmental degradation. The reflection of similar arguments on both levels will indicate its potential for instrumentalization. The main source of analysis are speeches and declarations made by political leaders in a powerful position, namely in the capacity to generate policies in the country and to influence public opinion within the Lebanese population. Furthermore, the data analyzed will also be categorized based on significant actors, namely who is behind the discourse, and their targeted audience increasing the weight of the research by directly focusing on hidden intentions.

Unfortunately, this exercise was limited through the inability of using Arabic sources as data. However, in order to still reach a plausible conclusion, the research was focused on well-known and reliable newspapers in French and English that offered direct quotes while reports published by international institutions were used to complement the

application of critical discourse analysis to the case study of Lebanese political discourse regarding Syrian refugees. In order to successfully do this, the first part of this chapter will focus on the discourse promoted nationally by certain politicians with considerable influence by focusing on its emergence and evolution as well its main points, namely the creation of a divide between 'us' and 'them' and the re-contextualization of the Palestinian issues. The second part of this section will look at this discourse on an international level, by analyzing how the same actors adapt it to fit their global audience while ensuring they are still able to reach their goals. The convergence of national and international narratives is expressed in the political economy of aid in Lebanon, which will be touched upon at the end of this chapter before being further explored in the final section of this paper.

2.1 A nationally tailored discourse

As described above the emergence and institutionalization of any given narrative is deeply rooted in the context it relates to, it is necessary to understand the history of Lebanon and its current social environment. As such, important in its treatment of refugees is the fact that Lebanon is not a signatory of the 1951 UN Convention Related to the Status of Refugees and therefore deals with this issue mainly based on its 2003 Memorandum of Understanding with the UN. As such, refugees are governed based on the 1962 Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon under the authority of the General Directorate of General Security, the governmental body in charge of national security, public order and resident aliens within the country. Specifically related to the arrival of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the policies developed can be broadly divided into three phases as noted by Geha and Talhouk (2018). During the first one, the 'policy of no policy', the entry requirements of 1993 for Syrians were

not altered thereby enabling them to gain legal and free residency for six months and renewable once before becoming accessible each year for 200$. Yet, according to Kabbanji and Kabbanji (2018), they were not considered refugees during this process as no distinction between labor or political migrants was made. The lack of a central framework in Lebanon, especially their non-encampment policy, led to increased pressure on municipalities but also offered them freedom in their reactions to refugees under their authority. Although this often resulted in the violent treatment of Syrians, whether physical or under the guise of restrictions, the Lebanese State did not intervene while increasing the role of municipalities regarding security under the 2013 Plan (Mourad, 2017). Only taken into account the refugees registered by the UNHCR, the lack of redistribution mechanisms has led to a concentration of migrants in certain areas, especially Beirut, Tripoli and the Bekaa (UNHCR, 2017), while not providing the affected governance structures with the necessary means to deal with the situation in an appropriate manner. The hands-off approach of the government under the guise of decentralization has therefore contributed to the negative treatment of migrants by the municipalities as no guidelines of conduct exist with all levels of authority unwilling or unable to provide the necessary policies. As such, curfews on the migrant population were and still are imposed by certain municipalities regardless of it being contrary to national law (Human Rights Watch, 2014). In 2013, the municipal police were also armed to foster a decentralized security response to the refugee presence (Mourad, 2017). What is commonly referred to as ‘Open Border Policy’ lost its predominance when the Council of Ministers introduced a new policy regarding Syrian presence in Lebanon in October 2014 with the aim of reducing the numbers of entry at the borders,

controlling their presence within while encouraging them to return to Syria (Lebanon Support, 2016).

This second phase can be placed between 2014 and 2016 with the Lebanese government 'stepping up' (Geha and Talhouk, 2018). This included the launch of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) by the Ministry of Social Affairs in collaboration with the UN focusing on humanitarian aid for Syrians but also first appeals for development projects in Lebanon. As such the first LCRP requested $2.48 billion, of which 65% would fund humanitarian programs while 35% were meant for 'stabilization programs' (UN, 2019). It is the absence of national-level policies for water, electricity and waste management that can be blamed for the current provision of services. The ongoing decentralization of public goods management has been incomplete and fragmented with political, administrative, fiscal and legal constraints that inhibit the proper delivery of services (Harb and Atallah, 2015). However, the Lebanese state since 2016 has been able to appeal to donors for the funding of development projects regarding lacking infrastructure although the latter had been unrelated to the Syrian refugee crisis (Geha and Talhouk, 2018). The last phase since 2016 is further reflective of this increased reliance on the development-aid nexus as a new Lebanese government has been in charge, creating a Ministry for the Affairs of the Displaced (MOSDA), while rising anti-refugee sentiment in the West has increasingly enhanced the bargaining power of Lebanon with international institutions. The existing consensus in the politics of aid to link humanitarian aid to national development has therefore benefitted the Lebanese government in the projects linked to pledged money. Yet the ongoing focus of governmental policies on municipal action to handle Syrian refugees in their

communities reduce prospects for any meaningful reform especially with EU member states having a stake in supporting Lebanon in hosting refugees (Geha, 2016).

As such, one sees that the dominant discourses regarding overpopulation, scarcity, and degradation as a solution have proved beneficial to Lebanese state authorities and international donors. The links between these discourses and neoliberalism will be further explored below. It is important to point out that Lebanon has historically been a country hosting refugees, especially Palestinians, a role now further requested by the arrival of Syrians fleeing the conflict that started in their country in 2011. Tehranian (1998) focuses on the globalization process enabling a new sort of imperialism, pan-capitalism, that produced centers and peripheries that are not geographically separate anymore. As wealth and employment vary not only between but also within countries, ethnic differentiation tends to be on the rise especially in the lower stratum of societies with migrants fleeing into communities where the local population tries to protect its status and identity in an age of an overbearing world of capitalism and technology. One sees this reflected in Lebanon, a country in which tensions already exist between the local population especially in light of the extreme differences in wealth between nationals in a context of growing unemployment but also with an exceptional number of refugees, Palestinian now joined by Syrians. This is not to say that there are only negative sentiments emanating from the Lebanese population, local civil initiatives have tried to help the Syrians while the complicated political, religious and class divisions of Lebanon are also reflected in the various treatments of Syrians by different segments of the Lebanese population. However, the context, and especially the lasting presence of Palestinian refugees, which partly sparked governmental policies in the Syrian crisis,

and the concept of pan-capitalism can partially account for the anti-immigrant sentiment in Lebanon and might have influenced the governmental rhetoric, while the latter has also fueled these ideas over the years. The focus on a state of emergency is described by Carpi (2019) as a ground for state liminality by the Lebanese government, the latter using this period of uncertain change to follow international principles of neutrality on paper while in practice it enables repressive acts against refugees. As such, the Lebanese state is able to renegotiate its relations with Lebanese citizens. The government also does not distinguish between economic migrants and refugees, at first simply not acknowledging the changing situation before mainly focusing on the 'displaced' Syrians without taken into consideration that the nation had always heavily relied on the neighboring population for cheap workforce. The constant association between refugee presence and security enables harsh policies as the security of the nation is supposedly at stake, appealing to the Lebanese population due to the linkages between Palestinian refugee camps and the civil war of 1975. The economic burden presented by Syrian asylum-seekers provides a basis on which Lebanon can demand international financial aid while providing a scapegoat for issues such as resource mismanagement. As such, Lebanon received $105 million by international donors invested to improve the service delivery of energy and water in communities hosting Syrian refugees in Lebanon (Yassin, 2018). The humanitarian aid packages would have enabled the mitigation of any supposed constraints on local resources and infrastructures by infusing considerable financial resources into the budget of the government and the employment of additional staff to Lebanese ministries under the payroll of the UN (Geha and Talhouk, 2018). Based on the data compiled by the NGO 'Refugees = Partners', increased economic activity coupled with what is known as

multiplier value transformed every $1 spent on humanitarian aid into having a fiscal multiplier value of $1.6 (Refugees = Partners, 2019).

Furthermore, one cannot neglect the political constellation of Lebanon. This can be linked directly to Syria thereby complicating the Lebanese attitude towards Syrians. The assassination of Rafiq Hariri in 2005, a major proponent of eradicating Syrian presence within the country, sparked a protest in favor of Syrian forces on March 8 and a counter-protest to showcase discontent on March 14. Ever since Lebanese politics have mainly been divided along those lines when addressing national issues. To resolve this divide, the Baabda Declaration was drawn to maintain neutrality in relation to external forces. Therefore, apparent neutrality is reflected in the discourse regarding the crisis as such, however, one also finds a relative agreement, a common denominator among all represented political parties, in the negative depiction of the refugees especially in later stages of the crisis although due to various reasons depending on the political figure in case.

As discussed previously, Foucault believes that for a discourse to achieve 'hegemony' it has to be commonly endorsed within a given society thereby representing an accepted form of knowledge. This is resonant with what Laclau and Mouffe refer to as seemingly objective meanings deprived of their hidden meaning. Yet, as the latter authors stress, any discourse is never shielded from the opposition as no meaning can ever be entirely fixed. As such, to classify a specific discourse as hegemonic, this paper will focus on its importance and common acceptance in a given context, namely Lebanon as described above.

