Lund University Master of Science in
International Development and Management
August 2022

# "We have other objectives to prioritise"

A study of the depoliticisation of foreign-funded NGOs and its
impact on the Lebanese anti-establishment movement

Author: Nadine Frisk

Supervisor: Ekatherina Zhukova

# Abstract

This thesis takes the Lebanese anti-establishment movement as a critical case study of the impact of NGOisation. The debilitating political, economic, and social crises experienced in Lebanon is argued to create an imperative for NGOs to take new forms of action to address and solve the crises. Therefore, this thesis studies the role that foreign-funded rights-based NGOs play in the anti-establishment movement which seeks to address the structural political and economic problems that led to the crises. A nuanced perspective to the study of NGOisation or the professionalisation of dissent is used as the theoretical framework to explain this role of foreign-funded rights-based NGOs in the movement. The analysis is based on semi-structured interviews of 3 foreign-funded rights-based NGOs and 3 alternative political parties that are part of the anti-establishment movement, as well as data collected from organisational websites of such NGOs and parties. It was found that despite the professionalisation of foreign-funded NGOs, many remained politicised. However, these NGOs had only marginal roles in the movement as the stigma against foreign funding and NGOs in Lebanon being co-opted by neoliberalism and the sectarian political elite causes the alternative political parties to distance themselves from them.

**Keywords:** *NGOisation, depoliticisation, professionalisation, NGOs, Lebanon, crisis, anti-establishment movement, neoliberal development regime.*

**Word count:** 14,682

# Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the great amount of unconditional support and generosity shown to me, without which I could not have written this thesis.

First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to all the participants to my research. These are members of organisations and political parties that, despite the critical assessment I have made in this thesis, I regard very highly and believe are each day making this world, and especially Lebanon, a better place with a brighter future. The perceptions, experiences and information on their organisations and parties that they shared with me purely on the basis that I was collecting data for this thesis, forms the substance and bulk of the content of this thesis. They made 'field research' in Lebanon possible from my tiny student room in Sweden.

Secondly, I give my thanks to the Lebanese academic that agreed to have a conversation with me on my research. They shared their expert opinion on my thesis topic and pointed me in the right direction during the early stages of this research. Their help allowed me to grasp the political culture and situation in Lebanon, a subject that was new to me, such that I could finish this thesis during the short time frame that I had.

Thirdly, I express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Ekatherina Zhukova. Her practical advice and guidance kept me moving forward when I was stuck, and her care and encouragement provided relief when the only feeling I associated with the thesis was that of stress.

Fourthly, I would like to thank my thesis supervision groupmates, Elina, Ida, Vide and Zhala, for all the great contributions they have made to my thesis. I learnt so much from all of them not just from the feedback that they gave on my thesis, but also from following their own journeys as they wrote their theses. I have taken much inspiration from them and their theses in writing my own.

Finally, I would like to thank Linmeng Zhai and Emma Chan, two of my dearest friends in the master's programme who gave valuable feedback and contributions to this thesis during the last stages of the writing process.

# Table of Contents

# List of Figures and Tables

# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **CSO** | Civil Society Organisation |
| **DAC** | Development Assistance Committee |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **GBV** | Gender-Based Violence |
| **GIZ** | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German International Development Agency) |
| **ICRC** | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| **IGO** | Inter-Governmental Organisation |
| **INGO** | International Non-Governmental Organisation |
| **IOM** | International Organization for Migration |
| **LBP** | Lebanese Pound |
| **MSF** | Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) |
| **NGO** | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| **OECD** | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| **ODA** | Official Development Assistance |
| **Sida** | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency |
| **SMO** | Social Movement Organisation |
| **UNFPA** | United Nations Population Fund |
| **UNICEF** | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |

# Introduction

In 2020, 14.1 percent of all Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Official Development Assistance (ODA) was channelled to and through non-governmental organisations[1] (NGOs) (OECD 2022). Individual OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members allocated up to 56 percent of their total bilateral development aid to and through NGOs. This is justified by the assertion that NGOs "are playing a major role in the framework of sustainable development, namely for improving economic, social and political conditions in developing countries" (OECD 2022: 6). However, by favouring professionalised and depoliticised NGOs over other civil society organisations (CSOs), the aid industry has been criticised for driving the demobilisation of social movements in the developing world (Choudry and Kapoor 2013). This process whereby movements for social change increasingly professionalise and adopt the NGO as a preferred organisational form is called 'NGOisation' (della Porta 2020; Kamat 2004).

Studies of NGOisation argue that donors aligned with neoliberalism deliberately fund professionalised NGOs that focus more on service provision than advocacy and movement-building activities (Kamat 2004). This diverts resources away from oppositional, anti-colonial and anti-capitalist movements (Choudry and Kapoor 2013). More recent literature shows that NGOisation is "a culturally and politically mutable tendency rather than a narrowly confined path" which possesses "different iterations and can be fuelled by different processes in different global or local constellations" (Lang 2013: 65). This is because NGOs across different contexts have been shown to exercise agency in navigating the pressures to professionalise and depoliticise imposed by the neoliberal international development regime (Alvarez 2009). Existing literature has focused on tracing the process of NGOisation of specific social movements over time (Alvarez 1999; Arda and Banerjee 2021; Chahim and Prakash 2014;

---

[1] The DAC uses the term 'NGO' interchangeably with 'civil society organisation' (CSO), which includes foundations, co-operative societies, trade unions, and ad-hoc entities set up to collect funds for a specific purpose (OECD 2022: 2).

Heideman 2017; Jaoul 2018) or analyse how professionalised NGOs depoliticise civil society and specific structural problems (Foth 2021; Ungsuchaval 2019).

This thesis seeks to contribute to the literature and theorisation of NGOisation by analysing the case of the anti-establishment movement in Lebanon. Lebanon is undergoing what is said to be among the top three worst economic meltdowns in the world since the mid-1800s (World Bank 2021). In response to the debilitating socio-economic conditions in Lebanon, several major demonstrations have been organised over the last few years against the sectarian political elite for failing to prevent the economic crisis and failing to make sound policies to mitigate and resolve it. These waves of demonstrations and collective political action have led to the development of an anti-establishment movement, whose demands include the removal of the political elite that have been in power since 1990, the replacement of the sectarian political system with a secular one, and sustainable long-term solutions to rehabilitate the Lebanese economy (Ipek 2020). Despite engaging in several mass demonstrations across the country and organising political campaigns to compete in elections since 2011, the movement has achieved very little.

NGOs in Lebanon have for decades been a prominent force in the Lebanese opposition and civil society. Yet, the literature shows that their failure to achieve fundamental reform is attributed to their susceptibility to co-optation by the sectarian political elite and their underlying complicity with neoliberalism (Kingston 2013; Salloukh et al. 2015). As such, the growing anti-establishment movement and crises in Lebanon provides a critical case to better understand the impact of NGOisation on the politicisation of Lebanese foreign-funded NGOs. By analysing the role that foreign-funded rights-based NGOs play in the movement, this thesis also seeks to better understand the internal dynamics and struggles of the anti-establishment movement.

This thesis seeks to contribute to the literature on and theorisation of NGOisation by connecting the existing community of foreign-funded NGOs to a new social movement that formed long after many of these NGOs had been established in society. By doing this, this thesis makes room for the possibility of re-politicisation of depoliticised foreign-funded NGOs. This thesis also contributes to the literature in its focus on perceptions of the members of the NGOs and anti-establishment movement, adding the influence of activists' perceptions as an additional layer to the implications of NGOisation to social movements.

This study is important in order to determine whether foreign-funded rights-based NGOs, in light of the crises recognise the structural political problems that need to be addressed and take politicised action accordingly.

## Research Questions

A. What role do foreign-funded rights-based NGOs play in the anti-establishment movement in Lebanon?

B. How does NGOisation impact the role of foreign-funded rights-based NGOs in the anti-establishment movement in Lebanon?

# Contextual Background

This chapter establishes the contextual background within which this study takes place. First, Lebanon's ongoing crises are presented. Second, the Lebanese political establishment and its role in producing the crises is explained. Finally, the development of the anti-establishment movement till the present day is discussed.

## The crises in Lebanon

Lebanon is currently undergoing simultaneous political, economic, financial, energy, medical, even psychological, and educational crises (Azhari et al. 2022; Ibrahim 2021; Save the Children 2022; World Bank 2021). The Lebanese Pound (LBP), officially pegged at 1,500 to one US dollar (USD), has lost more than 90 percent of its value in less than three years and as of the end of May 2022, is at a rate of LBP35,600 to the dollar in the black market (Chehayeb 2022a). The percentage of the population living in multidimensional poverty doubled from 41 percent in 2019 to 82 percent in 2021 (ESCWA 2021). Since at least the last two years, most regions have been receiving less than two hours of state electricity a day (El Husseini 2022). The devaluation of the currency and the consequent heavy debt of pharmaceutical importers to foreign pharmaceutical companies have led to a severe shortage of medication in Lebanon (Jawad 2021), and some 40 percent of medical staff were part of the exodus of people out of Lebanon because of the crises, further stressing an already burdened healthcare system (Azhari et al. 2022). Severe rises in the number of cases of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, insomnia, and substance abuse have been observed since 2020 (Ibrahim 2021). Due to a combination of COVID-19 prevention policies and teachers striking the drastic cuts on education spending, over 700,000 children were kept out of school in 2021, and many are expected to struggle to return to school due to difficulties affording stationery and transportation to school (Save the Children 2022).

On top of these debilitating conditions, on 4 August 2020, nearly 3,000 tonnes of ammonium nitrate stored since 2014 in a warehouse at the Beirut Port exploded, causing 218

deaths, 7,000 injuries, an estimated USD 4 billion in property damage and displaced 300,000 people, for which the officials responsible have yet to be held accountable (Amnesty International 2021; Human Rights Watch 2021). And in the wake of these crises, the country was without a government from August 2020 to September 2021, and the parliament remained in political deadlock and failed negotiate an agreement for much-needed funding from the International Monetary Fund until April 2022 due to political disagreements between the opposing 'March 8' and 'March 14' coalitions[2] (Chehayeb 2022b).

Economists, academics, experts, and Lebanese citizens from all segments of society blame Lebanon's crises on the political establishment and the dysfunctional sectarian system that bred a culture of corruption and prevents the making and implementing of rational policies (Abi Nassif et al. 2020). This is explained further in the following section.

## The Lebanese political establishment

Lebanon's political system is characterised by consociationalism, in that political power is formally shared between the 18 officially recognised religious sects also known as 'confessions' (Kingston 2013). Half of the 128 seats in parliament are allocated to Christians while the other half are for Muslims. Ministers and positions within the Public Administration are distributed according to a sectarian quota that reflects this equilibrium. This extends to the top political positions, such that the President is always a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament a Shi'a Muslim (Mrad 2011).

Lebanon is 'democratic' in that elections are to occur every four years, but candidates only compete against others within the same religious sect. This system does not promote competition between political parties, because political parties in Lebanon are formed based

---

[2] The two dominant coalitions of political parties in the Lebanese parliament are called the 'March 8' and 'March 14' alliances. The dates refer to events in 2005 surrounding the Cedar Revolution when mass demonstrations were held against the 28 year-long Syrian occupation of Lebanon. The March 8 alliance consists of pro-Syrian political parties that organised pro-Syria demonstrations on 8 March 2005. The March 14 alliance consists of anti-Syria political parties that organised counter-demonstrations on 14 March 2005. These alliances still define the political divide in Lebanon and the major opposing coalitions within the Lebanese parliament (El-Husseini 2012).

on sectarian identity (El-Husseini 2012). As such, instead of winning elections through policy programmes, the political elite mobilise their sectarian clientelist[3] networks to get votes (Salloukh et al. 2015). Therefore, political parties in Lebanon – especially the so-called 'traditional' parties that currently form the establishment[4] – are formed around individual sectarian leaders (known as *zu'ama*) rather than strong ideological platforms (El-Husseini 2012).

Almost all these parties transformed into militia groups during the civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990, which allowed them to consolidate their sectarian influence (El-Husseini 2012). After the war, they engaged in corruption and clientelism, keeping the Lebanese state weak and the Lebanese lower classes reliant on their respective sectarian political parties for basic services. This makes it extremely difficult for independent political actors without the resources of the traditional parties to gain any influence (Baumann 2019; Kingston 2013; Mrad 2011). According to El-Husseini (2012), new political elites are entirely dependent on patron-client relations with the *zu'ama* of these traditional political parties to emerge and remain relevant within the Lebanese political system.

The corrupt political establishment has benefitted and prospered from neoliberal policies. Lebanon underwent a restructuring of the state along neoliberal lines during the regime of former businessman Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. This involved the privatisation of public services such as waste management and the reconstruction of post-war Beirut. These services were tendered to politically tied firms, many of which were tied to Hariri himself (Leenders 2012). The withdrawal of the state from public services also pushed the poorer Lebanese to be more dependent on their sectarian leaders that used their monopoly over state resources to rally political support (Baumann 2019).

---

[3] Clientelism is defined as "a political or social system based on the relation of client to patron with the client giving political support to a patron in exchange for some special privilege or benefit" (Merriam-Webster 2022)

[4] These traditional parties include the Sunni party, the Future Movement; the Maronite parties, the Free Patriotic Movement, Kataeb, the Lebanese Forces, and Marada; the Shi'a parties, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement; the Druze party, the Progressive Socialist Party; the Armenian Orthodox party, Tashnag; and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.

By relying on clientelism, keeping the state weak and rallying foreign allies against the opposing coalition, the sectarian political parties ensure that no single sect can dominate the political system and their own religious sect retains its piece of the pie. It is this corrupt, sectarian, and neoliberal political system that discourages any move towards democratisation and keeps the parliament in paralysis so that effective policies to mitigate or solve Lebanon's crises are not passed (Abi Nassif et al. 2020).

## The anti-establishment movement in Lebanon

The Lebanese anti-establishment movement in its current form is relatively young, though its demands are rooted in grievances that go far back into Lebanon's political history (Meier 2015). The movement has mobilised several mass demonstrations such as in 2011, 2015 and 2019. It also attempted to achieve success through formal channels, namely through competing in municipal and parliamentary elections in 2013, 2016, 2018 and 2022. Each of these political events have contributed to the development of the movement, such that it now consists of a diverse collection of organisations that identify themselves as political 'movements', 'parties', 'platforms', 'collectives', 'groups', and 'organisations'. Though these organisations sometimes interact and cooperate with each other and with other civil society actors in the spirit of the greater movement, they often have differing ideas of the best way to achieve the goals of the movement (El Kak 2022). Therefore, the movement is not cohesive nor homogenous with a clear sense of identity. The following paragraphs illustrate this through a brief account of the movement's history.

Several thousand Lebanese participated in demonstrations throughout 2011 demanding the overthrow of the sectarian political system (Bahlawan 2014). This culminated in the 'Take Back Parliament' political campaign that failed to achieve the election of independent and secular candidates in the 2013 parliamentary elections (Naharashabab 2013). The dumping of waste all over Beirut because of government mismanagement in 2015, known as 'the Garbage crisis' led to the mobilisation of 100,000 protesters from all sectarian and political groups that framed the crisis as a symptom of the greater political corruption of Lebanon's sectarian elite (Vertes et al. 2021). The protests inspired the organisation of the municipal platform, *Beirut Madinati* (Beirut, My City), which competed in the 2016 municipal elections. Though they did not gain any seats, they won 35 percent of the vote and lost to the political establishment by

only 11,000 votes, marking the most significant challenge to the political elite by a non-sectarian platform (Sharp 2016). Their success motivated the organisation of several new political movements, parties and civil society coalitions that competed in the 2018 parliamentary elections, but they were only able to secure one seat (El Kak 2022).

Between 17-20 October 2019, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese, some say nearly two million (Ipek 2020; Sullivan 2019) joined demonstrations across the country that transcended class and sectarian divisions (Azhari 2019). Expressing the citizens' socio-economic grievances in light of the developing crises described at the beginning of this chapter, protesters called for the downfall of Lebanon's post-civil war sectarian elite (Ibid.; Vertes et al. 2021). The protests were organised by many of the new alternative political groups that formed in the years before (Sullivan 2019). In response to the protests, assertively called the *thawra* (revolution) by many Lebanese, the government cancelled the proposed tax on WhatsApp calls, and the prime minister resigned along with four other ministers (Azhari 2019). Close to 3,000 episodes of related collective action occurred between October 2019 and February 2020 (Civil Society Knowledge Centre 2020). Though the institutional change demanded by the protesters did not happen, it catalysed the formation of several more alternative political organisations. The alternative political parties competed in the parliamentary elections on 15 May 2022 and won 14 out of the 128 seats in parliament. Though this was better than what most Lebanese expected, it is not enough to have any significant influence over policymaking (Naddaff 2022).

# Literature Review

The following chapter elaborates on the literature review conducted in preparation for this thesis. It begins with a review of the general relationship between NGOs and social movements, followed by a contextual review of the role of NGOs in Lebanon. Existing literature within these two topics are discussed below.

## The role of NGOs in social movements

NGOs and social movements have largely been studied within separate fields. NGOs have often been perceived as synonymous to civil society and studied as a type of actor within civil society studies (Kamat 2004; OECD 2022; Ungsuchaval 2019). Social movements have a field and plethora of theories of their own. These two fields have rarely come together, despite covering much of the same processes, actors, and events (della Porta 2020).

### NGOs

NGOs and social movements are conceptualised differently. NGOs are defined broadly by the OECD as "any non-profit entity organised on a local, national or international level to pursue shared objectives and ideals, without significant government-controlled participation or representation" (OECD 2022: 2). The term 'non-governmental' places emphasis on its relationship to the state, while the term 'non-profit' emphasises its relationship to the market (Choudry and Kapoor 2013; Rooy 1998). Hence, NGOs, as a component of civil society, are often conceptualised as forming a 'third sector' between the state and the market (della Porta 2020). Existing literature on NGOs discusses the ways they are structured, whether on loose, grassroots and community-based lines, or more hierarchical corporate-like structures; the ways that they function; and their role in state-society relations (Alvarez 2009; della Porta 2020; Kamat 2004; Rooy 1998).

### *Social movements*

Social movement is defined as "a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (Diani 1992: 13). Emphasis is placed on social movements being a network of interactions, rather than organisations in themselves. Within social movement studies, the term social movement organisation (SMO), defined as a "complex, or formal, organisation which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or countermovement and attempts to implement those goals" (Zald and McCarthy 1987: 20) is used to refer to the diverse organisational forms adopted by social movement activists (della Porta and Diani 2020). Existing literature on social movements covers how they are mobilised and formed; analyses of the reasons for their success or lack of success; the different actors and forms of organisation involved; and their relationship to conflict and processes of democratisation (della Porta 2020; della Porta and Diani 2020).

### *NGOisation*

According to the conceptualisation above, NGOs can be components of a social movement. In addition, many conceptualisations of civil society consider both social movements and NGOs as components of civil society (Alexander 2006; Chahim and Prakash 2014; Cohen and Arato 1992; Edwards 2011). In recognising the overlap between these two concepts and the important interactions between NGOs and social movements, there is a growing literature on the 'NGOisation' of social movements.

NGOisation is a concept developed towards the end of the 1990s as a critical response to the rapid proliferation of NGOs in the developing and post-Soviet world in the same decade. In reference to this 'NGO boom' (Alvarez 1999), the term refers to the process whereby movements for social change increasingly professionalise and adopt the NGO as a preferred organisational form (della Porta 2020; Kamat 2004). As such, NGOisation literature studies the relationship between NGOs and social movements through this process (Choudry and Kapoor 2013).

Existing literature has studied NGOisation in different national contexts as diverse as Nicaragua (Chahim and Prakash 2014), Palestine (Arda and Banerjee 2021), Brazil (Rodgers 2019), Serbia (Bias 2019; Vukov 2013), Croatia (Heideman 2017), the Philippines (Africa 2013), India (Jaoul 2018; Roy 2015), Pakistan (Borchgrevink 2020), Thailand (Ungsuchaval

2019), Kyrgyzstan (Kim and Campbell 2013), South Africa (Sinwell 2013), and Canada (Foth 2021). While the bulk of the literature traces the process of NGOisation of specific social movements and evaluates the impact it has had on the success of the movement, NGOisation has also been applied to studies of general civil society (Ungsuchaval 2019), and the governance of crises in specific contexts (Foth 2021).

One strand of NGOisation literature asserts that material and institutional pressures imposed by the neoliberal state and international development regime drive the NGOisation process (Alvarez 1999; Choudry and Kapoor 2013; Kamat 2004). This is said to lead to the depoliticisation and demobilisation of social movements that undergo NGOisation as its organisations "prioritise institutional survival and maintenance at the expense of mobilisation" (Choudry and Kapoor 2013: 5) and thereby often become tools of the neoliberal development regime that seeks to privatise the public sphere and redirect movement resources away from the expression of grievances toward the neoliberal regime (Chahim and Prakash 2014; Kamat 2004). Therefore, according to these scholars, NGOs have a depoliticising and deradicalising effect on social movements, and NGOisation leads to the 'professionalisation of dissent' (Ferguson 1994; Kamat 2013; Lang 1997; Petras 1997). Analysing the Latin American feminist movement at the height of the proliferation of feminist NGOs in the 1990s, Alvarez (1999) notes that there is a tendency for foreign-funded NGOs to alienate the societal constituencies they claim to serve as they professionalise and focus on the production of marketable knowledge. In Palestine, Arda and Banerjee (2021) argue that foreign-funding, professionalisation and the institutionalisation of specific forms of NGOs in an area of limited statehood has constrained forms of resistance and even normalised the Israeli occupation, as middle-class Palestinians increasingly have ties to foreign-funded NGOs and the Palestinian Authority. In Nicaragua, Chahim and Prakash (2014) assert that thanks to foreign funding, professionalised NGOs that prioritise accountability to donors over beneficiaries, focus more on service delivery than political advocacy, and are largely run by middle-class Nicaraguans have gained disproportionate prominence in Nicaraguan civil society over grassroots organisations. Ungsuchaval (2019) makes similar observations of civil society working in the health sector in Thailand, though NGOisation is incentivised by a state agency instead. Foth (2021) uses NGOisation in his study of the governance of the opioid crisis in Canada, arguing that new humanitarianism's emphasis of the moral imperative over the political led to NGOs engaging in service delivery to address the opioid crisis which was treating the symptoms rather than the causes, and perpetuating inequalities and restricting visions of alternatives.

A more cautious strand of literature on NGOisation emphasises the agency and hybrid political strategies of NGOs, and the different outcomes that processes of NGOisation produce. Though highlighting the trend of professionalisation and depoliticisation of Latin American feminist NGOs, Alvarez (1999; 2009) emphasises that most NGOs employ hybrid modes of action, such that they may engage in a combination of policy advocacy and offering their expert knowledge to elites, and more radical movement-building activities. She asserts that NGOs need to be contextualised and historicised to avoid binary representations as either 'good' or 'bad'. Carrol and Sapinski (2017) observed that transnational alternative political groups of the global left navigate contradictions in their engagement with international institutions and learn to work around the incentives to professionalise and depoliticise. Heideman (2017) argues that NGOisation in the Croatian peace movement's case is simply transformed activism where non-activist supporters of the movement are recruited to help develop more organised action. Jaoul (2018) shows that NGOisation helped sustain the Dalit movement in Uttar Pradesh as they were able to legally pursue their agenda and avoid repression by the state, though they recognise that the requirements for foreign funding makes their financial sustainability uncertain as they navigate avoiding depoliticisation. Roy (2015) and Rodgers (2019) assert that reality is messier than the simplistic narrative of NGOisation leading to depoliticisation suggests, and NGOs are both shown to exercise agency in this dilemma to professionalise and depoliticise, but struggle against the funding requirements.

## The role of NGOs in Lebanon

Lebanon has long been noted to have one of the most dynamic civil societies in the Middle East, which went through extensive proliferation particularly after the civil war at a rate of 250 associations per year (Kingston 2013; Salloukh et al. 2015). Roughly 8,311 CSOs were officially registered by April 2014 (Khneisser 2020). NGOs have become prominent actors in the Lebanese political landscape, and several works have been written analysing the role of NGOs in Lebanon.

Existing literature strongly emphasises that NGOs in Lebanon are equally susceptible to and even reproduce the sectarian political culture that permeates all aspects of political and social life in Lebanon. Though claiming to be secular, independent, and representing broader groups in Lebanese society, competition with other NGOs for influence and resources; as well

as manipulation and co-optation by the political establishment has led to Lebanese NGOs mirroring societal divisions and reproducing sectarianism in their pursuit of social change in Lebanon (Cammett 2014; Kingston 2013). Furthermore, though they have achieved some policy successes and institutional reforms, NGOs have failed to sustain the preliminary successes at the policy level and drive fundamental changes to the direction of state-society relations in Lebanon. NGOs that promote secularism and employ an apolitical approach are argued to struggle to attract the participation of marginalised groups because their sectarian political identities are seen as a safety net (Nagel and Staeheli 2016). Identity-based NGOs that have ties to the political establishment are numerous and make politically driven decisions when providing welfare services (Cammett 2014).

Another prominent theme in the literature is the impact of neoliberalism on the role and function of NGOs in Lebanon. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Lebanon's post-war reconstruction was implemented along neoliberal lines under the Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. The withdrawal of the state from public services and their privatisation is argued to have led to the rapid proliferation of NGOs to fill in this vacuum as the poor and the marginalised could no longer rely on the state (Salloukh et al. 2015). Rafic Hariri is also said to have deliberately fragmented and weakened the influential trade unions and professional syndicates that formed the labour movement to minimise opposition to his neoliberal policies, leaving a vacuum in civil society and the opposition that over time, NGOs tried to fill (Khater 2022; Salloukh et al. 2015; Traboulsi 2014). NGOs are further argued to perpetuate neoliberalism when they engage in service provision and replace the responsibilities of the state. This is said to be contributing to the weakness of the Lebanese state as the state then has little incentive to provide these services (Khneisser 2019). Those that work for policy reform have achieved success through negotiation and collaboration with the political establishment, but these are argued to legitimise and reinforce the dysfunctional sectarian political system (Kingston 2013). This is further supported by the many cases of NGO leaders joining the electoral lists of the traditional parties during elections as 'civil society candidates', many with the intention of changing the system from within, but instead they legitimise these parties (Salloukh et al. 2015).

NGOs are therefore highly controversial figures in Lebanese politics. Rather than forming a united front against the corrupt sectarian political elite, many rights-based NGOs have succumbed to the sectarian political culture and become entangled in the sectarian political system such that they have failed to push forward the significant fundamental change that Lebanon needs.

## Contribution to the literature

Existing studies of NGOisation trace the process of NGOisation of specific social movements over time or analyse how professionalised NGOs depoliticise civil society and specific structural problems. This thesis seeks to contribute to the literature on and theorisation of NGOisation by connecting the existing community of foreign-funded NGOs to a new social movement that formed long after many of these NGOs had been established in society. By doing this, this thesis makes room to analyse the possibility of re-politicisation of depoliticised foreign-funded NGOs. This thesis also contributes to the literature in its focus on perceptions of the members of the NGOs and anti-establishment movement, adding the influence of activists' perceptions as an additional layer to the implications of NGOisation to social movements.