An important starting point of analysis is what Laclau and Mouffe refer to as elements particularly prone to the ascription of various meanings. Due to the nation's history of hosting refugees, its sectarian political system and Lebanon's particular past with Syria, Syrian refugees represent such a contested domain. Geha and Talhouk (2018) focus on the sectarian nature of the state when claiming that the issue was highly politicized as the majority of the Syrian refugees were of the Sunni sect thereby constituting a threat to the three major religious entities in Lebanon. According to the authors, to the Christians their presence represented an existential threat due to its power to tilt the sectarian balance clearly in favor of the Sunnis in case of any naturalization processes. The Shiites, on the other hand, perceived them as a security threat while the underprivileged Sunnis considered them an economic threat due to their competition in the same areas. To Lebanese politicians, they amounted to a force able to alter the delicate yet beneficial political balance in the country. As such, they became the possible basis for a shared reality between the public and the politicians consisting of their presence as a threat despite different underlying reasonings depending on the actors. Therefore, the ensuing analysis will try to demonstrate how this seemingly shared reality enabled the supposed fixing of the meaning of the nodal point 'refugees' and the surrounding creation of a specific discourse.

Emergence and Evolution of politicizing refugee policies

Within Lebanon, the hegemonic discourse regarding Syrian refugees can be traced along the line of an evolution from a positive humanitarian representation to a common negative depiction as burdens.

In the first instance, the statements made by political figures can be taken as the example to summarize the first official stance of the government at the arrival of the

Syrian refugees. Namely, political dissociation while focusing on the need to help the Syrians present in the country. This discursive stance is reflective of the initial phase of Lebanese policy regarding the increasing numbers of Syrians crossing into Lebanon, 'the policy of no policy' that corresponded with the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011 (Geha and Talhouk, 2018). As such, while no central framework was generated to remain as politically uninvolved in the ongoing crisis next door and due to disagreeing loyalties towards the Syrian regime within the Lebanese government as per the Baadba Declaration, the refugees were not yet promoted as a negative presence in the country. The humanitarianism referred to by the political figures, helping the newcomers per se, was mainly promoted through the usage of the UN allowed to register them and thereby enabling the provision of humanitarian aid to them through the international institution. As such, the latter concept of needing to assist is seemingly accepted, yet it is inherent in its delivery through the international institution of the UN that it will not be, solely at least, the responsibility of the Lebanese State.

The two main elements discursively promoted at the time, by figures such as the Prime Minister, Najib Mikati (2012) or the minister of public health Abou Faour (2012), were, therefore, complete dissociation from Syrian politics and a call for humanitarian action regarding their presence in the country. Even Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of Hezbollah and in this context presentative of its political party, uses the same humanitarian language in its initial discourse. However, their statements do not disassociate itself from Syrian politics while also encouraging the government to take direct action in handling the presence of Syrian refugees on Lebanese soil.

‘‘we should deal with the presence of Syrian refugees in a purely humanitarian manner and not politicize it (…) The Syrian families should be taken care of by the Lebanese government, whether they were with the opposition or the regime or in-between’
(The Daily Star, 2013)

A further difference remains as well in the choice of terms used by various actors to refer to the Syrians in Lebanon. While some political voices at this stage used the denomination ‘refugee’, others already distanced themselves from using such a designation rather employing the word ‘brethren’ (Najib Mikati Official Website, 2013). Yet, as will be shown further below, both still highly contrast with the negative depictions used to refer to the Syrians in later periods.

The previously mentioned political divide along March, 8 and March, 14 lines can still be detected as reflections in the official quotes of their representatives. In contrast to the statement by the Prime Minister above, in the years prior to 2013 other political forces such as Hezbollah as demonstrated above but also Amal, the Progressive Socialist Party and the Future Movement still referred to the need to focus on humanitarian needs of the refugees, not yet adhering to the much harsher depiction of the Syrians already used by the government in power. The polarization among the discourse used by various political representatives can partly be attributed to the political vacuum present in Lebanon at the time. There were severe delays between the stepping down of Prime Minister Mikati and the formation of a parliament by ensuing Prime Minister Tammam Salam almost a year later. As this was partially related to the crisis in next-door Syria and the difference in the actors’ ties to Syria (Carnegie, 2014), it makes sense that no united discourse regarding the issue of refugee representation could arise from the political class. As such, this will lead, as shown below, to different phases of political positioning before resulting in a relative convergence in the official discourse promoted.

The official narrative that would soon follow in the wake of the so-called 'October Policy' reflects the concern about the growing number which sparked the design of these new restrictive policies. As such, the speeches will increasingly contain hints to the need of reducing the amount of Syrian present in Lebanon while already beginning to encourage their return to Syria (Lebanon Support, 2016). However, a main point of contingency that lingers on among Lebanese politicians is the question of return. While Aoun already called for the return of Syrian refugees in March 2013, the Minister of Education, a member of the non-aligned Progressive Social Party, warned that the conditions of security had thus far not been reached (L'Orient-le-Jour, 2013). According to the UNHCR (2015), the start of the hostility in the rhetoric regarding Syrian was further noticeable after 2014, this time in direct parallel to the newly introduced policies of regulating their entry as well as their encouragement to return. The focus in the discourse deployed was once again twofold. Firstly, a strong emphasis on the numerical aspect of their arrival, namely the number of people crossing the border as well as the ensuing addition to the local population. Secondly, allusions to their strain on the country in general and more specifically on the national resources and infrastructures start appearing (Sleiman, 2014 and Sleiman, 2014). In the run-up to and following the parliamentary elections in 2018, a further increased spike in the negative images used in the language regarding refugees is also noticeable. In May 2018, President Aoun (An-Nahar, 2018) calls for the urgency of the return of Syrians by blaming them for a range of problems in Lebanon, such as security, stability, independence, and sovereignty, despite their existence before their arrival.

The question of the return of refugees to Syria, which in 2013 proved to be a point of contention dividing the political class has become increasingly accepted. However, as it is linked to the relation to the regime of Assad, no official decision has been taken by the Lebanese government regarding the choice of method, namely cooperation with the UN or the Syrian government. Prime Minister Hariri on the other hand, as well as the Lebanese Forces and the Progressive Social Party, have refused to engage in any communication with the Syrian regime unless it is UN-sponsored. (The Daily Star, 2018).

President Aoun, Speaker Berri and Foreign Minister Bassil publicly although in different statements criticized a joint EU-UN statement focusing on the need for voluntary returns following international humanitarian law (The Daily Star, 2018). The former focused on the sovereignty of Lebanon while Bassil in a revealing choice of words claimed that

‘all of the combined have not carried the burden the way we have’.

Interestingly, the reactions regarding the return are not solely based on the division between March, 8 and March, 14 parties. For instance, Nadim Gemayel, although his Kataeb party belongs to the opposition to the Syrian regime, called for a fast return of Syrian refugees in coordination with the government in Syria (Twitter, 2018). Newspapers, although outside the scope of a complete analysis in this paper, linked such quotes to similar statements that described the urban service infrastructures as strained by the influx of Syrian refugees (Naharnet, 2018). This view was echoed by the Environment Minister Tarek Khatib who even further stressed on the urgency of the matter at hand by referring to the Syrians as a ‘ticking time bomb’ due to the inability of the infrastructure to absorb their growing numbers (Daily Star, 2018*).* The statement

was made during his visit to Beit Chlala and the ensuing report directly blamed the Syrian refugees living alongside a Lebanese minority for the dire conditions of the water due to the waste not only produced by the Syrians but supposedly also thrown into the river by them. There is a clear construction of a link between the presence of the Syrians as a burden to Lebanon with their direct effects on infrastructure as well as the seemingly logically ensuing link then of their return to Syria. The call for return can in some way be seen as a general rallying call without however resulting in a comprehensive policy. While it provides a platform for a converging political discourse it is not a rallying cause for politicians due to their enduring competing ties to actors within Syria. As such, the Minister of State for Refugee Affairs Saleh Gharib was not invited to attend the Brussels III conference regarding the Syrian crisis, while the previous occupier of the post had come along to the same conference the year before. This example points to the continuing tensions within Lebanese politics due to their outside links with regional players, yet also to the power of their unified discourse regarding the presence of Syrians. Jumblatt, head of the Progressive Socialist Party, is a case in point of supporting their return while remaining cautious about the Syrian regime and negotiations with the latter:

> ‘We support the Russian initiative but there must be guarantees’
> (National News Agency, 2019)

However, in sum it can be concluded that painting the amounts of Syrians, focusing on their supposed numbers, as burdens, in order to present a picture of urgency, enables first initial calls for their return as well as an image of consistency and unity among the political ranks.

Us vs them

Syrian refugees' only support is limited to UNHCR officially in charge of them within the country or non-governmental organisms. However, this falls short of what Habermas' termed ideal-speech situation as they are at worst completely absent in the supposed discussions in the public sphere or at best not represented under the equal democratic terms required. As stated before, the Lebanese government has gained increasing relative bargaining power compared to the UNHCR. In his function of Prime Minister Bassil directly threatened the UNHCR claiming that they were countering the country's sovereignty in their efforts to prevent naturalization and return of what he terms the 'displaced'.

> "Our procedures against UNHCR begin tomorrow, and they will escalate to the maximum extent that sovereign Lebanon can achieve toward an organization which acts against (Lebanon's) policy of preventing naturalization and returning the displaced to their homeland,"
> (Twitter, June 2017)

Lebanese political forces have been explicitly vocal but also using punitive actions whenever they did not agree with the actions of international actors on their soil. As such, the latter cannot be considered fair representations for the Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This is especially true in light of Habermas' further analysis of mass media. To re-iterate, he believes that it gives the impression of a public debate leading to a consensus while they generate a pre-fabricated agreement forming public opinion. According to a study launched by the Maharat foundation in collaboration with the UNDP in 2013 before being published in 2015 ('Monitoring Racism in Lebanese Media: Representations of 'The Syrian' and 'The Palestinian' in News Coverage') scaremongering was heavily present in the national media focusing on the supposed burden and threats caused by the presence of both types of refugees. Although news

coverage of the crisis as such is not within the scope of this research, its positioning alongside quotes by politicians might reinforce their impact on the population. The negative message is reinforced in the sphere while excluding the main subject, thereby leading to a strong biased vision of the matter at hand. This goes against Habermas' vision of discourse freed of power. Firstly, power stems from the privileged access of the political class to having their vision represented in the media (Van Dijk, 2000) especially concerning the opportunity of the subjective portrayal of Syrians. Second, the concept of power is also reflected in the ability of the mass media amplified by the rendering of politicians' opinions to lead to the internalization of such opinions by individuals. Lastly, deprived of any major contestations on this level the dominant group is further able to reinforce their power over the minority of Syrian refugees.