This seeks to bridge studies of NGOisation with studies on the role of NGOs in Lebanon through examining the case of the anti-establishment movement. Analyses on the role of NGOs in Lebanon have only on a limited scale looked at their role in specific social movements. Existing literature on the anti-establishment movement focuses on the SMOs that formed from the movement and the struggles that the movement has faced in trying to take sustain itself and achieve its goals (Deets and Skulte-Ouaiss 2021; Halawi and Salloukh 2020; Khneisser 2019; Khneisser 2020; Mahzari 2018; Salloukh et al. 2015; Sharp 2016; Vertes 2020; Vertes et al. 2021). The movement is largely treated either as a series of events, or a collection of newly formed political groups that come and go and evolve over time, rather than a broader interaction of both new and existing actors in Lebanese society engaged in the same political struggle. As such, by acknowledging the potential role that both existing and new foreign-funded NGOs can have in shaping, supporting, or even hindering the anti-establishment movement, this thesis seeks to contribute to a more holistic conceptualisation of the movement.

# Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on the theorisation of the process of NGOisation by several feminist and post-colonial scholars. The chapter begins with explaining the conceptualisation of social movement utilised in this thesis. This is followed by explaining the theoretical framework – a nuanced approach to NGOisation – applied in this thesis. An introduction to the concept of NGOisation and the main tenets of this theory as developed by these scholars is followed by a section on the operationalisation of this theory for the purpose of analysing the findings of this thesis.

## Conceptual framework: Social movements as a network of interactions

This thesis adopts the definition of social movement as "a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (Diani 1992: 13). This definition is useful for a holistic understanding of the anti-establishment movement as being made up of a broad variety of actors – including foreign-funded NGOs – in Lebanese society that interact in different ways to mobilise and shape the movement.

The Lebanese anti-establishment movement is only recently being described as such, rather than being portrayed as isolated episodes of collective action. It has interchangeably been called the 'non-sectarian', 'opposition' and 'anti-establishment' movement by different academics, experts, and researchers (El Kak 2022; Vertes et al. 2021). This thesis uses the term 'anti-establishment' because it places emphasis on the movement's dissatisfaction not just with the government, but the political establishment as a whole, that includes the traditional political parties, sectarian leaders, and the financial elite. The SMOs of the movement emphasise non-discrimination along sectarian lines; secularism; and reject non-Lebanese donors and using

clientelism as a tactic to gather political support such as through providing goods and services. They demand the removal of the political elite that have been in power since 1990, they want to abolish the sectarian political system and replace it with a secular one, and they advocate for progressive centre-left social policy (El Kak 2022).

The literature on the anti-establishment movement has largely been on the alternative political parties that have formed from the movement and the political action they have taken through official channels such as elections (Deets and Skulte-Ouaiss 2021; Halawi and Salloukh 2020; Mahzari 2018; Sharp 2016; Vertes 2020; Vertes et al. 2021). However, several NGOs, other civil society actors and individual activists have been involved at different levels in the mass demonstrations (Khneisser 2020). As such, this thesis recognises that some foreign-funded rights-based NGOs may have had some contribution to the anti-establishment movement, or even be part of it. To determine this, Diani's (1992: 13) definition of social movement is used. Two main elements will be explored to define the role of foreign-funded rights-based NGOs in the anti-establishment movement: interaction with organisations/political parties associated with the movement; and engagement in the same political struggle. The element of sharing a collective identity is deemed inapplicable for this thesis because the movement is only recently being portrayed as such, and itself lacks cohesiveness and a clear sense of identity.

# Theoretical framework: A nuanced approach to the professionalisation of dissent
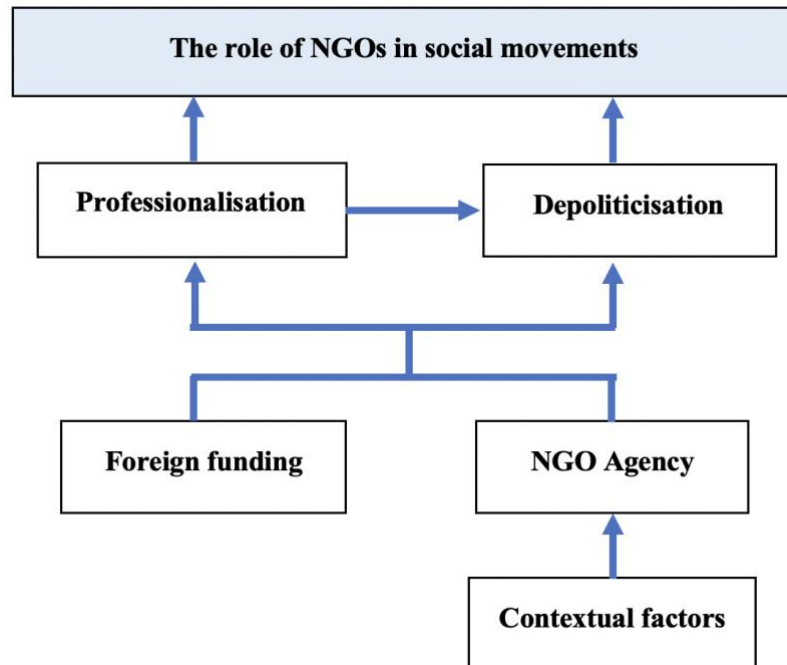


*Figure 1: A nuanced approach to the professionalisation of dissent*

To explain the impact of NGOisation on the role of foreign-funded rights-based NGOs in the anti-establishment movement, this thesis adopts the more nuanced approach to studying NGOisation or the 'professionalisation of dissent' as introduced in the literature review. On the one hand, this approach supports the critical perspective that material and institutional pressures imposed by the neoliberal development regime encourages the professionalisation and depoliticisation of NGOs. On the other hand, it acknowledges the agency of NGOs in navigating these pressures and choosing whether or not to professionalise and depoliticise. This is considered the best approach in this case as the literature on the role of NGOs in Lebanon strongly emphasises the influence of contextual factors of Lebanon's political history and sectarian political culture (Kingston 2013; Salloukh et al. 2015).

To answer the second research question, each of the three main elements of the process of the NGOisation, as presented in the Figure 1 – foreign funding, professionalisation and depoliticisation – are analysed. The following sections elaborate on these elements and how they will be operationalised in the analysis. The section on foreign funding elaborates on the

17

use of aid by the neoliberal development regime to encourage NGOisation. The two sections that follow it explain how foreign funding leads to the professionalisation and depoliticisation of NGOs. In each section, a balanced view is presented to account for the nuanced approach adopted in this thesis.

### *Foreign funding*

Foreign funding is argued by NGOisation scholars to lead to the professionalisation and depoliticisation of NGOs. The increase in aid provided to NGOs since the 1990s is said to be an agenda of the neoliberal development regime (Alvarez 2009; Kamat 2004; Roy 2015). Neoliberalism is based on the belief that "markets and private initiative are the most efficient mechanisms for achieving economic growth and providing the most services to the most people" (Hulme and Edwards 1997: 6). It became incorporated into the international development regime with the development of structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s that involved the downsizing of the state and privatisation of public services to let market forces act as freely as possible (Oringer and Welch 1998). Neoliberal policies have led to the unemployment of large numbers of civil servants, the rise in prices of necessities, increased inequality, and the loss of basic services for the impoverished. Therefore, donors aligned with the neoliberal development regime provide funding to NGOs to mitigate these negative consequences by replacing the services that the state no longer provides, offering employment to former civil servants, and driving development (Choudry and Kapoor 2013; Kamat 2013; Kane 2013; Roy 2015).

Furthermore, NGOs are argued to be "surrogates for civil society" as they are favoured by donors and international institutions over other actors to represent civil society even though they may be less capable of representing the masses (Alvarez 1999; Kamat 2004; Langohr 2005). By funding and institutionalising professionalised and depoliticised NGOs, the neoliberal development regime diverts dissent away from neoliberal capitalist policies and into activities that do not threaten the wealth and power of large corporations or access to the resources and markets of the world, leaving only tolerable opposition (Biekart 1999; Carroll and Sapinski 2017; Feldman 2007; Makuwira 2018).

The nuanced approach opposes blanket statements that all foreign donors have neoliberal agendas, as many foreign donors and IGOs have supported states in fulfilling their traditional responsibilities and providing public services. The European Union (EU), for instance, reallocated funds from NGOs to the state in the post-war former Yugoslav states in

areas that EU standards dictated was the responsibility of state institutions (Helms 2014). It is also recognised that there are a wide variety of donor agencies and states that do not subscribe to neoliberalism and therefore, support the state or actors in civil society for unrelated, even oppositional agendas (Alvarez 2009). This thesis will take into consideration this heterogeneity of intentions and effects of foreign funding.

## *Professionalisation*

Professionalisation entails employment of staff to run the NGO; structuring of the NGO along vertical, corporate management styles; and focusing on the efficient delivery of measurable results, expert knowledge and services aimed at achieving a specific policy outcome (Choudry and Kapoor 2013; Lang 2013). Hilhorst (2003: 6) notes that the NGO label is used as a "'claim-bearing label' through which organisations indicate that they conform to the expectations of a certain type of professional aid and development organisation." This label grants them access to funds and institutions that they otherwise would not have had access to.

della Porta (2020) notes that the domination of the New Public Management doctrine which entails the competitive contracting for public services, the introduction of voucher systems and the commodification of rights has led to reduced funds for NGOs resulting in a lower quality of services and high levels of competition for funding amongst NGOs. Thörn (2016) adds to this by referring to civil society being governed through marketisation, scientisation and standardisation. This involves the promotion of competition and entrepreneurship in civil society in developing countries that has steered NGOs towards becoming small businesses and service providers that compete in a service market. Funding requirements imposed on foreign-funded NGOs such as having clearly structured annual activity plans, the mainstreaming of donors' priorities into their work, regular auditing and reporting on project outcomes have made many NGOs to be more preoccupied with internal development than before (Alvarez 1999).

Several scholars have pointed out that professionalisation is not an imperative for NGOs and SMOs to survive. Many have been shown to resist professionalisation and retain more loosely structured organisation without risking survival (Ismail and Kamat 2018; Jaoul 2018; Roy 2015). Furthermore, in line with what was stated in the previous section on how not all donors follow a neoliberal agenda, greater dialogue and negotiation between recipient NGOs and their donors have resulted in the reduction of rigid funding requirements imposed

by those donors as it is increasingly recognised that they often impede on the quality of NGOs' work (Alvarez 2009). While this thesis recognises this growing opposing trend, professionalisation is still the overwhelming norm for NGOs to gain access to donor funding and institutions of power in this neoliberal era, and this has had a serious influence on the depoliticisation of NGOs which has had the effect of undermining social movements.

## *Depoliticisation*

Depoliticisation tends to result from the selective institutionalisation and funding of certain types of NGOs by the neoliberal development regime, and their subsequent professionalisation. NGOs then increasingly divert their resources from confrontational advocacy and movement-building to service provision, 'polite reformism', short-term development projects, and producing marketable knowledge. Forms of hegemonic NGO politics have been created by the neoliberal development regime in which social change is perceived to only be achievable in limited gains through opportunities that open up within existing structures (Choudry and Kapoor 2013).

These NGOs depoliticise issues such as poverty in their neglect of the lack of rights and freedom, and injustices of the political and economic system (Kane 2013). Another example is how women's empowerment is understood as 'largely a matter of facilitating women's participation in cash-yielding forms of production and consumer life', as exemplified in microfinance programmes (Leve 2014: 57; Roy 2015). Ironically, the concept of 'empowerment' was developed over 30 years ago by Ferguson who criticised the "powerful depoliticising effect" of the politics of economic development and advocated for empowerment for the purpose of creating better power-sharing to allow affected populations to effectively combat poverty (Ferguson 1994). Today the term is used to subordinate subaltern politics to purposes of 'good governance' and 'development', serving the same anti-politics machine that Ferguson was criticising (Jaoul 2018).

NGOisation is argued to "undermine, displace, neutralise or even destroy local and international movements for social change and environmental justice and/or oppositional anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics" (Choudry and Kapoor 2013). Feminist NGOs, for example, are reduced to gender experts that neoliberal states outsource responsibilities and services to, leading to their distancing from the ordinary women they claim to fight for and losing their links to the feminist movement (Alvarez 1999). Foth (2021) explains that the apolitical

moralism approach of many NGOs, particularly humanitarian NGOs makes it difficult to see suffering and violence that go beyond the present and confront the limits of the neoliberal order. Rather, they disconnect victims from politics and history by isolating them in their present crisis through their emphasis on urgency and emergency, which only contributes to the maintenance of the structural inequalities of neoliberalism (Ibid.). This is not limited to humanitarian NGOs as Mannan (2015) highlights how corporatised, professionalised and specialised NGOs reframe movements and struggles to fit within an apolitical 'global policy language'. The approach of this 'Non-Profit Industrial Complex' is as if there is no room to imagine a better world (INCITE! 2017).

The more nuanced approach asserts that professionalisation and foreign funding does not necessarily lead to the depoliticisation of NGOs, and that NGOisation does not necessarily undermine social movements. Alvarez (1999) emphasises that most NGOs have adopted hybrid political strategies and identities, that is, developing technical or issue-specific expertise in policy advocacy while maintaining their commitment to movement-oriented activities. Alvarez iterates that this is a strength, as NGOs can then effectively advance more inclusive policy agendas while remaining an important component of the social movements they share goals with. She further states that such a stark distinction between NGOs and social movements does not recognise this hybrid nature of NGOs, neglects crucial differences in the timing and extent of NGOisation in different countries, and misses the reality of the diversity of NGO activities. As such, Alvarez (2009: 176) emphasises the need to account for "the potential agency and 'wiggle room' even among those NGOs most beholden to global neoliberal agendas". Similarly, Helms (2014: 46) states that "NGOs come in many forms in terms of their organisation and mission and the motivation of those involves, as well as of their relationships with different kinds of donors and the state." NGOisation is therefore "a culturally and politically mutable tendency rather than a narrowly confined path" which possesses "different iterations and can be fuelled by different processes in different global or local constellations" (Lang 2013: 65).

### *Operationalisation of theoretical framework*

The Lebanese anti-establishment movement is a broad-based oppositional movement with a wide range of demands. Even so, it is still a local movement for social change and an expression of anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics (Choudry and Kapoor 2013). Therefore, it is relevant to be studied from the lens of NGOisation. The broader rights-based NGO sector in Lebanon,

regardless of whether the NGOs identify with or were formed in response to the movement, are included in this study based on the understanding that these NGOs claim and are often treated by foreign development agencies as representatives of segments of Lebanese society, particularly the marginalised.

The anti-establishment movement is conceived to ideally represent the interests of the majority of people in Lebanon, particularly the middle and lower classes, and inclusivity is seen to be an important characteristic that its members seek to uphold. The rights of marginalised groups such as the poor, women, and the disabled are uplifted in the political discourse of the movement. Therefore, it is relevant to explore the relationship or lack thereof between this movement and such NGOs, and how they may or may not support each other. In such a polarised political atmosphere like that of which Lebanon is currently experiencing, it is difficult for foreign-funded NGOs that claim to work for equality, social welfare, and the protection of human rights to remain politically neutral. Therefore, the actions or inaction of such NGOs are portrayed in this thesis as having an impact on the success of the anti-establishment movement.

To answer the second research question, the impact of NGOisation is analysed beginning from depoliticisation, followed by professionalisation and foreign funding.

Depoliticisation will be identified through the activities conducted by the NGOs, and the extent to which they associate themselves with social movements, especially the anti-establishment movement. NGOs that focus on service provision and economic empowerment are considered depoliticised while NGOs that focus on movement-building, confrontational advocacy and holding the political elite accountable are considered to have avoided depoliticisation. NGOs that were formed from social movements and maintain their support for those movements have remained politicised while NGOs that have moved away from supporting the movement they were a part of have depoliticised. NGOs that were never part of a social movement or never engaged in political activities are not depoliticised, but can still have a depoliticising effect on the problems that they seek to address through their work by focusing on apolitical, technical solutions.

Professionalisation of the NGOs will be identified through their organisational structures, type of staff, types of activities and projects they conduct, operational and governance procedures, use of language in communicating their work, and their principles and

values. Professionalised NGOs have hierarchical organisational structures over loose, network-based structures. They hire professional staff that do not necessarily have to be activists for the causes the NGOs work for. They tend to conduct short-term projects, and emphasise efficiency and measurable results to maintain legitimacy and accountability to donors. The language they use is highly technical, and professionalism is an important value that defines the way they work. These indications will help determine the extent of professionalisation of the NGOs in this thesis. This is also related back to the extent to which professionalisation may have influenced the depoliticisation of the NGOs.

Finally, the extent to which foreign funding may have influenced the professionalisation and depoliticisation of the NGOs is analysed. The patterns of foreign funding to the NGOs, the goals of the foreign donors, and the extent to which it can explain the professionalisation and depoliticisation of the NGOs are discussed.

The impact of these three elements and how they relate to one another on the NGOs and their role in the anti-establishment movement forms the core of the analysis and arguments of this thesis.

# Methodology

This chapter details the methods used in conducting research and writing this thesis. First, the logic behind this thesis is explained regarding its philosophical foundations and research design, followed by an account of the data collection and analysis process as well as the ethical considerations that guided them. The chapter ends with a reflection on my positionality as a researcher and the limitations I encountered in writing this thesis.

## Philosophical foundations: Social constructivism

This thesis places emphasis on perceptions and individuals' interpretations of their experiences in shaping people's behaviour and relationships within society, namely the role of foreign-funded NGOs in the anti-establishment movement. As such, this thesis is grounded in the philosophical assumptions of social constructivism. A social constructivist study focuses on the subjective meanings developed by individuals of their experiences (Cresswell and Poth 2017). The objects of study are the several realities constructed by different groups in society and the consequences of those constructions on their lives and interactions with others (Patton 2015).

Based on this worldview, this thesis will explore the different understandings and experiences of Lebanese foreign-funded NGOs and members of the anti-establishment movement of the recent political and socioeconomic developments in Lebanon and how they perceive each other. Since every individual's perspectives are filtered through historical and cultural understandings, their individual and contextual characteristics are taken into consideration in the analysis insofar that it is deemed relevant (Moses and Knutsen 2012). These perspectives are fundamental in determining the choice of actions or inaction by these NGOs in response to the political, economic, and social developments occurring in Lebanon.

Social constructivism is also epistemologically subjectivist in that the researcher is also engaged in social construction as opposed to objectively depicting reality (Patton 2015).

Therefore, my own biases as the researcher and how it affected the thesis will be elaborated on later in this chapter.

## Research design: Lebanon as a critical case

To best approach the subject of study, this thesis used a qualitative methodology. A single-case study design was chosen in which the unit of analysis is the anti-establishment movement in Lebanon. This is used as an instrumental case study that aims to produce generalisable findings on the role of foreign-funded rights-based NGOs in counter-hegemonic and pro-democracy movements in undemocratic developing countries (Silverman 2013).

The simultaneous occurrence of several escalated crises and their dire consequences on the Lebanese population are presented here as strong grounds for this being a critical case. The extreme circumstances as described in the first section of the chapter on the contextual background was presumed to have created an imperative for new forms of action. Therefore, it presents an opportunity to gain a better understanding of NGOisation and test the hypothesis of the theoretical framework as described in the previous chapter (Bryman 2012).

## Data collection: Interviews and organisational websites

Data for this thesis was collected by two means. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted of staff members of Lebanese foreign-funded rights-based NGOs and active members of the Lebanese anti-establishment movement. Second, data was collected directly from organisational websites of Lebanese foreign-funded rights-based NGOs and political organisations within the Lebanese anti-establishment movement. While the semi-structured interviews allowed me to get a first-hand account of participants' assignment of meaning and perspectives of their experiences, the websites filled in the gaps of information regarding the organisations being studied and served as a form of triangulation of the data from the interviews.

### *Purposive sampling: Nine NGOs and seven alternative political parties*

To strategically sample participants relevant to answering the research questions, purposive sampling was used to sample the organisations included in this thesis (Bryman 2012). Both foreign-funded rights-based NGOs, and political organisations within the anti-establishment movement were sampled in this thesis to get a holistic perspective of the relationship between these NGOs and the movement. This way, both how the NGOs perceive themselves in relation to the movement and how members of the movement perceive these NGOs are studied.

As the contextual background describes, the development of the anti-establishment movement led to the organisation of several alternative political parties embodying the ideals and upholding the demands of the movement. Therefore, these alternative political parties are considered in this thesis to be organised expressions of the anti-establishment movement that were formed by political activists to pursue sustained political action.[5] This motivates why members of these alternative political parties are considered active members of the Lebanese anti-establishment movement. It is acknowledged that there are many other members of the movement that are not affiliated with any of these parties, and that over the years these parties have come and gone while the movement persists. Even so, in the run-up to and immediate post-election period, they are currently the most visible and most accessible actors in the anti-establishment movement. They are therefore suitable for the purpose and scope of this thesis to represent the anti-establishment movement.

Two approaches to purposive sampling were used: maximum variation sampling and snowball sampling. Maximum variation sampling was used to generate as wide a variation as possible in terms of specific dimensions of interest stated below (Bryman 2012). This allows for the collection of a greater variety of perspectives, as well as the identification of common lines of understanding and meaning across organisations of different forms and issue areas. Due to my limited time, resources, and lack of direct access to the context being studied, snowball sampling was used as a supplement to get a greater sample of participants. Interview participants were asked at the end of each interview to recommend other organisations or individuals that they know and would be relevant to this thesis. The table below presents the

---

[5] The interviews with both NGO and political party participants support this.

sampling criteria and aspects of variation of NGOs and alternative political parties included in this thesis.

| Sampling criteria | NGOs | Political parties |
|---|---|---|
| Qualifying criterion | **Lebanese:** Formed in and based in Lebanon, not an affiliate of any international NGO headquartered outside Lebanon. | Based in Lebanon |
| | **Rights-based:** Mission and activities are formulated in the language of human rights | Non-sectarian |
| | **Foreign-funded:** Receives operational or project/programme funding from aid agencies or organisations based outside Lebanon | Widely recognised (by Lebanese journalists, academic and political experts, NGOs) as alternative to the establishment parties |
| | **Politically and religiously independent:** Non-sectarian and no explicit affiliation to any of the establishment Lebanese political parties | Advocating for or running a campaign based on anti-establishment, systemic reform to the political and economic system in Lebanon |
| Aspect of variation | Size | |
| | Age | |
| | Issue areas they work with | |
| | Types of activities | |

*Table 1: Sampling criteria*

Nine NGOs and seven political parties were sampled according to the above criteria. Of these, staff members of three NGOs and representatives of three alternative political parties were interviewed, of which further details can be found in Appendix A. For the remaining six NGOs and four political parties, data collected was limited to what was available on their organisational websites. This included descriptive information about the organisations and their work, press releases, published articles, reports and social media posts that were available and accessed via their organisational websites.

### *Online interviews*

The interviews were conducted remotely using participants' preferred video conferencing platform which included Microsoft Teams, Zoom, WebEx and WhatsApp. As data collection was designed to be inductive and the theoretical framework was chosen based on initial data, an initial four interviews were conducted before the interview guide was refined and a further two interviews were done, as shown in Appendix D and E. Interviews were conducted before the May 2022 parliamentary elections but based on the responses and minimal success of the opposition candidates it is unlikely that the responses would be significantly different if conducted after the elections.

## Data analysis: Thematic analysis

The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed using the speech transcription software Otter. While the entire recordings were automatically transcribed by the software, corrections to the transcriptions were manually done.

The data from both the interviews and organisational websites was analysed using thematic analysis, which helps to systematically identify patterns of meaning across the data set and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences in the data set (Braun and Clarke 2012). Codes were generated inductively for the data to 'speak for itself' and allow for a wider range of possibilities in the analysis (Cresswell and Poth 2017). These codes were then organised into themes and subthemes as seen in Appendix F.

## Ethical considerations

An important ethical consideration for this thesis was regarding the political nature of the topic and the potential risks involved for participants in this research. In the run up to the 2022 parliamentary elections, political tensions were very high in Lebanon. Furthermore, although freedom of expression in Lebanon is relatively strong compared to the rest of the Arab world, it is a commonly used tactic of the political elite to sue dissidents for slander and use indirect means to suppress opposition (Mady 2022). As such, though it is much lower than in countries like Egypt or Saudi Arabia, there is always some risk involved in criticising the government and the political elite in Lebanon. Therefore, although all interviewees expressed that they were okay with their organisations' names being used in my thesis even after being informed of potential risk with the information sheet attached in Appendix C, I followed the advice of Weipert-Fenner (2018) and decided to anonymise all of them to minimise potential risk from their participation in this research.

As interviews and transcription were conducted online, all software used were selected to ensure the confidentiality of the interviews were protected. The video conferencing platforms Microsoft Teams, WebEx, WhatsApp and Zoom all have encryption and security features to ensure that only the interviewees and I were listening in (Lobe et al. 2020). Interviews were recorded both using the video conferencing platforms and my smartphone. Recordings were saved onto my personal Google Drive and were erased from the cloud service with the submission of this thesis. For transcription, recordings were uploaded to Otter.ai which does not share any personal identifiable information including the transcripts and recordings to third parties, has two-factor authentication for increased security, and erases all data once the account is deactivated (Otter.ai 2022).

## Positionality: The sympathetic outsider

I am not Lebanese, nor have I ever been to Lebanon. I am a Eurasian from Malaysia with no experience living in the Middle East and only a very small part of my ancestry has roots in the Middle East. The only contacts that I have in Lebanon were established in connection to writing this thesis. My interest in Lebanon is relatively recent and mainly the result of getting offered to do an internship in Lebanon, though I have had a prior interest in politics and civil society

in the Middle East in general. Research as an outsider presented both advantages and challenges to my research. I used my initial interviews to get a general understanding of the political dynamics in Lebanon and the main civil society actors that had a role to play. I also consulted a Lebanese academic who could "put on the hat of an outsider while also claiming to have insider knowledge" (Kingston 2018: 245). I was open regarding my lack of knowledge on the situation and asked open-ended questions. These interviews went smoothly and produced larger amounts of data, though not all relevant, as I was seen as a Swedish university student that needed to understand what the Lebanese people are going through. After four interviews, I decided to refine my interview questions based on the deeper understanding I had developed. My remaining interviews sought to discover underlying motivations behind NGOs' and alternative political parties' choices. These interviews involved more challenging exchanges with my interviewees, and several times it was observed that they were not entirely comfortable and seemed suspicious of my intentions behind the questions.

Another important element of my positionality is the feeling of being politically close to or sympathising with the political struggles of my research participants. Though I am not an activist, I am politically left-leaning and sympathetic to popular struggles for civil rights and democracy as these are struggles that have recently gained momentum in my home country. In addition, I have some experience interning in NGOs and have developed a pessimistic perception of the role of NGOs and international aid in developing countries. Therefore, I needed to be careful to avoid thinking that my views were superior or advocating this perspective in my interaction with my research participants (Carapico 2006). Therefore, whatever clashes between my own expectations and the perspective of my interviewees is transparently included into the analysis and used to develop grounded conclusions. I have also avoided romanticising the political activists and alternative political parties with which I sympathise with by also turning a critical eye on them (Weipert-Fenner 2018). Even so, in such a politically polarised setting as Lebanon is today, my positionality opened some doors and closed others. The snowball sampling and my struggle to secure more interviews is likely to have skewed the perspective presented in the data collected for this thesis, therefore, I can only treat this data with care and attempt to balance this perspective by cross-checking with other sources, talking to the Lebanese academic and avoiding generalisation without the basis to do so (Ibid.).