Following the convergence of discourse towards an increasingly unanimous negative depiction of the Syrians by major political leaders, the group dynamics described by Laclau and Mouffe can be observed. As such, in a country usually divided along sectarian lines, inherent in the political system and reproduced socially, one sees the reliance on promoting a certain unity of Lebanese in the discourse in contrast to the foreign entity of Syrians in the country. Firstly, the speeches refer to 'Lebanon', 'the Lebanese' to create or reinforce the existence of a given group while it is also directly pitted against the Syrians. As group formation is always done in relation to what one is not, the re-enforcement of the Lebanese identity is achieved against the identification with Syrians. This exercise is facilitated by the exclusion of Syrian voices on the political level and their negative depiction by both the politicians and media outlets as outlined above. As early as 2012, at the time when Bassil was still Minister of Energy directly pitted the two nationalities against in each other, by claiming that the financial

aid flowing into the country should be directed to Lebanese only as they had more of right to it.

‘I believe that the Lebanese have more of a right to the aid than Syrians do. We will not accept that any penny be paid to any Syrian refugee, whether with or against the regime’
(Daily Star, 2012)

The same dividing argument was used by the Speaker of Parliament Berry five years later when he claimed that Lebanon’s land was for the Lebanese (2017). The specifically created group dynamic further enables the domination of the discourse about a minority group whose absence in the discourse negotiations is not felt or at least not relevant to members of the more powerful group (Van Dijk, 1993). This can be considered a strategy of the elite to legitimize their negative representation of the other. It is in this context that racism, as described by Van Dijk, is especially interesting. Conceptualizing it as a social system based on a dominant group, the author claims that social cognitions are reinforced in members of the ‘in-group’. Namely, in the logic of bottom-up and top-down linkages between discourse and society, negative feelings are hereby reinforced in individuals making them more responsive to the proclaimed legitimacy of ensuing scapegoating of refugees.

Seemingly, this legitimacy and the division between the Lebanese and the Syrians were deeply entrenched by October 2017. Gebran Bassil, now in the function of Foreign Minister, tweeted about his refusal to naturalize Syrian refugees:

‘We are racist in our Lebanese identity’

(2017)

The above is a clear example of a top-down reinforcement of a certain point of view, in which the feeling of group division based on racism is fully legitimized by the Foreign

Minister furthering the receptiveness of social cognition to negative statements regarding refugees and Syrians in particular. The power the mass media relaying such negative portrayal by Lebanese politicians are visible as perceptions by the Lebanese population also evolved since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. According to a survey commissioned by the UNDP (2018), an increase in perceived tensions between co-habiting Lebanese and Syrian populations was noted since 2014 with the supposed competition for service and utilities intensifying by 11%. A further relevant finding of that study is the fact that greater interaction between the two populations led to lower perceived tensions. In sum, a parallel can be drawn between the evolution of public discourse and public perception both evolving towards increased negativity. This reflects the convergence between the arguments of Habermas and Van Dijk presented above. Being excluded from the public sphere of discourse, the Syrian refugee population is solely represented by the Lebanese politicians whose influence through social cognition is increased through the power of mass media especially in segments of the Lebanese populations that are less prone to intensive encounters with the Syrians. This is reminiscent of Tehranian's (1998) argument related to the globalization process creating a new sort of imperialism that leads geographically close centers and peripheries. As such, while wealth and employment vary not only between but also within countries, ethnic differentiation tends to be on the rise especially in the lower stratum of societies with migrants fleeing into communities where the local population tries to protect its status and identity in an age of the overbearing world of capitalism and technology. This process is then further reinforced through the discourse as well as the media.

Re-contextualization

As discourse is dependent on the social cognition of recipients, its emergence is facilitated by previously ignited references that enhance feelings of comprehension within the population. Given Lebanon's history of hosting Palestinians since 1948, the importance of the narrative surrounding their presence is not neglectable. Naturally, the majority of Palestinians being of Sunni faith, the same sectarian fears had always been present reflected in the complete non-acceptance of their naturalization (tawteen). The situation was further complicated by their involvement in the civil war, and their prolonged stay within the country. While there are differences in the extent and justifications of positions regarding their presence in Lebanon, increasingly they are seen as unwanted. Their position in the official discourse has become that of a burden and/or a threat to Lebanon.

The mentioning of the increasing number, thereby enhancing fears, is further complemented by the sustained reference to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon when mentioning the Syrians. As such, while the refusal of *tawteen* is justified by other rationales in the case of the Palestinians on the international level the juxtaposition of the imaginary of the 'settled' Palestinians with that of the Syrians now expands the fear of having them in the country at all. Firstly, because it triggers a sentiment that they might also be engaged in a protracted stay and because they are represented as a further burden for the state once again seemingly at the expense of the Lebanese population. The refugees are then conflated into one as a burden and drain on national resources. Asking for increased support for Lebanese institutions and infrastructure in his function of Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil regrouped the two types of refugees claiming they are constituting half of the country's population while Speaker of Parliament Berri

disregarded any divergences between the two types of refugees when addressing the Lebanese population in the Rashaya region while addressing the issue of naturalization.

> ‘We won’t facilitate the naturalization of Syrians and Palestinians when real Lebanese are deprived of it (…)’
> (Narhanet, 2015)

This regrouping of both nationalities under the same umbrella representation disregards the differences between the two. These relate to the nature of their presence in Lebanon, their relations to Lebanon, their legal status and the often-ensuing living situation as well as the supposedly deriving consequences on infrastructure.

Also, the political polarization concerning Syria is also existent within the population due to its previous ties with Lebanon. The memory of the Syrian occupation following the civil war until the assassination of Rafiq Hariri is still very present in the population’s mind. As such, during the period preceding the parliamentary elections of 2018 one could see a banner reading

> ‘The day will come when we tell the Syrians: gather your things and everything you stole, and leave.’ (Refugee Hosts, 2018)

These words were originally pronounced by Bashir Gemayel in regards to Syria’s military presence before 2005 and thereby not related to Syrian refugees. However, it shows that public opinion is still very much influenced by this recent history and therefore not necessarily differentiate between the Syrian army or the Syrian refugees. Once again, this then reinforces the population’s cognitive receptiveness to the negative image depicted by the political sphere.

The previous parts constitute the emergence of a hegemonic discourse along its evolution, as well as its constitution, through the exercise of power in its reflection of exclusion and the creation of a sense of adversity between Lebanese and Syrians present on the same Lebanese soil. Through this construction of the hegemonic discourse, the Lebanese government emerges as a relatively unified voice contrasting to its usual fragmented nature. As such, on the national level, the scapegoating of the Syrian refugees as burdens on the country and specifically the infrastructure firstly enables the government to distance from the blame for the problems in the country. Furthermore, by depicting the refugees as a threatening outside force present within the nation's boundaries the Lebanese political class also seemingly emerges as a defender of its people especially in regarding its calls for their return. Taken together, the government seemingly re-establishes the social contract as provider and defender of its citizens thereby re-gaining legitimacy from its population.

Related to the importance of discourse as such, regarding its emergence, evolution, and reception, is mainly context-specificity. This is due to the bottom-up and top-down linkage between how discourse is affected by certain groups and their power but also the way its reception is based on social cognition of group members (Van Dijk in Wodak and Meyer, 2001). As such the relevant parts of the social context already quickly described in the introductory passage regarding Lebanon is herein inherent in the political situations described alongside the analysis of the evolution of the political discourse regarding the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Complementary to this is the significance of the presence of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon due to their instrumentality for Lebanese political leaders in their discourse as they are using them as a cognitive frame of reference.

Social Consequences of Discourse

The importance of critical discourse analysis stems from its social approach which helps uncover the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of domination. It, therefore, enables one to focus on the instrumentalization of given narratives by specific actors to achieve certain ends while also analyzing the social consequences in the form of policies affecting society.

The initial 'policy of no policy' of the government enabled municipalities to gain power regarding 'displaced' people as no over-arching stand or precise guidelines to follow existed which they mostly used to impose restrictions such as illegal curfews on Syrians. At the same time, the official discourse promoted by the Lebanese government through influential figures like Hariri, Bassil, and Aoun also reinforces the negative attitude towards Syrians as it seemingly validates their mistreatment and the desire for them to return to ensure their 'displacement' is only temporary. Combined with the recurrent calls for return, Lebanon's General Security Directorate as well as Hezbollah have introduced parallel programs facilitating the registration and transportation to their home country. In December 2018, the Lebanese governmental office claimed that 80,000 have voluntarily signed up their initiative (L'Orient-le-Jour, 2018). Despite international concerns, public opinion and official discourse have enabled the common acceptance of these departures. The controversy regarding the returns stems from three sources. Firstly, the repatriations are done in direct coordination with the Assad government as powerful voices, including political leaders but also religious figures like the Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros, from within Lebanon are calling to differentiate between a political solution to the conflict and the issues related to the refugees (Agenzia Fides, 2017). Furthermore, the declaration of so-called safe zones is

linked to the Syrian government and not under any international supervision. Lastly, and most unfortunate, conflicting feedback has come back about the returnees with the Minister for Refugees Merhebi claiming that many are forced to conduct their military service or even executed while President Aoun claims not to be aware of such information. (L'Orient-le-Jour, 2018) A further negative policy directly linked to the promoted narrative has been the eviction of Syrian refugees from informal settlements along the Litani River as part of an 'anti-pollution' drive in 2019. This wider ongoing campaign has witnessed the demolishment of settlements of around 1,500 Syrians around the river (Al Jazeera, 2015). Amnesty International (2019) has even accused Lebanese authorities of breaching their obligation under international law of non-refoulement by instating a climate of life intolerable for Syrian refugees leaving the latter with no choice but to return to Syria despite the country still not being officially safe. Among unlawful evictions, still-existing curfews, mass arrests and constant raids, the latest example of the inferno was the evacuation of 600 refugees ordered by the Lebanese authorities in Deir al-Ahmar at the beginning of June. This was the officials' response after altercations between locals and refugees as the latter claimed that the firefighters arrived late when a fire broke out. Furthermore, none of the surrounding villages agreed to take the families in while the Free Patriotic Movement organized a meeting a couple of days later to mobilize against their presence by calling for their return and to protect Lebanese workers by reporting refugees who violate labor laws (Amnesty International, 2019). This climate of clamping down on already vulnerable refugees is ongoing, lately reinforced by a new labor law requiring companies to acquire work permits for any foreigner and which resulted in closing down almost 600

business owned by or employing Syrians as well as two Palestinian-run (NPR, 2019). This is also a further testament to the simplistic re-grouping of the two refugee groups.

The backlash emanating from the Lebanese population does not only take form as rallies but has further repercussions for Syrian refugees. The legitimized perceptions of the latter have led to the negative treatment of Syrians around Lebanon. According to a study (USJ, 2015) the number of reported assaults against Syrians by Lebanese offenders has been increasing. This can partly be explained by the ongoing public discourse that depicts the Syrian refugees as direct competition to Lebanese citizens already previously in need thereby creating a sense of resentment especially in light of international agencies focusing on Syrians. As such Lebanese host communities are perceiving them as unlawful competition triggering negative reactions and assaults legitimized through the official narrative.

2.2 Diffusion and Instrumentalization: translation of discourse on the international level

The Lebanese public discourse cultivated among the national population used to distance themselves from recurring problems related among other to public provision of resources is translated on the international scale. This diffusion of this specific narrative is especially discernible in encounters between international institutions and representatives of the Lebanese government usually taking place at international conferences. The acceptance of this similar although adapted hegemonic discourse is firstly enabled by its convergence with a broader global belief regarding growing populations and their strain on resources as previously described. International institutions such as the World Bank or the IMF also use the overpopulation discourse in

their production of knowledge. Secondly, this particular view fits two further interests of Western governments and institutions: their desire to keep refugees outside their borders as well as their wish to further entrench neoliberal capitalism.

Terminology: refugees or migrants?

This 'translation' of discourse is most evident in the choice of terms used to refer to the Syrian refugees. Within the nationally used discourse, there was an evolution of terms starting from *brother* to *refugees* (although often preceded by 'the problems of') to an increased convergence towards the designation as *displaced* or *displaced people*. However, when addressing an international audience, the Lebanese representatives refrain from using the term *refugees* at all times when talking about the Syrians on Lebanese territory. (i.e. Bassil in The National, 2018) Instead, national representatives have solely been using the denominations 'migrants' as well as 'displaced'. As depicted on the national level, the Syrians who are the main subject of the discourse are not included in the negotiations regarding the creation of the myth surrounding them. Therefore, the choice of terms is crucial as will now be explained. Although not a signatory of the 1951 UN Convention Related to the Status of Refugees, the refusal to use 'refugee' while referring to the Syrians present in Lebanon further distances the government from taking the responsibility of dealing with them as 'someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence', namely the official UN definition of this label (UNHCR; 2019). 'Migrant' reflects a more voluntary connotation for the reason of their presence as the UN, in its differentiation between the words, defines migrant as 'someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status' (UN, 2019). Finally, according to the UNESCO (2018) 'displaced person' reflects the forced nature

of the migratory movement but can have other causes than armed conflict including development and economic changes. ‘Refugee’ clearly has the strongest connotation in terms of requiring, even being entitled to, humanitarian assistance and a prolonged stay if needed. Both these components are contradictory to the current hegemonic discourse promoted on the national and international levels, especially relating to the calls for their return.

Sovereignty

Distancing itself from international conventions related to refugees was taken further as Lebanon increased their relative power in their negotiations with international governments within major institutions. The strategy reflected in the political discourse was to stress Lebanon’s sovereignty relative to decisions or recommendations offered especially by the UN. Following the creation of the Global Compact on Migration resulting from the intergovernmental conference in Morocco, the non-binding nature of this product was stressed (UN Press Release, 2018). Once again regarding the issue of return, Bassil also directly linked it to ‘the sovereignty of the host country’ in a letter to the UN (National News Agency, 2018) echoing his direct threat in the same year to the UNHCR previously mentioned. Lebanon’s increased bargaining power after 2016 is therefore noticeable in the way they stress their sovereignty in relation to any decision regarding the presence of Syrians on their soil. Aoun also stressed on the issue in his speech to the UN General Assembly in 2017 qualifying the presence of refugees as ‘population invasion’ rather than asylum as they did not have Lebanon’s acceptance (UN GA Debate, 2017).

3 Neoliberalism and refugees in Lebanon

The previously mentioned literature spawned the themes of overpopulation, resource scarcity, and degradation and their relation to migrants and refugees. On the one hand, the different strands focus on refugees as the main cause of overpopulation and the 'green-washing' of anti-immigration discourses highlights how these narratives beneficially fit into supposedly technical and universalist solutions offered under the neoliberal paradigm. However, one can uncover further links between neoliberalism and refugees. If one looks at migration from a racial and neoliberal perspective, the previous argument regarding the 'us vs them' delineation is further strengthened. As argued by Davison and Shire (2015) ideas about race and nation enable the upper class to create an invented alliance with the working class as they create the illusion of national cohesion in the face of a common enemy. The authors further point out to an additional benefit when the migrants can be blamed for issues in public services, as it absolves the elite from any wrongdoings especially related to equal access and distribution. Another interesting point regarding neoliberalism is the de-humanizing conceptualization of the migrant reducing the latter to his economic utility. Contrasting the representation of Syrian migrants in Germany and Lebanon, the assessment of their presence is reduced to their usefulness in the recipient country which explains the differing representation in either country (Roberts and Mahtani, 2010). Yet, the migrants and/or refugees regain their humanity when they are to be blamed for straining infrastructure and resources, especially when blamed to be flooding the labor market. The contradiction, however, lies in the need for low wage costs for the neoliberal project to sustain itself, which is then resolved by blame-shifting for the upper class to protect its interests as well as its 'alliance' with the lower classes.

Taken together one sees how neoliberalism and refugees are linked in Lebanon through certain discourses as well as projects enabled by their presence while benefitting given actors at the detriment of others. This will now be demonstrated through a short history of Lebanon's aid dependency resulting in converging national and international discourses. Ensuing will be a discussion on three sectors of infrastructure, namely the water, electricity and waste management services, to show how the political elite has been able to shift the blame for their mismanagement. The last part will then directly link capitalist practices to the different projects proposed in these three sectors in order to tie together the discourse analysis related to refugees and the promotion of neoliberalism in Lebanon.

3.1 An overview of aid dependency

As highlighted by Gray and Moseley (2005), the focus on an impending crisis inherent in these arguments enables states to mobilize international resources and the introduction of universal effective solutions as advocated by neoliberal practices. Interestingly, above was detailed how official international reports adopt the narrative of environmental degradation by refugees in their refugee impact assessments. The institutional promotion of such solutions enables the further entrenchment of the privatizing trend through conditional loans (Shah, 2016). Golub and Townsend (1977) for instance showed that this ongoing narrative was already used by the 'Club of Rome' as it feeds into the reasoning of requiring institutional and financial means to provide for one's population.

Yet, one should also focus on the fact that these trends do not necessarily lead to a retreat of the state, rather it can be actively led by the government which points to the

importance of focusing on the reasons behind such an official decision (Swyngedouw, 2005 and Bakker, 2003). Neoliberalism is embedded in the political economy of aid insofar as it creates convergent interests between donors, further promoting the dominant discourse of neoliberalism as a solution, and recipient countries, interested in accessing further funds. This is what de Mesquita and Smith (2009: 310) call 'aid-for-policy' deals that advance interests of political elites. There is a common understanding within the realm of international institutions that stability is needed to remedy underdevelopment but development is also a measure to increase stability within a country (Gordon and Donini, 2016), leading to increasingly humanitarian-development aid nexus. As such, in his vision statement UN Secretary-General Guterres focuses on the recent re-commitment of international states, as seen with the 2016 New York Declaration as well as the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, to reinforce the nexus between humanitarian and development programs as to create common strategies, projects and goals (Guterres, 2016). This strategy was previously already promoted under the LRRD (Linking relief, rehabilitation, and development) and rests on the basic premise of linking short-term relief programs with long-term development strategies. A narrative has been created based on the intrinsic interdependence between peace and development in which the solution would reduce the humanitarian needs through development while using aid to promote development (UNDP, 2016 and Macrae, 2004). This has been a recurrent argument on which the policy agenda of the UN and its various institutions has been based since the aid and development have been presented as a tandem. Crisp (2001) traces back the history in the case of the UNHCR and their work regarding refugee assistance, in which donor states since the 1970s have tried to improve the cost-efficiency of their aid contributions by focusing on supposed macro-

causes such as political instability and economic mismanagement to limit their aid spending by increasing self-sufficiency through their policies. As such, one can look at humanitarian aid as a variable element of development policy in which the former becomes dependent on economic considerations by donor countries (Paulman, 2013). This is further complemented by the view of Western powers who have since the turn of the century believed in the existence of migration crisis that should be contained. Therefore, they believe that investing in humanitarian and development aid will retain refugees in their first country of asylum. (Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002) Lastly, rounding up the donors' argument is the proposition to link humanitarian and development aid to political and security objectives, to stabilize the first country of asylum alongside the country of origin (Hinds, 2015). In sum, according to this supposed intrinsic interdependence between stability and development, humanitarian needs could be reduced by development while the aid could also be used to further promote development.