# Limitations

Several limitations hindered this study from becoming what I envisioned it to be, namely, remote data collection, the low participation of NGO representatives, and my lack of proficiency in the Arabic language.

Concerned for my personal safety and ability to conduct research under conditions resulting from the escalating crisis at the time, I chose not to physically visit the field and instead collected data for this thesis entirely remotely. I found it more difficult to establish rapport with interviewees through the screen, making most of the interviews feel very formal, and the participants were not as comfortable as they perhaps would have been in person. This may have affected their eagerness to share their personal opinions and experiences, and instead mostly focussed on their organisations' work.

Extending from this lack of access and familiarity with the field, I struggled to get NGOs to agree to participate for an interview. I had only one prior contact in the Lebanese civil society before undertaking this research, and therefore, had to establish new contacts from scratch which was very difficult to do remotely. Several other reasons such as the political nature of the topic, and the likelihood that the NGOs were extremely busy during this period of crisis and approaching elections may have affected the willingness of the NGOs to participate in this study. As such, although 13 NGOs and 7 political parties were contacted, only six interviews were acquired, of which only three NGOs participated, limiting the generalisability of the findings of this study to the wider Lebanese NGO landscape. To counter this limitation, data from organisational websites were collected as a supplement.

Finally, my lack of proficiency in Arabic posed a limitation both during interviews and access to Arabic-language materials. The interviews were conducted in English, which is probably not the first language of any of my Lebanese interviewees. It was clear that some interviewees who may have lived in English-speaking countries before or more frequently used English in their work were better at expressing themselves in the interviews than others. In addition, the wealth of Arabic-language materials such as organisational websites, videos, news articles, social media posts and reports were largely inaccessible to me. Therefore, Google Translate was used wherever possible to access Arabic-language materials.

# Findings and Analysis

The following chapters answer the research questions posed by this thesis. First, an analysis of the data describing the role that foreign-funded rights-based NGOs play in the anti-establishment movement is presented. This is followed by an analysis of how this role may or may not have been impacted by NGOisation.

## The role of foreign-funded rights-based NGOs

In assessing the role of foreign-funded rights-based NGOs in the Lebanese anti-establishment movement, this section will discuss the direct and indirect interactions between foreign-funded rights-based NGOs, and the alternative political parties that identify with the movement. This is followed by an analysis of the extent to which the NGOs are engaged in the same political conflict as the anti-establishment movement.

### *Interaction*

There is limited, if any direct interaction and cooperation between the sampled foreign-funded rights-based NGOs and alternative political parties. The interviewed political party members adamantly claimed that they are not and have never been supported by any NGO and do not work with NGOs.

> "We prefer not to do direct work with CSOs. So, we usually empower personnel inside of the party that either want to start their own initiatives, or they want to take some kind of a collaboration so for that purpose we created our own organisation." (Political Party Participant 1)

> "Now, if you're referring to NGOs… many of these actors, in fact, without generalising, of course, have neither played a positive role in the formation of our party, nor in advancing its objectives." (Political Party Participant 2)

> "We are not supported by any NGO. We are a political party. We believe there is a difference of nature between us and between them as a political party." (Political Party Participant 3)

Data from the websites largely confirms this lack of cooperation, and only limited indirect cooperation could be found. Some NGOs have used their online presence as a platform to spread awareness about the existence and political programmes of alternative political parties competing in the 2022 parliamentary elections, and there was one instance where an alternative political party signed a petition demanding improved women's rights with other NGOs.

### *Engagement in the same political conflict*

This thesis found that the political views of both the NGO and political party interviewees did not contradict one another. In fact, the rhetoric used by all the interviewees to describe politically contentious issues such as the root causes of the crises and what needs to be changed to improve the situation in Lebanon was remarkably similar. The interviews revealed a shared understanding of the crises being caused by decades of corruption by the political and financial elite which hold on to power by manipulating the sectarian political system.

> "There is decades of weak governance, mismanagement, fragile, corrupt and unproductive economic and political systems that led to this destruction and this collapse." (NGO Participant 1)

> "We are not pleased with the democratic life in Lebanon, we are not pleased with the existing political parties that are in charge of running this country. And they are in-charge but not democratically… because they have set a certain electoral law that allows them to keep their seats." (NGO Participant 2)

> "The economic crisis, the political crisis, everything, it all goes back to – because unfortunately, we have corruption… A lot of politicians have been at their seats for 10 years, they haven't been changed… the corruption continued." (NGO Participant 3)

"The political circle – which is the dominant sectarian leaders – their foreign patrons, and the financial circle – which is the governor of the central bank and the owners of commercial banks and their partners… The financial circle would act as a channel to attract money from abroad and pumps it domestically through public and private debt, usually private debt takes the form of loans for consumption to import goods and services, etc. And the political circle in turn, manages these distribution channels. So, it buys loyalties through let's say public employment. And hence, it consolidates its grip on power." (Political Party Participant 2)

Similarly, both NGO and political party interviewees expressed their belief that the sectarian political regime and its tendency to undemocratically cling to power through corruption and clientelism needs to be removed.

"We believe that fundamental pillar in establishing different context and different reality is by pushing forward the agenda of real democracy that is built on social solidarity economy, and that will free people from nepotism, clientelism and all the fragility people are under that gets them very fragile to all the nepotism and clientelism that is being forced by the current regime and its tools." (NGO Participant 1)

"Personally, I see that if we want to make a change here in Lebanon, we have to count on the new generation. Not to follow any political party from the existing parties now. To work on the new generation, to work on new values, to work on a new kind of government that doesn't discriminate based on religion." (NGO Participant 3)

"We need to topple down the sectarian system." (Political Party Participant 1)

"We are not against communities, but against the communitarian governance of the state… We have a problem with the parties that are in power since 1990." (Political Party Participant 3)

This shows that all three of the NGO interviewees shared the major sentiments of the anti-establishment movement. However, this does not necessarily mean that the NGOs as a

whole share these sentiments as the interviewees were expressing their personal opinions and were not all in decision-making positions within their organisations where their opinions could influence the strategy and activities of the organisations.

Though the goals of the NGOs and alternative political parties largely overlap, there is only limited indirect interaction between them. Therefore, a small number of foreign-funded rights-based NGOs only play a marginal role in contributing to the development of the anti-establishment movement in Lebanon, while most play no role at all.


# The impact of NGOisation

## *Depoliticisation*

Depoliticisation was found to occur on two levels: a political, movement-based NGO is depoliticised over time; and/or an NGO acts in a way that has a depoliticising effect on a movement, crisis, or problem. Depoliticisation varied greatly among the NGOs sampled for this thesis. For ease of analysis, they are divided into three levels of depoliticisation: NGOs that are completely depoliticised; NGOs that are partially depoliticised; and NGOs that have avoided depoliticisation. Of the nine NGOs sampled, one is completely depoliticised, four are partially depoliticised and another four have avoided depoliticisation. Despite the varying levels of depoliticisation, the main issue areas of NGOs across two or even three categories overlap. For example, the livelihoods and rights of refugees and the poor, and gender-based violence (GBV) are major issue areas for NGOs across all three categories. Their point of differentiation rather correlates with how they articulate their purpose and what they do. The NGO in the first category is a humanitarian NGO, the NGOs in the second category articulate their work as spreading awareness and defending human rights, while the NGOs in the third category articulate their mission using the language of democracy, justice, transparency, and accountability. All of them work for human rights and explicitly state this on their websites, but especially in the case of politicisation of their work, have chosen different ways to do so.

The NGO in the first category completely disassociates themselves and their work from the political dynamics of the country and the region, and in doing so, also have a depoliticising effect on the problems and crises that they seek to address. They work on issues such as GBV, the rights of refugees and the welfare of the poor. These issues can be argued to be the

responsibilities of the state, but rather than addressing the state's failure at its roots, the NGO has limited its work to addressing the gap left by the state through activities including service provision, capacity-building programmes, economic empowerment projects, and campaigning to the public to raise funds and spread awareness in an apolitical manner. Their communication material makes no mention of the government, political movements, or the October 17 Revolution. This NGO cannot be said to have experienced depoliticisation since they were never political to begin with, rather, their apolitical portrayal of crises including the current multidimensional crisis, the Beirut Blast and the Syrian Refugee Crisis can have a depoliticising effect on those crises.

Discussing this with the interviewee from this NGO revealed that talking politics is not allowed in this organisation, and they reiterated several times that whatever opinions they shared about the political situation in Lebanon were their own and not the position of the organisation.

> "We don't want to talk politics or take parties or say something that affects
> it because as an NGO we don't intervene, or we have no issue, or we don't
> deal with these issues." (NGO Participant 3)

In relation to the anti-establishment movement, although they shared its sentiments, they did not necessarily agree with its actions or perceived their NGO as having any role to play in its political struggle.

> "In the revolution, we don't intervene. We had our own projects, but the
> block of the roads was preventing us and was challenging. I don't know, if
> someone, like, each individual participated – it's their opinion, their own
> work. But as [NGO 3], no, we didn't intervene." (NGO Participant 3)

The NGOs in the second category are partially depoliticised as they underwent depoliticisation over time due to certain changes in circumstances, and/or also engage in activities that have a depoliticising effect though to a lesser extent than the first category. To advance and defend human rights in Lebanon, they conduct political advocacy, lobby the political establishment, and some even support independent or civil society candidates in elections.

"We did a lot of meetings with the parliament… but they have an internal decision that they don't want to endorse it… at the end of 2020, we were obliged to name the specialised parliament committee. So, we named and shamed them. And when we did that, they were frustrated, and they started threatening us that we should withdraw our campaign and we said no, and then they put it on their discussion meeting again. But honestly, from December 2020, till today, they only discussed it four times… So, we are waiting for the elections in order to immediately lobby and meet with the new parliament members and the specialised committee to activate our law again. Maybe it will be endorsed, but we will not stop our advocacy work on ending child marriage." (NGO Participant 2)

"We did a conference in one of the regions for nine woman candidates running for the 2018 elections in order to expose them, and to introduce them to the society since they are not politically affiliated, and we wanted to encourage their participation in the elections back then… Election that is coming soon in May… Once we know who are the woman candidates, of course, we will meet them and do a big public event for them as usual in order to encourage them as being candidates in the coming election." (NGO Participant 2)

At least two of these NGOs were born out of a social movement, namely the feminist movement, and were founded with the purpose of movement-building. However, over time they have undergone some measure of depoliticisation, as changing circumstances and professionalisation pushed them to change their priorities and organisational strategies.

"At the establishment of [NGO 2] back then it worked on… contributing to the existing feminist movement that mainly worked in Lebanon and ending civil war between political parties from different sects and so on. [NGO 2's] main work was intervening and asking for peace and working on political engagement, engaging in shaping the political image back then, but later on, after the end of the war, they started talking about the rights of women to elect and be elected. And then they go, talking more about economic empowerment, basic needs, ending GBV and so on." (NGO Participant 2)

"Before we had a strategic objective that states that we want to activate the feminist movement in Lebanon. But now we see that it's not the time to put our efforts on activating the movement, because we have a lot of other strategic objectives that we have to prioritise and it will be automatically activated, but we cannot put now all the efforts on that. So, we remove that."
(NGO Participant 2)

While the quotes above illustrate quite explicit political engagement by this feminist NGO, they have also conducted economic empowerment activities that, as explained in the theoretical framework, can have a depoliticising effect on the crises and political problems that they claim to address. Economic empowerment activities were conducted by all three of the NGOs that participated in the interviews, and this is likely at least in part due to pressure as a result of the unique circumstances created by the current economic and financial crisis in Lebanon.

"[NGO 1] is an initiative that supports and encourages solidarity initiatives, collectives, micro, small and medium enterprises, which sustainably invest in its resources with the aim of empowering and increasing local communities' resilience economically and socially." (NGO Participant 1)

"We work on… economic empowerment, because of the current economic situation." (NGO Participant 2)

"I thought that empowerment now is much more matters, especially when Corona rises, especially when the dollar exchange rate and the economic crisis happened. I knew that a lot of women, a lot of youth need support, they don't know how to get it… Of course, we have emergency response, like food parcels hot meals, medical aids, but providing a skill, or a career is better than providing the services itself… it's more sustainable." (NGO Participant 3)

Two of the sampled NGOs considered to fit into this category based on referrals by interviewees and data gathered from their organisational websites declined to be interviewed. One of them declined after the interview guide was shared with them, suggesting that though these NGOs engage in human rights advocacy and lobbying the political establishment, they

are not comfortable discussing the political situation in Lebanon. Three of the four NGOs in this category are women's rights NGOs.

The third category includes foreign-funded rights-based NGOs that have avoided depoliticisation. They challenge the hypothesis of scholars that are critical of NGOisation that states that NGOisation necessarily leads to depoliticisation of social movements and civil society. The four NGOs under this category have retained confrontational approaches in their political advocacy work and continue to engage in movement-building activities. Though they are funded by foreign governmental, non-governmental and private donors, they have not shied away from holding the political establishment accountable. Their work involves producing detailed reports on corruption by specific government agencies or ministries, criticising the political establishment's handling of the crises, explicitly supporting reforming the sectarian political system, and providing a platform for greater publicity for alternative political parties. Despite the economic and financial crises, three of the four NGOs in this category do not appear to engage in economic empowerment projects or the provision of necessities, and it is not stated as part of their strategic objectives. The one that does engage in economic empowerment activities does it with the explicit goal of countering Lebanese people's dependency and vulnerability to clientelism of the corrupt political elite. Moreover, three of the four NGOs were founded by political activists, legal experts and/or journalists.

As such, depoliticisation varies across Lebanese foreign-funded rights-based NGOs, and nearly half of the NGOs in this thesis have avoided depoliticisation. Interestingly, it was found that the growth of the anti-establishment movement, as exemplified in the 17 October Revolution, had the effect of politicising an NGO in that was partially depoliticised.