This fits with the previously exposed narrative linking overpopulation to resource scarcity and degradation as the hegemonic neoliberal order, reinforced through the development-aid nexus, based on the argument that free-market mechanisms supposedly provide a solution to environmental problems as well as socio-economic development through notorious 'trickle-down' processes (Kumi et al., 2013). Framed as such, while taking into account humanitarian development, and deprived of any further political meaning as mentioned above, this discourse resonates with contemporary schemes for saving nature by privatizing natural resources thereby rendering them a commodity (McCarthy and Prudham 2004 and Gray and Moseley, 2005). The emphasis on privatization is also extremely discernible and even bluntly present in official UN

documents, especially the ones regarding the Sustainable Development Goals supposedly representing a 'universal call to action to end poverty, protect the plant and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity' (UNDP, 2018). For instance, in an annexed document for the SDG regarding the implementation of the measures to improve access and quality to water, 'UNDP Support to the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6', the organization directly calls for partnerships with the private sector (UNDP, 2016). Furthermore, concerning refugees, there is an argument that displaced persons only addressed through humanitarian means can impede or delay the achievement of sustainable solutions, and lead to protracted displacements and a cycle of dependence on humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, 2010). As such, reflected in the IMF's Poverty Reduction Strategy is the emphasis on 'empowering' the people in need by offering them basic skills that they can then further apply. Inherent in this rhetoric is the neoliberal focus on the individual and the related concept of meritocracy, resonant as well with Malthus' view of the poor being responsible for their misery. What is blurred out of the discussion, through the narrow focus of these analyses, are the policies' place in the neoliberal functioning of the world and the political economy of poverty in the first place (Craig and Porter, 2003).

However, despite the prominence of this discourse some negative attributes have also been pointed to. Firstly, although having been promoted for a while, privatization has yet to wield the benefits anticipated and there has been no proof of greater private sector participation reducing deficiencies in water in developing countries for example (Budds and McGranahan, 2003). Furthermore, these neoliberal policies magnify the power and the control of private companies, the water sector, for instance, is shared by a very small

amount of companies that cooperate leading to a very oligopolistic control. This power gives them leverage when negotiating with states and allows them to focus on profitable areas (often rich urban parts) thereby contradicting the logic of universal privatization and benefits (Swyngedouw, 2005 and Bakker, 2003).

The political economy of aid in Lebanon

Parallel to its history of hosting of refugees, Lebanon has also been a recipient of various forms of aid, whether humanitarian or development related before becoming the common develop-aid nexus approach. Lebanon was part of Truman's Point Four Program in which technical assistance was to lead to political objectives during the time of the Cold War (Macekura, 2013). However, not considered strategically important enough in its capacity to host Palestinian refugees economic aid was minimized while development projects such as the Litani River Basin intervention were encouraged (Sneddon and Fox, 2011). Furthermore, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been active in Lebanon since its establishment under UN Resolution 302 in 1949. It is both a relief and human development agency supporting Palestinian refugees which also includes the emergency response in situations of armed conflict (UNRWA, 2019). It is mainly funded through donations by European countries and the United States directly to the UN organization. After the civil war, Lebanon was the recipient of foreign aid, including grants and loans, used in its postwar reconstruction projects after 1992. The funds were mainly channeled through the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), the reconstruction institution of the government, and mostly came from international institutions, Arab Gulf countries, and institutions as well as France and Italy. After 1997, the country's reliance on foreign aid is now necessary to retain a fiscal balance and financial stability.

The financing in this regard mainly stemmed from donors' conferences (i.e. Paris I and Paris II) uniting countries as well as multilateral institutions. (Dibeh, 2007) Lebanon has therefore benefitted from relief, development and financial aid over the years.

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Lebanon has participated in 8 conferences held to secure new funding for Syria and neighboring refugee-hosting countries: International Pledging Humanitarian Conference for Syria in Kuwait (2013, 2014, 2015); On the Syrian Refugee Situation Supporting Stability in the Region in Berlin (2014); Supporting Syria and the Region in London (2016); Brussels Conferences on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region (2017, 2018, 2019). The EU and Lebanon also adopted a 'partnership priority compact' in 2016, enabling funds to improve the living conditions of refugees and vulnerable host communities. Furthermore, the nation took part in Paris IV in 2018 also known as the Economic Conference for Development through Reforms with the Private Sector hosted by France. This was meant to bolster financial support through soft loans from international funds and financial institutions for Lebanon and its upcoming projects of water, transport, electricity and sanitation sectors. Lebanon was offered $20.8 billion in soft loans and $800 million in grants, however conditional on fiscal reforms, structural reforms and sectoral reforms to enable the previously mentioned infrastructure projects (Fransabank, 2018). Another condition states that financial aid is to be directed to public-private partnerships. Since the arrival of Syrians in Lebanon, the country has used the aid and development nexus at these various conferences to secure financing. As such, these international conferences above directly related to the Syrian crisis, focus not only on the Syrian refugees but also on the host communities with funds enabling helping both. At the same time, during economic conferences such as Paris IV, the

argument of the presence of the Syrians and their effects is also used to increase the demands for aid. The further entanglement of humanitarian and development aid is reflective of convergent interests between donors and recipient countries. The former is guided firstly by economic arguments, interested in offering conditional loans to governments enabling both interest rates and the promotion of neoliberal projects in Lebanon. Secondly, the supposed existence of a 'migration crisis' entails security arguments which lead Western nations to provide aid to hosting countries in the hope of keeping the refugees away from their territories, thereby enhancing Lebanon's bargaining power regarding their demands and the usage of funds (Geha, 2016). The convergence of certain interests between donors and the Lebanese elite is then complemented by economic and security rationales which can all be justified by the logic of combining humanitarian and development aid, namely the need for stability for development while the former requires financial aid in various forms. Lebanon has benefitted from $1,647 in total net receipts of ODA in 2017. The sectors of social infrastructure made up 16% of bilateral ODA in 2016-2017 while humanitarian aid amounted to 53% (OECD, 2019). Between 2012 and 2017, Lebanon was the recipient of a total of $6,255.9 million in aid (Clough, 2018). These various forms of aid related to the Syrian crisis are channeled in different ways, namely through:

- The Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) under the Lebanese government and focusing on humanitarian and stabilization action;
- The Lebanon Recover Fund related to stabilization and development projects by providing particular assistance to Lebanese host communities through cooperation between UN organizations, NGOs and the government;

- The Lebanon Syria Crisis Trust Fund linked to stabilization and development activities to mitigate the impact of the Syrian conflict on host communities through a fund managed by the government and the World Bank;
- And the Lebanese Humanitarian Fund aligned with the LCRP for critical humanitarian and stabilization needs. (UN Lebanon, 2017).

As such, one sees first the deep involvement of the Lebanese government in the usage of this financial aid as well as their cooperation with international institutions. It is, therefore, this dynamic of the political economy of aid that links overpopulation, migration, and neoliberalism.

Converging national and international discourses

The diffusion of the discourse on a global level is enabled by the previously mentioned converging interests of the actors involved. While the discourse of overpopulation and the ensuing argument regarding refugees as a burden on infrastructure is commonly accepted, Lebanon also benefits from a certain material power flowing from its role as host. As such, despite the obvious issues in the policies governing the presence of the Syria refugees in Lebanon, the nation has nonetheless been praised by the international community. Western donor countries would rather support the hosting communities financially rather than welcome further refugees in Europe as was explicitly stated by the President of the European Parliament (Twitter, 2017). The lack of willingness of European countries to welcome further refugees is inherent in their media representation of the Syrians but also in the numbers that they have taken in. In the year 2018, only 9,800 of the 1.5 million UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees left for third-country resettlement (UNHCR; 2018). Furthermore, according to the 2019 UNHCR budget for Lebanon re-settlement benefits from the least financial allocations (UNHCR; 2018).

This points to the fact that given the public opinion in Europe, financial aid in various forms to hosting countries is the preferred solution rather than re-settling the Syrians within their borders.

The visit of the German chancellor to Lebanon in June 2018 points to further mutual interests that explain the adoption of this given narrative. Being under pressure at home to decrease the number of Syrian refugees, her trip to Jordan and Lebanon aimed to support the efforts of the host countries through aid (Deutsche Welle, 2018). However, one can also discern an added layer in the discourse used. The latter points to the further entrenchment of neoliberal policies around the world especially concerning the development-aid nexus. During the talks with among other President Aoun, it was hinted that aid could be provided in the waste management and energy sectors as long as reforms would be implemented that increased Lebanon's attractivity for investments (Deutsche Welle, 2008). Resonant of the CEDRE conference that took place in the same year, aid is promised but remains contingent on reforming, especially the infrastructure sectors, in a neoliberal manner that will increase the role of private companies. This latter point will be discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter.

Seemingly contradictory to the calls for the return of the refugees and the claims to sovereignty, Lebanese officials appeal for financial aid from international donors based on the Syrian migration crisis. To do so, another part of the official narrative deployed contains continued referral to the burden represented by the Syrians for the Lebanese and the need to support the humanitarian action that the government claims to have initiated. This fits within the language of development and aid nexus increasingly

deployed by the UN in response to donor fatigue. It also solves the contradiction between the calls for return and the requests for aid. An argument is constructed that Syrians are draining public infrastructure and services to the detriment of local communities but also their own. The situation is framed as to enable the focus on the host community. This then sets up the premise for Lebanese representatives to request development aid to attenuate long-term effects in Lebanon alongside humanitarian packages to relieve the immediate needs of the displaced population. (i.e. Hariri in National News Agency, 2018) A major difference from the myth used on the national level is the juxtaposition of the Syrian and Lebanese segments in Lebanon rather than the creation of an 'us versus them' narrative. Focusing on a supposed shared reality between Lebanese host communities and Syrians in Lebanon enables the government to demand further assistance for both groups while focusing on their humanitarian role rather than on the increasing hostility.

This narrative has been adopted by international institutions, such as the UN, which do not dispute the links created between the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the material repercussions on Lebanon. This imagery is even reinforced by its usage at international conferences such as Brussels II 'Supporting the future of Syria and the Region' Conference (Lebanon Partnership Paper, 2018). As such, the hegemonic discourse has been successfully translated into a globally accepted narrative. It retained its elements of restricted access in its creation as the voices of Syrians are still unheard thereby keeping the message intact on their effects on the infrastructure for instance. However, the divide created between Syrians and Lebanese is toned down to appeal for increased development help to benefit all rather than solely humanitarian aid to be

delivered to refugees. The focus on both the importance of Lebanon's sovereignty as well as their humanitarian duty provides a solution to the contradiction between their increased calls for the return of Syrians and the sustained demands for financial assistance. Complemented by the strain on infrastructure, the Lebanese government can divert attention to the long-lasting consequences the presence will have which lead to long-term projects in addition to humanitarian emergency assistance.

3.2 Shifting blame for mismanagement in public services

The hypothesis guiding this research could be summarized as the Lebanese government promoting a certain narrative to shift the blame away from the recurring issues of resource management as well as to promote self-beneficial neoliberal practices as solutions. Official discourses, as shown above, are therefore actively referring to migrants, namely Syrian and to some extent Palestinian refugees, as burdens on infrastructure and resources. In Lebanon, the refugees have been blamed for exacerbating any public service, and also saturating the labor market and straining the sectors of education, health services as well as even traffic. However, the presence of the Syrian refugees has merely highlighted pre-existing issues and enabled the politicization of the shortcomings rather than causing them (Uzelac and Meester, 2018). The issue is then further complicated by the skewed nature of the Lebanese system that is designed solely to benefit some segments of the population. This is then further enhanced through the availability of aid justified by the presence of refugees while clouding the real roots of the problems. This is especially true when it comes to the often-discussed labor market in Lebanon. Blamed for taking up the lack of job opportunities, this misconception does not take into account the restrictions placed on

which labor can be taken up by the refugees which are mostly in low-skill and low-paying sectors already previously having occupied a great number of Syrians. While a statement was circulated claiming that 500,000 Syrians are working in Lebanon it did not mention that 300,000 had already been employed in the country before 2011 (Afif, 2019).

To further prove this narrative, it will first be demonstrated that problems of resource availability are actually due to mismanagement rather than the mere presence of refugees. Three other public infrastructure areas will be analyzed: water management, electricity provision, and solid waste management. To this end, the current state of these services will be evaluated in a brief historical context with their related laws as well as the latter's implementation. Secondly, the second assumption regarding the promotion of neoliberalism as benefitting certain political actors while fitting into the hegemonic economic order promoted by international institutions rather than being best-suited solutions will be assessed. This will be done by looking at the projects promoted as remedies to the current issues, including their main local and international defendants, their funding sources, their justification as well as their links to neoliberalism.

Water Sector

Starting with the water sector, the Lebanese Water Policy is heavily influenced by the nation's history under the Ottoman Empire, the French Mandate as well as the civil war and the following reconstruction (Riachi, 2016). At any of these given moments, the policy-making was always connected to the social, political and economic identity of the country while prominence was given to the modernization of the system without ever focusing on water inequality which remains an issue until today. Lebanon, therefore, underwent on a path for a hydraulic mission defined by Wester (2008: 10) as

‘the strong conviction that every drop of water flowing to the ocean is a waste and that the state should develop hydraulic infrastructure to capture as much water as possible for human use’. In 2000, the recurring discourse of strained water resources claimed that this was due to a growing population, rapid urbanization, economic growth, mismanagement of water, pollution, climate change, and ineffective water governance (MoE; UNDP; ECODIT, 2011). Law 221/2000 focused on the re-grouping of previous water authorities under the Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW) alongside 4 autonomous Water Establishments (North Lebanon, Bekaa, Beirut and Mount Lebanon, South Lebanon) and finally the Litani River Authority. The structure was to be based on the MoEW overseeing the Water Establishments while also building and implementing major facilities and conducting national scale studies. The Water Establishments, on the other hand, were responsible for their regions to ensure the proper implementation. Lastly, the Litani River Authority based on basin-scale geographic demarcation was initially focused on the river basin and its irrigation of South Lebanon but has since seen its functions expanded (Litani River Authority, 2019). While other ministries are indirectly related to the water projects and management (i.e. Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture), a further very important institution is the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) responsible to mobilize funds. Furthermore, the 2012 National Water Strategy presented by the Minister of Energy and Water, Gebran Bassil, further focuses on enabling an environment for Private Sector Participation (PSP) linking it to the creation of the ‘Code de l’Eau’ (Water Code) supposed to set out the legal framework for the increased involvement of the private sector (National Water Strategy, 2012). The latter was written by the AFD (Agence française de développement) at the request of Lebanon to

improve the water sector and includes pollution fees, a national council for water and even water police. However, although it has been ready since 2005, the document was adopted, alongside the national budget, shortly before the Paris IV Conference also known as CEDRE to be able to access further funds (L'Orient-le-Jour, 2018). The EUWI and OECD (2011) also published a report with an emphasis on future water shortage due to the lack of large-scale projects as well as lack of wastewater treatment with the conclusion that while first steps had been taken an increased focus on private-public cooperation could solve the management problems as the latter are directly linked to the financing according to this study. One sees that in the development of the legal, institutional and technical frameworks in recent years regarding water management, due to the nation's dependence on international donors, priority is given to infrastructure rather than focusing on the acute water inequality present as the central government is forced to keep proving their legitimacy to make use of donations.

Despite the short historical context proving that the shortcomings in the water sector have been present before the Syrian crisis even started, this does not deter the Lebanese government from blaming them for the current issues. While this is further used to request increased funding from international institutions, the latter task is also facilitated by various reports published regarding the supposed strain of refugees in Lebanon and especially its infrastructure. For instance, the World Bank Report of 2013, conducted at the request of the Lebanese Government to assess the impact and stabilization needs between 2012-2014, was used as a ground document in ensuing conferences as proof for the increased needs occurring as well as to develop the first LCRP. However, the methodology and findings present some clear issues. For instance, the water provision

solely takes into account regional water establishments, yet most refugees living in informal settlements will not be connected to a water line. Based on similar measurements, the third LCRP (2017-2020) claims a 28% increase in demand for water since 2011, an argument reinforced by UN-Habitat that published similar estimates (Reliefweb, 2017). Instead, as proven by the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) of 2018, conducted under the collaboration of UNHCR; UNICEF and WFP, disproves this by showing that 43% of the refugee population is reliant on bottled water and the most vulnerable segments of refugees completely dependent on water trucks thereby not affecting any increase in governmental provision of water. There are also 23% of refugee households that do not have access to a family bathroom around the country (ReliefWeb, 2019). A further argument against the supposed increased strain on infrastructure, whether water or electricity and waste management that will be presented below, is the lack of accounting for the decrease in tourism which is nonetheless announced as a consequence of the Syrian conflict (World Bank, 2013 and Oxfam, 2017). This, however, would decrease the demand for water coming from certain habitations enabling a far greater water consumption than where Syrian refugees can to stay. Lastly, the service delivery improvements to be funded through the rhetoric do not extend to informal camps as that would paradoxically legitimize their presence so the latter would still be dependent on solely humanitarian aid in the form of trucks (IIED, 2017).

Electricity Sector

The production and distribution of electricity in Lebanon came under state monopoly in 1964 through the creation of Electricité du Liban (EdL) as a result of citizens' complaints about unstable voltage supply, frequent power cuts, and prices in the two

previous decades (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 2015). The public institution has since been under the control of the Ministry of Energy and Water and is charged with generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity in the country except for Zahle and Jbeil where ancient concession to local firms are still operating (Fardoun et al., 2012 and Verdeil, 2009). The civil war strained the infrastructure of the sector with heavy damages as well as a lack of maintenance. As such the 'Power Sector Master Plan' was launched between 1992 and 2002 to introduce rehabilitation (Fardoun et al., 2012). In 2002, the Hariri government in power introduced Act 462 permitting the total privatization of the sector (Verdeil, 2018). These measures were heavily encouraged by international funding agencies and even became the conditional basis for the aid promised at the conferences of Paris II and Paris III (Verdeil, 2009). Yet, apart from a short collaboration with EDF and local private companies for meter measurement and tariff collection from 2002 until 2005 (Verdeil, 2008), no further measures were implemented. While the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) claims to have wielded some results in the pursuit of increased generation and rehabilitation, demand still exceeds supply and 15% of losses occur due to technical issues (Fardoun et al., 2018). The latest proposed solution is Lebanon's Capital Investment Plan, based on EDL's master Plan for 2023-2030, which focuses once again on increased generation through technical solutions (Executive Magazine, 2018). Also, the construction of two new power plants to be built by private companies has just been announced that include in a second part of the project the use of smart grid able to monitor stolen electricity (The Daily Star, 2019).