> "We didn't include political participation before, although we work in it, but we didn't include it as something strategic... But after that 2019 movements and the participation of women in the movements, we decided to include political participation as a huge component to work on." (NGO Participant 2)

Despite this diversity and the potential for even depoliticised NGOs to become more politicised, NGOs are still perceived negatively by the alternative political parties in terms of their depoliticisation of structural problems in Lebanon and fragmentation of the opposition to the establishment.

"After five years of working with NGOs, I started to realise it's not my field, first of all, and I don't want to be part of NGOs, because it is killing the political essence of anything, it is shattering the cause into so many causes." (Political Party Participant 1)

"These different NGOs… they've been preoccupied with advancing very ad hoc, piecemeal initiatives that can best be characterised as treatments to the symptoms, rather than solutions to the disease." (Political Party Participant 2)

Therefore, despite the differing levels of depoliticisation of foreign-funded rights-based NGOs in Lebanon, there remains a strong perception amongst members of the anti-establishment movement, in this case the interviewees from the alternative political parties, that NGOs do have a depoliticising effect on their cause.

### *Professionalisation*

This section explores the extent of professionalisation of the NGOs in this study and how well it explains the depoliticisation of some NGOs over others, as well as the negative perception of members of the anti-establishment movement regarding the role of NGOs. Professionalisation was not a major theme of discussion in the interviews, and this section therefore relies primarily on the limited information available on the NGOs' organisational websites. Most of the sampled NGOs detailed their organisational structures, decision-making procedures, as well as employed staff in their organisational websites. All the NGOs were professionalised to some extent, regardless of which level of depoliticisation they fell under.

All the NGOs had hierarchical organisational structures, nonactivist professional staff, and clear governance procedures that include a Board whose members are elected by a General Assembly that meets regularly. At least five of the NGOs were observed to conduct short-term project-based activities, present monitoring and evaluation reports, as well as financial auditing reports. Some differences in professionalisation were observed between the three categories of NGOs, although the extent of professionalisation is not uniform across all NGOs within the category.

The NGO in the first category that is completely depoliticised was the most transparent and structured regarding their organisational structure and governance procedures. It is stated

on their website that professionalism and organisational integrity are their most important values of governance, and the requirements to be a member of the Board include executive management experience, financial knowledge, expertise in the areas that the NGO works within, and knowledge of the NGO. There is no mention of any political or social ideals of the organisation, and no requirement that Board members are actively engaged or passionate about the causes that they work for. In addition, quantifiable results achieved by the NGO are emphasised on their homepage. In this sense, they are highly professionalised.

When asked why they distance themselves from politics, the staff member of this NGO reasoned that engagement in politics would risk the integrity of the NGO and therefore, their credibility to both beneficiaries and donors. Distancing the NGO from politics is expressed by them as a fundamental principle tied to the values of independence, non-discrimination, and professionalism.

> "A reason? Why we don't want to be involved? Because as an NGO, one of your values should be that you don't accept someone for his party or for his religion. So, if you want to follow someone, that means that we're going to choose a specific target of people and leave the other target, which is not acceptable in the NGO values or in the humanitarian work values. We have to accept all people and provide help and support for all kinds of people, all the nationalities or all the religions… So, it doesn't match with our values." (NGO Participant 3)

> "You're not going to find an NGO that participates in these matters, I assume. Because all of the NGOs – especially the ones that have the same standards and values – they know if they have to follow one or another party it's going to be not matching the responsibility or the professionalism or the transparency, or non-discrimination rule." (NGO Participant 3)

As demonstrated in the first quote, the intimate association of politics with religion in Lebanon is a strong influence on this NGO's decision to stay away from politics and political struggle. However, the explicit mentioning of 'professionalism' and 'NGO values' as reasons confirms the influence of 'hegemonic NGO politics' involving collaboration and polite reformism rather than confrontation and movement-building (Choudry and Kapoor 2013). It also supports the idea that the term 'NGO' is a claim-bearing label indicating that organisations conform to certain expectations (Hillhorst 2003).

One of the NGOs in the second category of partially depoliticised NGOs is observed to be structurally and procedurally professionalised. They are however, still staffed primarily by activists that also possess professional expertise and qualifications. One of the NGOs in the third category is professionalised structurally much like the NGO in the second category, but has retained political and ideological language in their mission statement and media advocacy to indicate their continued support for leftist movements.

As such, there are no clear differences in professionalisation between the NGOs in the three categories and none of them are structured like grassroots organisations – along loose, network-based structures. While they do sometimes collaborate with other NGOs and civil society organisations and form networks and coalitions with them, they retain their professionalised organisational structures, administrative and operational procedures internally. Though the NGO in the first category demonstrated high levels of depoliticisation and professionalisation, the lack of similar uniformity and correlation amongst the NGOs in the second and third categories suggests that professionalisation alone cannot explain the different levels of depoliticisation.

### *Foreign funding*

This section elaborates on how foreign funding may explain the depoliticisation of some NGOs in this study, their professionalisation, and the distancing of the alternative political parties from NGOs. When looking into the funding sources of the NGOs included in this thesis, some interesting insights were found regarding how foreign funding both did and did not drive depoliticisation. The table below shows some of the foreign donors to the nine sampled NGOs, divided according to which category of depoliticisation they belong under.

| Donors | | First category of NGOs | Second category of NGOs | Third category of NGOs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **State agencies** | Australian Embassy | ██ | | |
| | Belgian Embassy | | | ██ |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German International Development Agency – GIZ) | | ✅ | |
| | Japanese Embassy | ✅ | | |
| | Kuwait Zakat House | ✅ | | |
| | Netherlands Embassy | | | ✅ |
| | Norwegian Embassy | ✅ | | ✅ |
| | Qatar Charity | ✅ | | |
| | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) | | ✅ | |
| | Turkish Embassy | ✅ | | |
| **IGOs** | International Organization for Migration (IOM) | ✅ | | |
| | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) | | ✅ | |
| | United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) | | ✅ | |
| | UN Women | | ✅ | |
| | EU | | ✅ | ✅ |
| **INGOs** | Plan International | | ✅ | |
| | ActionAid | | ✅ | |
| | Save the Children | ✅ | ✅ | |

| Category | Organization | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Oxfam | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| | Doctors without Borders (MSF) | ■ | | |
| | Democracy International | | | ■ |
| | Privacy International | | ■ | |
| | International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) | ■ | | |
| | International Media Support | | | ■ |
| **Foreign NGOs** | IM Swedish Development Partner | | ■ | |
| | Kvinna till Kvinna (Sweden) | | ■ | |
| | Diakonia (Sweden) | | ■ | |
| | National Democratic Institute (United States) | | | ■ |
| | Aman Palestin (Malaysia) | ■ | | |
| | Geneva Call (Switzerland) | ■ | | |
| | Norwegian Refugee Council | ■ | | |
| | Several Islamic charities | ■ | | |
| **Political party-affiliated foundations** | Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (German Green Party) | | ■ | ■ |
| | Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (German Social Democratic Party) | | ■ | ■ |
| | Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung (German Free Democratic Party) | | | ■ |

| | Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (German Christian Democratic Union) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Private foundations** | Open Society Foundations | | | |
| | Ford Foundation | | | |

*Table 2: Foreign donors to each NGO category of depoliticisation[6]*

The table above shows that while some foreign donors favour less political NGOs, others don't shy away from funding politically active ones. These include the Belgian, Dutch, and Norwegian states; the EU; INGOs such as Oxfam, Democracy International, and International Media Support; the National Democratic Institute of the United States; some German political party-affiliated foundations; and privately-owned foundations. Internet-based research on these donors revealed several indications that they do not support the neoliberal development agenda. These indications include the dominance of leftist parties in the Norwegian government; these INGOs' support for social justice, democracy, and equality; the practise of the political party-affiliated foundations supporting the strengthening of progressive, liberal, and leftist transnational movements; and the Ford Foundation's explicitly stated goal of supporting social justice and movement-building globally. Even so, these are not definitive evidence that they don't support neoliberal development, and the agendas of the other donors to NGOs in the third category are unclear. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that none of them support the neoliberal development agenda.

Amongst the donors to the NGO in the first category are the Australian, Japanese, Kuwaiti, Norwegian, Qatari, and Turkish states; the IOM; various humanitarian INGOs; and foreign NGOs. The NGOs in the second category have been funded by Sida, GIZ, most of the UN agencies and INGOs in the table, and some German political party-affiliated foundations.

---

[6] This table is based on information found on the organisational websites of the nine NGOs. It is not a complete list of foreign donors to these NGOs, and it is possible that the information is outdated. Even so, I believe it is still relevant to be discussed and can offer insights to this thesis.

Based on these nine NGOs, the Swedish donors in the table – Sida, IM Swedish Development Partner, Kvinna till Kvinna and Diakonia – according to information available on organisational websites, appear to only have donated to the NGOs in the second category. These are a wide variety of donors, including several states and agencies that are not known to be neoliberal or supportive of neoliberal development. However, such donors that restrict their funding recipients to NGOs that are professionalised; articulate their work in terms of only human rights and the SDGs; and avoid confrontational policy advocacy and movement-building indirectly uphold the neoliberal development regime.

There are no clear distinctions amongst the foreign donors to the NGOs in this thesis in terms of the extent to which their funding supports the neoliberal development agenda. Therefore, while the influence of the neoliberal development regime through state policies and foreign funding provides some insights, it is insufficient to explain the patterns of depoliticisation of NGOs in Lebanon.

In regard to why the alternative political parties distance themselves from NGOs, perceptions have trumped reality.

> "NGOs… they've been also affected by the crisis… relatively speaking, they are better off now than they would have been before the crisis, since most of them actually earn in US fresh dollars… So, their purchasing power is now higher in relative terms compared to other Lebanese citizens… The fact is that this is an unprecedented crisis. And there is a sort of quasi-complete absence of the state. This renders the country vulnerable to external influence, like any country, some CSOs and some infant political parties… For recent infant political platforms, funding platforms, CSOs, NGOs, political parties, they play an active role in lending foreign countries a foot in the door, in this current crisis and that is envisioned as reason to be concerned." (Political Party Participant 2)

Another political party participant explained further that this negative perception of foreign-funded NGOs and political parties being proxies for external interests to interfere in Lebanese politics has made it almost taboo to be associated or work with foreign-funded NGOs. This is supported by the strict vetting procedures that many alternative political parties and their fundraising platforms have adopted for receiving donations, only accepting donations

from Lebanese citizens that are found to have no conflicts of interest with the party. Though this limits their financial resources, something that can strongly influence their likelihood of winning votes in the elections, it is a fundamental principle that they do not want to compromise on.

In conclusion, NGOisation and professionalisation has affected the nine NGOs in this thesis in different ways such that some are depoliticised while a substantial number of other NGOs are not. The hybridity of foreign-funded rights-based NGOs and the work that they do is confirmed. In the context of Lebanon, however, there is a strong stigma against foreign-funded NGOs, in part due to the depoliticisation tendency of some foreign-funded NGOs, but also the historical interference of foreign governments in Lebanese politics, and the tendency of NGOs to be co-opted to serve the interests of the political elite. This explains the marginal role that foreign-funded rights-based NGOs play in the anti-establishment movement in Lebanon.

# Conclusion

Lebanese foreign-funded rights-based NGOs play only a marginal, if any, role in contributing to the anti-establishment movement in Lebanon. Though NGOisation has professionalised these NGOs, they widely vary in their extent of depoliticisation. In the case of the anti-establishment movement in Lebanon, however, perceptions have a stronger influence over the role of these NGOs in the movement. This is because foreign funding is a politically controversial topic in Lebanon, as it is associated with external interference in Lebanese politics. The fact that many foreign funded rights-based NGOs in Lebanon have depoliticised has also created a stigma against all NGOs, regardless of the existence of several politically hybrid and politicised NGOs, that has led to alternative political parties in the anti-establishment movement to distance themselves from NGOs. Therefore, this stigma makes it politically detrimental to be associated with NGOs, especially those that receive funding from foreign donors.

## Suggestions for future research

This thesis points to several issues for future research. Firstly, a mapping of foreign aid to NGOs in Lebanon that looks into detail which countries support which types of NGOs, what factors determine their choices and what indirect effects this may have. Secondly, it is interesting to study what drives people to move from NGOs to the political organisations of the anti-establishment movement, and how the values and perspectives they bring with them may shape the movement.

# Bibliography

Abi Nassif, F., Asseily, E., Bazzy, B., Bejani, H., Bisat, A., Chaoul, H., Diwan, I., El Sayed, H., El Reda Youssef, A., El Zein, S., Fahed, N., Jabr, P., Nader, S., Nasrallah, M., Raphael, P., Riachi, J., Salti, N., Shehadi, K., Saidi, N., Yahya, M., Yammine, B. and Zouein, G. (2020). Lebanon's Economic Crisis: A Ten Point Action Plan for Avoiding a Lost Decade. *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 6 January. Available at https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/01/06/lebanon-s-economic-crisis-ten-point-action-plan-for-avoiding-lost-decade-pub-80704 [Accessed 30/7/2022]

Africa, S. (2013). Philippine NGOs: Defusing Dissent, Spurring Change. In A. Choudry and D. Kapoor (Eds.), *NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects*. London: Zed Books, pp. 118-143.

Alexander, J. C. (2006). *The civil sphere*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Alvarez, S. E. (1999). Advocating feminism: The Latin American Feminist NGO 'Boom'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics 1*(2), pp. 181-209.

Alvarez, S. E. (2009). Beyond NGO-ization? Reflections from Latin America. *Development 52*(2), pp. 175-184.

Amnesty International (2021). *One year on from devastating Beirut explosion, authorities shamelessly obstruct justice*, 2 August. Available at https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/lebanon-one-year-on-from-beirut-explosion-authorities-shamelessly-obstruct-justice/ [Accessed 1/9/2022]

Arda, L. and Banerjee, S. B. (2021). Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood: The NGOization of Palestine. *Business & Society 60*(7), pp. 1675-1707.