Apart from the lack of available supply, other issues of mismanagement are plaguing the electricity sector. Firstly, EDL is dependent on government funding as it does not

yield any revenue on its own. This is partly the result of the lack of updates in the tariffs that have not been changed since 1996 despite increases in generation costs as well as being due to electricity theft and fraud by consumers of all social classes (Fardoun et al., 2018 and Verdeil, 2018). The practice of non-payment and illegal hookups was a response to the deficiencies in the delivery of the service that originated during the war and has been continued since (Verdeil, 2009). Secondly, these short-comings translate into the very unequal distribution of electricity as the shortages are not distributed evenly on a national scale, prioritizing mainly Beirut (Verdeil, 2008). Furthermore, the high cost of necessary alternative supply through generators which are utilized by 58% of households (MENNA Knowledge and Learning, 2018) favor parts of the population. As such, the mismanagement of the electricity exacerbates social inequalities based on the ability to afford alternative solutions (Verdeil, 2008). Refugees are thereby unable to access electricity legally and the smart grid would further enable the private companies in charge to cut it off immediately (The Daily Star, 2019).

It is only within the electricity sector that the World Bank report of 2013 does distinguish between the consumption of Lebanese citizens versus Syrian refugees, acknowledging the latter's lesser consumption. However, they predict high rates of illegal connections without any focus on private electricity generators, thereby still presenting a biased view of the actual situation. In reality, as depicted by the VASyR of 2018, more than half of the refugee population (56%) relies on private generators as a source of electricity rather than illegal connections alone. The Syrian refugees are still blamed for adding 500MW of consumption according to the Ministry of Energy (The Daily Star, 2013) thereby supposedly depriving Lebanese citizens of 5 hours of

electricity (UN Lebanon, 2017). Cesar Abi Khalil, Minister for Energy and Water since 2016 and member of the Free Patriotic Movement, has been especially vocal about the supposed effect of refugees on the electricity sector especially as he feels that it has been left out of any international assistance program (Business News, 2019). Yet, one could argue against this as the sector is a part of the CEDRE package during which the refugee argument was also introduced as shown above. He distances his Ministry from the issues by claiming that 'I don't think any country in the world could have planned for such a dramatic burst in the population' (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2018).

Waste Management

The Solid Waste Management in Lebanon is lacking a national framework or even strategy with only two legal instruments addressing the sector: Decree 8735 of 1974 placing the responsibility on municipalities and Decree 9093 of 2002 placing the incentive on municipalities to host waste management facilities. (SweepNet, 2014) What has culminated into a waste crisis, even leading to demonstrations in 2015, can be traced back to the civil war (Azar, 2018) after which sequential emergency plans have been adopted. As such, the Nameeh landfill in Southern Beirut was opened in 1997 supposedly for seven years, but extended 4 times for a total of 18 years, operating in over-capacity (An-Nahar, 2018). It was finally closed in 2015 but without any alternatives, the decision was taken to open 2 new temporary landfills (HRW; 2017) which are already reaching capacity. Furthermore, the emergency plan of 1997 also included the contraction of 2 private companies; Sukleen and Sukomi; by the central government to manage solid waste. While this has improved the collection, it has proven to be an expensive solution based on clientelism with supposed links between the companies and the Future Movement leading to a recurrent renewal of contracts

(Verdeil, 2018). The short-term solutions have focused on Beirut and Mount Lebanon leaving municipalities in the rest of the country to deal with the issue without any resources or expertise (HRW, 2017). Delayed payment from the Independent Municipal Fund as well as overlapping responsibilities have led to the proliferation of open dumps burned on a regularly, with substantial environmental and health consequences. (HRW, 2017) In 2005, the relevant Ministry of Environment presented a Draft Law on Integrated Solid Waste Management uniting all stakeholders under one framework (the Solid Waste Management Board) responsible for planning at a national level as well as for waste treatment while municipalities would handle waste collection (MoE, 2018). Only approved by the Council of Ministers in 2018, it reduced the responsibility of the municipality but did not change the funding mechanism leaving the local actors still reliant on the badly managed Independent Municipal Fund.

The main issues in the sector are Lebanon's excessive waste output and the country's inability to effectively manage it which originated during the civil war. Management is affected by the inexistence of a comprehensive strategy and a lack of available funds for municipalities resulting in substantial problems such as garbage piles around the country and their burning which carries environmental and health consequences. As seen above previous solutions were always introduced as emergency fixings and short-term in character.

The third LCRP (2017-2020) further claims a 40% increase in municipal waste disposal generated by Syrian refugees. A view echoed within the political class as seen above with the Environment Minister Tarek Khatib referring to Syrians as 'ticking time bomb'. The Litani River Authority also took this a step further by sending a letter to the

UNHCR in August 2018 requesting them to stop the Syrians from causing environmental damage (Al Jazeera, 2019).

3.3 The realities of neoliberalism and migration

Rather than being the actual cause of the current issues in the infrastructure sectors, the prolonged presence of the Syrian refugees has merely highlighted the severity of the shortcomings. The narrative of victimhood deployed by the Lebanese political class when depicting the situation in Lebanon at the moment enables to access funds while gearing the attention away from its clientelist distribution of services. Further returning to the logic of political economy of aid linking overpopulation, migration, and neoliberalism, with the new dominant framework of development-aid nexus which leads to a certain type of infrastructure improvement projects. As described above, Lebanon as historically dependent on foreign aid leading to convergent interests between donors and recipients.

In this light, the three sectors of water management, electricity provision, and solid waste management, share common solutions. The latter can be traced to previously offered solutions yet now presented under a new banner, namely humanitarian and development aid due to the presence of refugees. The four Paris conferences are a representative example of this continuity. The proposed solutions even have their roots in Truman's Point Four Program that linked development aid programs to neoliberalism as it used its influence to curb communism by promoting neoliberal practices thereby furthering their economic interests (Winterhalt, 2018). As explained above the last conference held in Paris in 2018, also known under the name of CEDRE Conference, focused on the effects of the refugees in Lebanon and their effects on its infrastructures.

The first conference was Paris I and held as early as 2001 focusing at that time on Lebanon's economic development. The ensuing conferences in 2002, 2007 and the latest 2018 extended their agendas to include further points such as political issues and social needs (Relief Web, 2007) before framing the issues through the latest addition of refugee impact on the social and economic well-being of Lebanon. Looking at these economic and social conferences as continuity rather than events trying to find solutions to a certain problem, sheds light on the fact that chronic issues are just being re-framed to fit a given agenda which enables funds to be unlocked for Lebanon. The latter's government also does not seem very committed to solving the actual problems as shown above and also noticeable during the long discussions on the budget that amounted to decreasing the fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio to be able to access the funds promised at Paris IV in 2018. (Salloukh, 2019) The international donors are also willing to turn a blind to the cronyism and inherent corruption for the sake of 'reforms' discussed by the parliament as no real changes have been implemented. The actors involved, namely the Lebanese government and in this case France as representative of Western power, seem to mainly satisfy themselves with the promotion of neoliberal practices regardless of the issues at hand. Public-Private-Partnerships are a good case in point as they are being further entrenched without any considerable results. The Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) Law of 2017 further exemplifies the entrenchment of the private sector as a solution to mismanagement thereby additionally creating a legal framework for neoliberalist practices, saluted by everyone. Although created in 2000, the Higher Council for Privatization and Partnership is now able thanks to the 2017 PPP Law to issue the license for the partnerships as well as allowing the government to provide the private company with its owned lands (Business News, 2017), once again

commodifying a technically legally good. The EUWI and OECD (2011) also published a report with an emphasis on future water shortage due to the lack of large-scale projects as well as lack of wastewater treatment with the conclusion that while first steps had been taken an increased focus on private-public cooperation could solve the management problems as the latter are directly linked to the financing according to this study. A further example of the re-framing of issues is the Bisri Dam, which was initially proposed by the US Bureau of Reclamation as early as 1953 as part of Truman's previously mentioned Point Four Agenda (EJ Atlas, 2017) before becoming part of the Litani Water Bureau and included in investigations by the Council for Development and Reconstruction in 2000. Now under the auspices of the CDR as part of the 'Water Supply Augmentation Project', also known as the Awali Project, it was officially approved in 2014 (World Bank, 2019). The project under its various proponents has found different justifications reflecting the dominant narrative at given times. In the World Bank Report (2013) it is now framed as a necessary condition to improve the water provision in Lebanon regaining impeding necessity due to the Syrian strain on infrastructure. The CDR has also countered the growing activism making a case against the building of the Bisri Dam by focusing on the approval by international experts under the World Bank in order to hide their inability to provide purely scientific arguments (Beirut Today, 2019).

This further entrenchment runs parallel to failed privatization projects as seen for instance in Tripoli where the privatization of the management of the Water Authority had no positive impact (Verdeil, 2017) or the continued disasters, whether social, financial or environmental when it comes to the commissioning of dams.