Azhari, T. (2019). One month on: Hope, defiance as Lebanon protests persist. *Aljazeera,* 17 November. Available at https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/17/one-month-on-hope-defiance-as-lebanon-protests-persist/ [Accessed 10/5/2022]

Azhari, T., Bassam, L. and Saad, M. (2022). Lebanon's healthcare on brink of collapse amid crisis, says minister. *Reuters*, 20 January. Available at https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-healthcare-brink-collapse-amid-crisis-says-minister-2022-01-20/ [Accessed 1/6/2022]

Bahlawan, N. (2014). Secularism as a National Stance: Antisectarian Campaign and the Development of a Civil Society Movement in Lebanon. *Hemispheres 29*(3), pp. 27-44.

Baumann, H. (2019). The Causes, Nature, and Effect of the Current Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics 25*(1), pp. 61-77.

Bias, L. (2019). NGOisation and generational divides in Serbia's feminist movement. *Women's Studies International Forum 77*, pp. 1-9.

Biekart, K. (1999). *The politics of civil society building: European private aid agencies and democratic transitions in Central America.* Utrecht, The Netherlands: International Books.

Borchgrevink, K. (2020). NGOization of Islamic Charity: Claiming Legitimacy in Changing Institutional Contexts. *Voluntas 31*, pp. 1049-1062.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic Analysis. In H. Cooper (Ed.) *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology: Vol. 2, Research Designs*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, pp. 57-71.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cammett, M. (2014). *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Carapico, S. (2006). No Easy Answers: The Ethics of Field Research in the Arab World. *PS: Political Science and Politics 39*(3), pp. 429-431.

Carroll, W. K. and Sapinski, J. P. (2017). Transnational Alternative Policy Groups in Global Civil Society: Enablers of Post-Capitalist Alternatives or Carriers of NGOization? *Critical Sociology 43*(6), pp. 875-892.

Chahim, D. and Prakash, A. (2014). NGOization, Foreign Funding, and the Nicaraguan Civil Society. *Voluntas 25*, pp. 487-513.

Chehayeb, K. (2022). Lebanon reaches agreement with IMF on economic reforms. *Aljazeera*, 7 April. Available at https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/7/lebanon-reaches-agreement-with-imf-on-economic-reforms [Accessed 1/6/2022]

Chehayeb, K. (2022). Value of Lebanese pound drops to all-time low. *Aljazeera*, 26 May. Available at https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/26/lebanese-pound-value-drops-to-lowest-level [Accessed 1/6/2022]

Choudry, A., and Kapoor, D. (Eds.) (2013). Introduction. *NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects*. London: Zed Books, pp. 1-23.

Civil Society Knowledge Centre (2020). *Interactive graphs based on our "Map of Collective Actions in Lebanon"*. Available at https://civilsociety-centre.org/cap/collective_action/charts&#x202F [Accessed 10/5/2022]

Cohen, J. L. and Arato, A. (1992). *Civil Society and Political Theory*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Cresswell, J. W. and Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Deets, S. and Skulte-Ouaiss, J. (2021). Breaking into a Consociational System: Civic Parties in Lebanon's 2018 Parliamentary Election. *Ethnopolitics 20*(2), pp. 157-185.

della Porta, D. (2020). Building Bridges: Social Movements and Civil Society in Times of Crisis. *Voluntas 31*, pp. 938-948.

della Porta, D. and Diani, M. (2020). *Social Movements: An Introduction* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Diani, M. (1992). The concept of social movement. *The Sociological Review 40*(1), pp. 1-25.

Edwards, B. (Ed.) (2011). Introduction: Civil society and the geometry of human relations. *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-14.

El-Husseini, Rola (2012). *Pax Syriana: Elite Politics in Postwar Lebanon.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

El Husseini, Rouba (2022). Cash-strapped Lebanon struggles to turn lights on for polling day. *Al-Monitor*, 1 April. Available at https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/04/cash-strapped-lebanon-struggles-turn-lights-polling-day [Accessed 1/6/2022]

El Kak, N. (2022). Ten Years On Project: Lebanon's 2022 Parliamentary Elections [Online conference]. *Jadaliyya.* Available at https://www.facebook.com/Jadaliyya/videos/555236162630419 [Accessed 8/5/2022]

ESCWA – United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (2021). *Multidimensional poverty in Lebanon (2019-2021): Painful reality and uncertain prospects.* Available at https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/news/docs/21-00634-_multidimentional_poverty_in_lebanon_-policy_brief_-_en.pdf [Accessed 10/5/2022]

Feldman, B. (2007). Report from the field: left media and left think tanks – foundation-managed protest? *Critical Sociology 33*(3), pp. 427-446.

Ferguson, J. (1994). *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development,' Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Foth RN, T. (2021). Humanitarian reason and the movement for overdose prevention sites: The NGOization of the Opioid "Crisis". *Nursing Philosophy 22*(1), e12324.

Halawi, I. and Salloukh, B. F. (2020). Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will after the 17 October Protests in Lebanon. *Middle East Law and Governance 12*, pp. 322-334.

Heideman, L. (2017). Cultivating Peace: Social Movement Professionalization and NGOization in Croatia. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly 22*(3), pp. 345-362.

Helms, E. (2014). The Movementization of NGOs? Women's Organizing in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina. In V. Bernal and I. Grewal (Eds.), *Theorising NGOs: States, Feminisms and Neoliberalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 21-49.

Hilhorst, D. (2003). *The real world of NGOs: Discourses, diversity and development*. London: Zed Books.

Hulme, D. and Edwards, M. (Eds.) (1997). NGOs, States and Donors: An Overview. *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort*. New York: St. Martin Press/Save the Children.

Human Rights Watch (2021). *"They Killed Us from the Inside" An Investigation into the August 4 Beirut Blast*, 3 August. Available at https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/03/they-killed-us-inside/investigation-august-4-beirut-blast [Accessed 1/9/2022]

Ibrahim, A. (2021). 'Nothing but a pot of mlukhiye': Trauma, mental health in Lebanon. *Aljazeera*, 20 September. Available at https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/20/nothing-but-a-pot-of-mlukhiye-trauma-mental-health-in-lebanon [Accessed 10/5/2022]

INCITE! (2007). *The Revolution Will Not be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex.* Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Ipek, Y. (2020). Activists-in-Becoming: Lebanon's October 17 Revolution and Its Afterlives. Member Voices, *Fieldsights*, 24 December. Available at https://culanth.org/fieldsights/activists-in-becoming-lebanons-october-17-revolution-and-its-afterlives [Accessed 30/7/2022]

Ismail, F. and Kamat, S. (2018). NGOs, Social Movements and the Neoliberal State: Incorporation, Reinvention, Critique. *Critical Sociology 44*(4-5), pp. 569-577.

Jaoul, N. (2018). Politics Against the Grain: The Dalit Movement of Uttar Pradesh in the Throes of NGOization. *Critical Sociology 44*(4-5), pp. 611-627.

Jawad, N. (2021). *The real impact of disastrous medicine shortages in Lebanon*. Global Health Institute, American University of Beirut, 3 December. Available at https://ghi.aub.edu.lb/ghiblog/the-real-impact-of-disastrous-medicine-shortages-in-lebanon/ [Accessed 1/6/2022]

Kamat, S. (2004). The privatization of public interest: theorizing NGO discourse in a neoliberal era. *Review of International Political Economy 11*(1), pp. 155-176.

Kamat, S. (2013). Preface. In A. Choudry and D. Kapoor (Eds.), *NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects.* London: Zed Books, pp. viii-xii.

Kane, M. (2013). International NGOs and the Aid Industry: constraints on international solidarity. *Third World Quarterly 34*(8), pp. 1505-1515.

Khater, L. B. (2022). *The Labour Movement in Lebanon*. Manchester University Press.

Khneisser, M. (2019). The marketing of protest and antinomies of collective organization in Lebanon. *Critical Sociology 45*(7-8), pp. 1111-1132.

Khneisser, M. (2020). The Specter of 'Politics' and Ghosts of 'Alternatives' Past: Lebanese 'Civil Society' and the Antinomies of Contemporary Politics. *Critical Sociology 46*(3), pp. 359-377.

Kim, E. and Campbell, M. (2013). Peace-building and Violence against Women: Tracking the Ruling Regulations of Aid in a Women's Development NGO in Kyrgyzstan. In A. Choudry, and D. Kapoor (Eds.), *NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects*. London: Zed Books, pp. 185-206.

Kingston, P. (2013). *Reproducing Sectarianism: Advocacy Networks and the Politics of Civil Society in Postwar Lebanon.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Kingston, P. (2018). Playing with Positionality? Reflections on "Outsider"/"Insider" Status in the Context of Fieldwork in Lebanon's Deeply Divided Polity. In J. A. Clark and F. Cavatorta (Eds.), *Political Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa: Methodological and Ethical Challenges*. Oxford University Press, pp. 242-253.

Lang, S. (1997). The NGOization of Feminism. In J. W. Scott, C. Kaplan and D. Keates (Eds.), *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in International Politics.* New York: Routledge.

Lang, S. (2013). *NGOs, Civil Society and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Langohr, V. (2005). Too Much Civil Society, Too Little Politics? Egypt and Other Liberalizing Arab Regimes. In M. P. Posusney and M. P. Agrist (Eds.), *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc.

Leenders, R. (2012). *Spoils of Truce: Corruption and State-building in Post-war Lebanon.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Leve, L. (2014). Failed development and rural revolution in Nepal: Rethinking subaltern consciousness and women's empowerment. In V. Bernal and I. Grewal (Eds.), *Theorising NGOs: States, Feminisms and Neoliberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 50-92.

Lobe, B., Morgan, D. and Hoffman, K. A. (2020). Qualitative Data Collection in an Era of Social Distancing. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods 19*, pp. 1-8.

Mady, C. (2022). Ten Years On Project: Lebanon's 2022 Parliamentary Elections [Online conference]. *Jadaliyya*. Available at https://www.facebook.com/Jadaliyya/videos/555236162630419 [Accessed 8/5/2022]

Mahzari, B. (2019). Challenging Lebanese Politics-as-usual One Neighbourhood at a Time? The role of local municipal platforms in processes of democratization. *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation 1*, pp. 1-31.

Makuwira, J. (2018). Power and development in practice: NGOs and the development agenda setting. *Development in Practice 28*(3), pp. 422-431.

Mannan, M. (2015). *BRAC, Global Policy Language, and Women in Bangladesh: Transformation and Manipulation*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Meier, D. (2015). Popular Mobilizations in Lebanon: From Anti-System to Sectarian Claims. *Democracy and Security 11*(2), pp. 176-189.

Merriam-Webster (2022). Definition of clientelism. *Clientelism*. Available at https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clientelism [Accessed 9/8/2022]

Moses, J. W. and Knutsen, T. L. (2012). *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research* (2nd e.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Mrad, E. (2011). Some Legal and Political Factors Affecting the Civil Society and Democratization in Lebanon. *International Journal of Civil Society Law 9*(2), pp. 1-32.

Naddaff, A. J. (2022). Lebanon's Surprisingly Promising Election. *Foreign Policy*, 18 May. Available at https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/18/lebanon-election-results-parliament-hezbollah-opposition-candidates-reform/ [Accessed 30/7/2022]

Nagel, C. and Staeheli, L. (2016). NGOs and the Making of Youth Citizenship in Lebanon. *Politics, Citizenship and Rights: Geographies of Children and Young People.* Springer Science+Business Media Singapore, pp. 497-514.

Naharashabab (2013). Young People Want: "Take Back Parliament." *An-Nahar*, 28 February. Available at https://naharashabab.wordpress.com/2013/02/28/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b4%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%a8-%d9%8a%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%af-%d8%a5%d8%b3%d8%aa%d8%b1%d8%ac%d8%a7%d8%b9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a8%d8%b1%d9%84%d9%85%d8%a7%d9%86/ [Accessed 9/5/2022]

OECD (2022). Aid for Civil Society Organisations: Statistics based on DAC Members' reporting to the Creditor Reporting System database (CRS), 2019-2020. *The Development Assistance Committee: Enabling Effective Development*, June. Available at https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Aid-for-CSOs-2022.pdf [Accessed 30/7/2022]

Oringer, J. and Welch, C. (1998). *Structural Adjustment Programs*. Available at https://ips-dc.org/structural_adjustment_programs/ [Accessed 29/4/2022]

Otter.ai (2022). *Privacy and Security*. Available at https://otter.ai/privacy-security [Accessed 30/7/2022]

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods (4th ed.): Integrating Theory and Practice.* Thousand Oaks: CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Petras, J. (1997). NGOs and Imperialism. *Monthly Review 49*(7), pp. 10-27.

Rodgers, C. (2019). The NGOization of Pro-Black Mobilization in Rio de Janeiro: An Investigation of Agency Between Pro-Black Activists and *Anistia Internacional Brasil*. *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs 43*(2), pp. 73-94.

Rooy, A. V. (Ed.) (1998). *Civil Society and the Aid Industry.* London, UK: Earthscan Publications Limited.

Roy, S. (2015). The Indian Women's Movement: Within and Beyond NGOization. *Journal of South Asian Development 10*(1), pp. 96-117.

Salloukh, B. F., Barakat, R., Al-Habbal, J. S., Khattab, L. W. and Mikaelian, S. (2015). Neoliberal Sectarianism and Associational Life. *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*. Pluto Press, pp. 52-69.

Save the Children (2022). *Lebanon's education crisis – an open letter,* 24 January. Available at https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-s-education-crisis-open-letter-24-january-2022-enar [Accessed 1/6/2022]

Sharp, D. (2016). Beirut Madinati: Another Future Is Possible. *Middle East Institute,* 27 September. Available at https://www.mei.edu/publications/beirut-madinati-another-future-possible [Accessed 9/5/2022]

Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Sinwell, L. (2013). From Radical Movement to Conservative NGO and Back Again? A Case Study of the Democratic Left Front in South Africa. In A. Choudry and D. Kapoor (Eds.), *NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects*. London: Zed Books, pp. 102-117.

Sullivan, H. (2019). The Making of Lebanon's October Revolution. *The New Yorker*, 29 October. Available at https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/the-making-of-lebanons-october-revolution [Accessed 10/5/2022]

Thörn, H. (2016). Politics of responsibility: governing distant populations through civil society in Mozambique, Rwanda and South Africa. *Third World Quarterly 37*(8), pp. 1505-1523.

Traboulsi, F. (2014) *Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon*. Beirut: Heinrich Boell Foundation – Middle East.

Ungsuchaval, T. (2019). *Metagovernance and NGOisation in Thailand: An Exploratory Study of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (THPF) and Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs)*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent.

Vertes, S. (2020). *Breaking the Cycle of Crises in Lebanon: Grassroots Strategies of Desectarianization between 2015 and 2020.* Master's Thesis, Utrecht University.

Vertes, S., van der Borgh, C. and Buyse, A. (2021). Negotiating civic space in Lebanon: The potential of non-sectarian movements. *Journal of Civil Society 17*(3-4), pp. 256-276.

Vukov, T. (2013). Seven Theses on Neobalkanism and NGOization in Transitional Serbia. In Choudry and D. Kapoor (Eds.), *NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects*. London: Zed Books, pp. 163-184.

Weipert-Fenner, I. (2018). Blurred Lines of Inclusion and Exclusion: Research Ethics for Political Sympathizers. In J. A. Clark and F. Cavatora (Eds.), *Political Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa: Methodological and Ethical Challenges*. Oxford University Press, pp. 233-242.

World Bank (2021). *Lebanon Sinking into One of the Most Severe Crises Episodes, amidst Deliberate Inaction,* 1 June. Available at https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/01/lebanon-sinking-into-one-of-the-most-severe-global-crises-episodes [Accessed 30/7/2022]

Zald, M. N. and McCarthy, J. D. (1987). *Social Movements in an Organizational Society: Collected Essays*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview details

| Date | NGO/Political party | Age | Position of interviewee |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NGOs** | | | |
| 25/1/2022 | NGO 1 | Less than 5 years | Co-founder |
| 8/2/2022 | NGO 2 | More than 10 years | Committee Supervisor |
| 30/3/2022 | NGO 3 | About 10 years | Project Coordinator |
| **Alternative Political Parties** | | | |
| 26/1/2022 | Political Party 1 | More than 10 years | Field Coordinator |
| 1/2/2022 | Political Party 2 | Less than 10 years | Representative |
| 25/3/2022 | Political Party 3 | Less than 10 years | Founding member |

# Appendix B: Email invitation for interviews

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Nadine Frisk, a Master's student in International Development and Management at Lund University, Sweden and I am writing to request an interview with a representative of your organisation for the purpose of my thesis research.

The topic of my Master's thesis is the impact of the ongoing economic crisis on the work of Lebanese civil society organisations to influence political and social change in Lebanon. Therefore, hearing from your experience as an organisation part of Lebanese civil society would be very valuable for my research.

As I am currently in Sweden and am unable to travel to Lebanon at the moment, this interview would have to be conducted online. I understand that this may be difficult, but I hope that we could still discuss how to make this possible and convenient for your organisation.

The interview would take up to an hour, and while I would ideally like to do it through Zoom, your representative may suggest the most convenient platform or means for them. As I am not fluent in Arabic or French, it should preferably be conducted in English, but I can try to arrange for a translator if needed. While the interview will be recorded with your consent, it will be anonymous and the interviewee's name and the name of your organisation will only be documented in the final written thesis if requested by your organisation.

I aim to conduct this interview by early February, so please let me know if and when you would be available.

Feel free to ask any questions about myself, my research or this interview. I would also highly appreciate it if you were to share with me information on other organisations or individuals that may be interested and relevant to include in my research.

Take care and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

Nadine Frisk

# Appendix C: Information sheet to request participants' consent

## Request for participation in an interview for Ms. Nadine Frisk's master's thesis research

**Name of researcher:** Nadine Frisk

**Master's programme:** Master's in International Development and Management

**University:** Lund University, Sweden

**Topic and aim of the research:**

This research seeks to explore the work of Lebanese civil society in influencing political change in Lebanon, and how the ongoing crisis in Lebanon has impacted this work, if at all.

**Your role in this research:**

You have been asked to participate in this research because you are a member of a Lebanese civil society organisation or political party. Information about your organisation or party and your experience having been part of this organisation or party will help the researcher gain a better understanding of the political situation in Lebanon in the last two years, the efforts of Lebanese civil society in influencing political change in Lebanon in the last two years, and what role (if any) the ongoing crisis in Lebanon has played in these.

While you will be asked many questions about your organisation or party, <u>you do not need to represent your organisation or party and speak on their behalf. You should answer the questions based on your own personal experience, observations and perspective</u> as someone who is a member of a Lebanese civil society organisation or political party, unless you are uncomfortable doing this and would prefer to speak from the perspective of your organisation or party.

**Final products of this research:**

- A Master's thesis published on the university's portal and that may be shared online by the researcher
- Potentially an article published in an academic journal

**How the interview will be used:**

<u>With your consent, the interview will be recorded by the researcher</u>. The recording will be transcribed by the researcher for use in writing the thesis. Both the recording and its transcription will only be stored on the researcher's computer and will be deleted when the written thesis is completed on 13 May 2022.

Only the researcher will have access to the recording and transcriptions, and your name and your organisation's or party's name will not appear in the final written thesis. You may request for your organisation's or party's name to be mentioned in the thesis if you deem it to be beneficial for your organisation.

**Potential risk:**

During the interview, you will be asked questions potentially of a politically or culturally sensitive nature. As such, there may be associated risks to yourself or your organisation in participating in this interview.

Therefore:

- You may request that your name or your organisation's/party's name is not mentioned throughout the process of the interview, or suggest other anonymity measures
- You may decline to answer any of the questions asked throughout the interview
- You may request at any time during the interview that the researcher stops recording
- You may ask the researcher any questions you may have about the research and interview, before, during and after the interview has been conducted.
- You may request at any time after the interview and before 13 May 2022 that your statements during the interview are omitted from the research and the written thesis.

If interested, the final written thesis can be shared with you once completed.

Finally, <u>do not feel obligated at all to participate in this research</u>. It is only for a master's thesis and though she would be extremely grateful if you do agree to participate and to get to learn from your experience, the researcher can find other interviewees or a different topic to write her thesis on if needed.

Thank you very much!

# Appendix D: Interview guide for NGO participants

**Original interview guide**

1. Can you tell me about your NGO? What does your NGO do and what are its goals?
2. Can you tell me about the history of your NGO? How and why was it formed? How has the organisation grown or changed since then?
3. Would you say that your NGO engages in politics in Lebanon? How?
4. Would you say that your NGO tries to influence politics or decision-making in Lebanon? How?
5. Does your NGO engage decision-makers or politicians in Lebanon? Who and how?
6. What are your NGO's aims in regards to this?
7. What successes have your NGO achieved in this work?
8. Has the crisis affected this work to influence politics? Please give details and examples (which aspect, from when, better or worse, in what way). Goals, strategies, success.
9. What is your opinion of the upcoming elections? Optimistic/pessimistic?
10. Is your NGO's work affected by the upcoming elections?
11. What is your opinion of the new political parties that were formed from the "You Stink!" movement and October 17 uprisings?
    a. What kind of support and influence do they have?
    b. Are they able to bring real change, and the right kind of change?
    c. If no, what is the way to a better future for Lebanon in your opinion?
12. Besides NGOs like yours, do you think other civil society groups have a role to play in influencing politics in Lebanon such as trade unions/syndicates, something else?
13. Do you think civil society in Lebanon can influence political change?
14. Do you have any suggestions of other groups/organisations I should talk to for my research?
15. Is there anything else you would like to add before ending the interview?

**Refined interview guide**

1. How long have you been working at your NGO?
2. What motivated you to join the NGO?
3. Do you consider yourself politically active?
    a. If yes – since when, in what way and why do you choose to be politically active?

b. If no – is there a reason as to why not?

4. Did you participate in the 17 October Revolution? If yes, in what way?

5. Did your NGO participate in or respond to the 17 October Revolution in any way? If yes, how?

6. Does your NGO engage in Lebanese politics or interact with political parties in any way? How?

7. What would you say is the main cause of the crisis in Lebanon?

8. Has your NGO adopted any new strategies since the escalation of the crisis? If yes, what are they?

9. How do you think the crisis should be resolved and which actors should be involved?

10. Does your NGO have a role to play in resolving the crisis? Please explain.

11. Do you think there is currently an opposition movement in Lebanon?

    a. If yes,

        i. Is there a single, united movement?

        ii. What are the goals of the movement?

        iii. Who are the main actors that are part of this movement?

        iv. When did this movement start?

        v. Is your NGO part of or supportive of this movement? How and why?

        vi. Do Lebanese human rights NGOs have a role to play in this movement? What is it?

    b. If no,

        i. How would you describe the new alternative political groups that seek to compete in the elections in Lebanon?

12. What do you think of the new political groups?

    a. How would you define them – are they political parties, organisations, platforms or something else?

    b. Are they part of the solution to the crisis?

    c. Do they represent the will of the Lebanese people?

    d. Are they different from Lebanese NGOs? How?

    e. Does your NGO have any interaction or cooperation with them?

    f. Do you know if there are staff in your NGO that are active in any of these groups?

13. Does your NGO have any initiatives related to the upcoming parliamentary elections?

14. Do you know of any other NGOs I should involve in my research and how I may contact them?

15. Is there anything else you would like to add before ending the interview?

# Appendix E: Interview guide for political party participants

**Original interview guide**

1. Could you introduce yourself – what is your position/role in your political party?
2. Can you tell me a bit about the history of your party, how and why it was formed?
3. What are the goals of your political party and how are you working to achieve them?
4. Where is your party based? How many members?
5. Did the economic crisis have an impact on your party's goals and strategy? Why?
6. Do you think that the crisis has had an impact on your party's prospects of success in achieving its goals?
7. If your party were to win elections and get in power, what is your plan to manage the crisis?
8. There have been several new alternative political parties and groups formed in Lebanon over the past six years. What is your opinion on them? Is it a good or bad thing?
9. Does your party interact with any of them? Is there any form of cooperation with them? What is the likelihood of a coalition?
10. Does your party have any cooperation with the traditional political parties in power?
11. Does your political party have any interaction or work with civil society actors such as NGOs, professional associations, voluntary organisations, human rights activists?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. What kind of interaction or work?
    c. Which civil society actors?
    d. What benefits does your party get out of this interaction?
    e. Do the political demands of civil society actors influence the work of your political party?
12. Do you think that trade unions and professional associations have any influence in politics?
13. Why did you join this political party? What was your motivation to get into politics?
14. When did the crisis start in Lebanon?
15. Do you think that Lebanese civil society can change the political situation in Lebanon? Are they already changing it? How?
16. Do you think that the crisis had an impact on Lebanese civil society's ability to change the political situation in Lebanon?

17. What are you expecting from the elections in May?

18. Will people vote for the alternative parties?

19. Do you know any other organisations or parties I should talk to?

20. Is there anything else you would like to add before ending the interview?

**Refined interview guide**

1. Tell me a bit about yourself, your political journey.

2. What was your role in your political party?

3. How and why was your political party formed? What were its goals?

4. Did your political party cooperate with any NGOs in its campaigning? Other political parties?

5. How would you describe the current crisis in Lebanon?

6. What would you say is the main cause of the crises and problems in Lebanon today?

7. How should these issues and the crisis be solved? Who should be involved?

8. Would you say there is a united opposition/reform movement in Lebanon right now? When and how did it form, and what are its goals? Who represents the movement?

9. What was the significance of the October 2019 revolution to politics in Lebanon?

10. What is your opinion of the new political groups?
    a. How would you define them? What is their significance and role?
    b. Are they part of the solution?
    c. Do they represent the Lebanese people?
    d. Do they have support and resources to achieve change?
    e. Funding issue – independence of donors, what do you think?

11. What is your opinion of NGOs in Lebanon and their role in bringing about positive change in Lebanon?
    a. Are foreign-funded NGOs bringing positive change? How?
    b. Do NGOs support the opposition movement? Seeing how things are now and perhaps during the Revolution.
    c. Considering how NGOs maybe have more resources and credibility than the new political parties, do you think they have an important role and maybe should have a bigger role in the movement?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add before ending the interview?

# Appendix F: Thematic tables from coding of interviews

| Themes | Subthemes |
|---|---|
| Description of the crises | - |
| Does the NGO engage in politics? | No |
| | Not really |
| | Yes |
| How to solve the crises? | Actions |
| | Actors |
| | Own NGO/party role |
| Impact of the crises | To Lebanese people |
| | To NGO/party work |
| Main cause of the crises | - |
| May election | Expectation |
| | Initiatives |
| Mission of NGO/party | - |
| Means of achieving mission | - |
| Motivation for joining NGO/party | - |
| NGO interaction with political parties | - |
| NGO political activities | - |
| Non-discrimination value | - |

| Perception of alternative parties | Description |
|---|---|
| | Interaction with NGOs |
| | Relation to movement |
| | Solution to crises |
| Perception of the establishment | - |
| Perception of NGOs | - |
| Perception of October 17 Revolution | - |
| Perception of the anti-establishment movement | Actors |
| | Goals and motivations |
| | Nature |
| | Relation to own NGO/party |
| | History |
| Personal level of political engagement | - |
| Organisational structure | - |
| Response to the crises | Optimism |
| Role of NGOs in Lebanon | - |