Verdeil (2018) argues that the effects of neoliberal reforms are mitigated through the unwillingness of the local business elites to safeguard their interests. Yet, while it is true that the process of neoliberalism has not fully resulted in the complete entrenchment of privatization across the different urban services, there have been instances in all three cases. They are generally to be funded, at least partly by the private sector while also contingent on neoliberal reforms such as opportunities for foreign direct investment through favorable conditions as well as increased public-private partnerships. Furthermore, the ensuing projects offer technical solutions that do not take into account health issues, environmental degradation or the continued proliferation of social inequality. The latter manifests itself in two interlinked ways: the further personal financial enhancement of certain actors without any 'trickle-down' benefit and the continued uneven access to the needed infrastructures in the water, electricity and solid waste sectors. Personal financial enrichment is enabled by the wide-spread corruption inherent in the clientelist system (Salloukh, 2019). This is partly reflected for instance in the existing connections between government officials involved in the negotiations with international institutions and the ones responsible for the infrastructure projects. For instance, as previously seen, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Bassil was the former Minister of Energy and Water thereby linking public discourse and development projects. His successor at the Ministry of Energy and Water is Cesar Abi Khalil who believes that the private sector is to play an important in his 'National Energy Efficiency Action Plan' (2016-2020). Lastly, the President of the Council for Development and Reconstruction, heavily involved in the three sectors used to be the former Prime Minister's (Fouad Siniora) advisor and close to the latter's Future

Movement led by Hariri. These various linkages in the Lebanese context show that they operate toward the same goals which unfortunately usually do not focus mainly on the improvement and evolution of the management in any of the public sectors. Within the water sector, this manifests itself by prioritizing certain infrastructure projects rather than focusing on the acute water inequality present as the central government is forced to keep proving their legitimacy to keep accessing the donations. The latter results in the protection of the dam lobbyists linked to politicians while reflecting the political and economic ideology of the officials in charge that benefit from a neoliberal order. The dams, for instance, represent ideal development projects to develop through their crony connections while directly bringing international loans to their constituency (Riachi, 2016). This is reflected by the ongoing construction of dams, inherent in the 'Water Supply Augmentation Project', funded by international money without showing clear results of improvement, whether related to water provision, management or shortage. However, the projects regained urgency and legitimacy as they have once again been directly linked to the refugee 'crisis', claiming that the latter are deteriorating the water services among others. As such, reports such produced by the World Bank (Relief Web, 2017) base the justification for this narrative. The mismanagement of electricity exacerbates social inequalities dependent on the ability of the citizen to afford alternative sources (Verdeil, 2018). Vulnerable populations, whether refugees or underprivileged Lebanese, are completely disregarded as the access to this public service is linked to the legality of residency status. In this particular sector, the guiding light of neoliberalism is less present in the management due to the lack of reforms that have been implemented but rather in the protection of unequal access to electricity in the first place. This is true for citizens but goes as far as the lack of reforms can partly

be explained by the desire to protect Beirut from losing its privileged access to the resource. Framed as a necessity to protect the country by preserving the business activities and tourism in the capital, it still reflects and protects certain interests of the elite class at the expense of the 'common' citizenry. As such, the new electricity plan (Updated Policy Paper for the Electricity Sector) announced in April is supposedly going to enable 24/7 provision of electricity by 2020. Increased prices for all classes of consumers have been justified by the claim that no more private generator bills would arise in the following year without taking into account that some users have never been able to afford private sources of electricity. Furthermore, the plan specifically calls for finding a solution to collect the outstanding fees of Palestinian residents connected illegally to the grid to reduce losses from theft (The Daily Star, 2019), following a similar campaign to enforce the bill collection in camps after a severe energy crisis in 2003 (Diana, 2013). Yet, the latter often do not have any alternative option than sharing power outlines due to the mediocre service delivery in camps. The waste management underwent privatization in Beirut and Mount Lebanon following an opaque and very undemocratic process, hinting to its probably clientelist nature. Similarly, the new project regarding a giant incarcerator in Beirut supposedly able to solve both the trash crisis and the energy deficit was agreed upon behind closed doors despite costing $250,000 million while raising further environmental, technical and health questions (An-Nahar, 2018).

In sum, the hegemonic discourse on the global level has accepted the rhetoric depicting refugees as a burden on infrastructure. Enabled by this is the absorption of the Lebanese translation of their narrative especially in light of converging interests of Western

donors, namely keeping the refugees away from Western soil while promoting neoliberal conditionalities in the aid packages. The translation of the Lebanese narrative consists mainly of refraining from using the term 'refugee' when addressing an international audience and the different instrumentality of depicting Syrians as burdens to infrastructure. Nationally, this enables the government to distance itself from the recurrent problems thereby re-enforcing their legitimacy in the eyes of the Lebanese population. Internationally, on the other hand, this strategy offers access to financial aid, through aid and development projects. The power of the Lebanese political discourse is not only discursive but enhanced by the material threat of sending the refugees present on their soil to European countries.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research stemmed from a desire to showcase the importance of critical discourse analysis, especially in current political and social climates, as it enables to uncover hidden agendas leading to important consequences, including but not restricted to the perpetration of social inequalities f*or refugees*. In order to pursue this goal, critical discourse analysis appears crucial in order to understand what discourses are emerging, how they are able to do so and finally what their consequences might be.

The first part of this paper explored how recurring arguments framed as scientific research have linked refugees to overpopulation and thereby blaming them for resource scarcity as well as environmental degradation. These arguments have further been

instrumentalized in current movements of ‘eco-fascim’ rooted in social Darwinism and thoughts summarized as eugenics. The latter’s re-contextualization has now found new ways to express themselves in the discourse surrounding refugees. The danger of these negative representations is their continued re-interpretation and ensuing instrumentalization depending on the current social climate, reinforcing negative sentiments through discourse and with social effects through policies. The concept of biopower relates discourse to refugees as the former enables certain treatment of the latter.

The context of Lebanon provided a case study to focus on these discourses through the links between political discourse regarding Syrian refugees and the ensuing entrenchment of neoliberalist practices reflected in infrastructure projects. The hegemonic discourse can be traced along the evolution from including humanitarian concerns to a common negative depiction as burdens that need to be returned to Syria. The political discourse is based on the exclusion of Syrians from the negotiations leading to a narrative about them in which they have no say. This facilitates the creation of a divide between Lebanese and Syrians, an ‘us vs them’ perspective, that reinforces Lebanese identity feelings while being pitted against the out-group members, namely the refugees. This exercise is further simplified as the politicians draw on the social cognition of their recipients by linking Syrians to the long-lasting presence of Palestinian refugees in the country. As such, the situation evokes even deeper fears and the ensuing divisions seem further justified. This political narrative is then translated on the international scale during encounters between international institutions and representatives of the Lebanese government. This translation includes differences in

terminology as well as recurrent mentions of the principle of sovereignty. The specific discourse that emerges in this context does not include any reference to the term ‘refugee’ rather solely using the words ‘migrants’ or ‘displaced’ at all times.

This is achieved through the creation of a hegemonic discourse focusing on the burden represented by the refugees and focusing on a separation between the Lebanese ‘us’ and the Syrian ‘them’ while drawing on the long-lasting presence of Palestinian refugees. Furthermore, through the exclusion of the main subject from the negotiations of the discourse a certain uncontested image of Syrians as main culprits can emerge. On the international level, this is translated in order to access funds from international donors. The latter are complacent to this image as the converging interests include to keep the Syrians in Lebanon while promoting a neoliberal order by channeling the aid towards certain infrastructure projects in this case. The latter has clear long-lasting on the service distribution for the Lebanese population as it increases the already-present social inequalities as it does not lead to suitable solutions to the problems but rather to fulfilling the interests of powerful actors on the national and international level. For the Syrian refugees the social consequences are present in the policies of the state as well as the behavior of the Lebanese population, with the two aspects mutually reinforcing each other. The strategy reflected in the political discourse was to stress Lebanon’s sovereignty relative to decisions or recommendations offered especially by the UN. Thanks to converging interests, the hegemonic discourse on the global level has accepted the rhetoric depicting refugees as a burden on infrastructure. Nationally, the Lebanese government is therefore able to distance itself from the recurrent problem thereby re-enforcing their legitimacy in the eyes of the Lebanese population.

Internationally, Lebanon also gains access to financial aid, through aid and development projects. The power of the Lebanese political discourse is not only discursive but enhanced by the material threat of sending the refugees present on their soil to European countries. The public discourse then has social consequences for the Syrian refugees as it they are depicted as direct competition to the Lebanese population creating a sense of resentment that seemingly justifies and legitimized their negative reactions and assaults.

The last part links the previous themes through the relation between neoliberalist practices and refugees in Lebanon. This leads to the conclusion that the discourses enabled by the presence of the Syrian lead to certain projects benefitting given political actors at the detriment of others. Through the negative depiction of the Syrians present in Lebanon, the government manages to distance itself from the historical shortages in service provision regarding water, electricity and waste management using them as scapegoats. The convergence of neoliberalism and refugees in Lebanon is further facilitated through the long history of development and humanitarian aid present by referring on an impending crisis that could reach the West thereby unlocking further international resources linked to neoliberal practices. International actors are complacent to this image as the converging interests include to keep the Syrians in Lebanon while promoting a neoliberal order by channeling the aid towards certain infrastructure projects in this case. The focus on the long history of Lebanon as a recipient of humanitarian and development aid reveals the hidden interests behind this aid, as similar projects have always been offered as solutions to the country's long-lasting public infrastructure issues despite the lack of results. Furthermore, these public infrastructure projects have clear long-lasting effects on the service distribution for the

Lebanese population as it increases the already-present social inequalities as well as not leading to suitable solutions to the problems but rather to fulfilling the interests of powerful actors on the national and international level. For the Syrian refugees the social consequences are present in the policies of the state as well as the behavior of the Lebanese population, with the two aspects mutually reinforcing each other.

The importance of these findings seems resonant with the current political discourse in Europe as well. In light of the recent European Union elections results, one saw a rise in votes for right-winged parties by the elder voting population while there was an increase in votes for green parties in the younger segments. Although seemingly hopeful, as seen above, there has also been a green-washing to justify anti-immigrant sentiments due to claims of their effect on the environment through infrastructure for instance as demonstrated in Lebanon. As such, it seems important to keep in mind the dangers any rhetoric can have for both local and refugee populations. The usage of critical discourse analysis allowed the discovery of what is behind the emergence of this given public narrative, how it reached that point and what the consequences might be. As the world is experiencing increasing flows of forced migration, the repercussions of such discourse cannot be neglected.

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