

The Struggle of Unifying a People in Fragments

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The Struggle of Unifying
a People in Fragments

PhD Dissertation

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Acknowledgements

The first time I visited Lebanon was in autumn 2015. A few weeks before my visit, the streets of Beirut had been filled with thousands of protesters, directing their anger against the country's regime. The city still bore the traces of these demonstrations; graffiti on the walls, concrete barriers and barbed wired fences cutting the road to government buildings. Seeing these traces made me curious. What drove people to revolt against a political system that is said to be designed to reproduce itself? What would it take for these people to achieve the change they demanded? At that time, I did not know that this curiosity would lead me to pursue a PhD on popular protests against Lebanon's sectarian system. Today, I am looking back at the PhD journey, feeling grateful for the things I have learned and for the people who helped and supported me along the way.

First and foremost, this PhD rests on testimonies from individuals who were part of the Lebanese October Uprising; people who went to the streets to express their anger, frustration, and hopes for a better future. To all those who took their time to share experiences from the uprising: Thank you for your patience and confidence. Not only were our meetings and conversations essential for this PhD. They also taught me important lessons about determination, friendship, and the struggle for justice, which will continue to inspire the way I view the world surrounding me.

Turning testimonies into a PhD dissertation is not an easy job. In my case, it was a job that oftentimes drove me into a stage of profound confusion. Whenever I got lost, trying to navigate an abundance of vague ideas that pointed in too many directions, I relied on competent advice from my supervisors, Thomas Olesen and Morten Valbjørn. Thanks to you, I always got safely back on track. At the same time, you made sure not to carry me there. Rather, you pushed me to take the difficult steps in the project journey, by asking tough but necessary questions and providing constructive critique. When a global pandemic forced the world into lockdown, you offered me extra hours of supervision without hesitation and kept encouraging me to develop new ideas and make use of the options I had available. This meant a lot to me.

When I returned to Lebanon in summer 2021 after a year and a half of travel restrictions, I was relieved, yet nervous. I had only limited time left to finish my PhD, and I had set out to conduct fieldwork in Tripoli, a city that was practically new to me. If no one would agree to be interviewed, this would be disastrous. Luckily, my fears turned out to be unfounded. In fact, I was welcomed by a community of warm and open-minded people who offered invaluable help. I owe a special thanks to Ibrahim (Bob) for taking hours of his time

to help me recruit and conduct interviews with people from all walks of Tripoli's life. To Obeida and his brothers: Thank you for making me feel at home in your lovely guesthouse and for the insightful conversations we have had about activism, research ethics and politics in Lebanon. I also want to thank all those who welcomed me in Lebanon and assisted me during my previous rounds of fieldwork. A special thanks to Moh, Kareem and other friends in Beirut for helping me navigate the first confusing weeks of the uprising, back when everything was still up in the air.

It was not only in the field I had a warm and helpful community to rely on. During my time as a PhD, I had the luxury of being part of several inspiring research environments in Denmark as well as abroad. At Aarhus University, I was part of no less than two research sections – Sociology and International Relations – as well as a research unit on Islamic cultures and societies and a study group on development. I want to thank members of these sections and groups for their qualified feedback and support. Outside Aarhus, I had the pleasure of becoming a member of the research project, Sectarianism, Proxies & De-sectarianisation (SEPAD) at Lancaster University from the day I was enrolled as a PhD student. As Larissa Abou Harb has said it: SEPAD is with no doubt the safest academic circle that any young scholar could possibly join. I strongly agree, and I owe a great thanks to Simon Mabon and Edward Wastnidge for directing and co-directing the project and to all the other SEPAD members for their inspiring inputs to my work and my life in academia. Another round of thanks goes to the scholars who have helped widen my understanding of Lebanon and the politics of sectarianism over the years. Much remains puzzling to me, but with help from competent experts including Bassel Salloukh, Ibrahim Halawi and Tamirace Fakhoury, I have become confused on a higher level.

One of the things I keep mentioning when asked about my work at the Department of Political Science at Aarhus University is the community of PhD students. The past years, I have been surrounded by wonderful colleagues, several of whom I consider to be close friends and sources of inspiration. To Amalie Trangbæk, Matilde Jeppesen, Ane Bak Foged, and Liv Frank: thank you for being my emergency hotline on ethnographic and qualitative methods, and for acting as my support system in moments of work stagnation and writer's block. Thanks to Lasse Schmidt Hansen, Karoline Kolstad, Liv Frank, Nanna Vestergaard Ahrensberg and Karl Magnus Møller for being the kindest office mates one could ask for. Lastly, thanks to the many colleagues, with whom I have shared joys, worries and Friday beers over the years. Names that come to mind other than those already mentioned are Alexander Vonebjerg-Grundholm, Steffen Selmer Andersen, Emily Rose Tangsgaard, Johan

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A PhD is the kind of job that tends to have a large spillover effect on one's private life. But the reverse is also true. I want to thank my family and friends for the positive spillover effect they have had on my PhD. My parents, Jens and Kirsten, have contributed more to this dissertation than they might know by equipping me with a curiosity for learning already during my early childhood years. When this curiosity later took me to conflict zones, you worried (of course) for my safety, but you always supported me in my quest for understanding the strange and unfamiliar. For all this, I am grateful. To Benedikte: I often tell others, jokingly, that you are a more socially intelligent version of me. Behind this joke lies a deep appreciation of your character. The attention you pay to the wellbeing of people around you, including me, is inspiring and it makes me feel lucky and proud to have you as my sister.

Another thing that makes me feel lucky is the army of wise and thoughtful friends I have around me. You are responsible for some of the best memories I have had over the past years, from hiking trips to wine tastings. In your company, I find a place to put my mind at rest. My friends from Rejsby Europæiske Efterskole and Odense Katedralskole deserve a huge thanks for bearing with my absentmindedness for more than a decade. Whenever my thoughts orbit around protest movements against sectarianism, you give me different perspectives on life. This is one of the things I appreciate most about our friendships. In the members of the (perhaps not so) secret sisterhood from the 2012 Political Science class at University of Copenhagen, I have found an inexhaustible source of good memories. When the covid lockdown extended into its fourth month, you convinced me that the only right thing to do was to ride together across Fyn and Lolland on our bicycles. This testifies to your extraordinary ability to turn my attention towards all things positive and meaningful.

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Last but not least, I want to thank Alexander and Anne for trusting me to be sponsor to your son, Jonathan, who is now destined to hear stories about graffiti, concrete barriers, and passionate protesters in Lebanon. Hopefully, Aunt AK's stories about protest movements will not end with this PhD. In fact, with the continued support from my colleagues, family, and friends, I dare to believe that most things will be possible.

Anne Kirstine Rønn
August 2022

Chapter 1.

Introduction

In the late afternoon of October 17, 2019, people poured into the streets across Lebanon. Over the course of few hours, a protest triggered by a proposed tax on WhatsApp¹ escalated into a popular mass movement, releasing years of accumulated anger and frustration. In the months that followed, an estimated one million individuals joined the movement, which became known as the October Uprising or simply the *Thawra* (Arabic for revolution)². The October Uprising was seen as a historical moment in Lebanon, because it displayed an unprecedented level of unity and solidarity between citizens in a country that has been associated with division and conflict.

Lebanon is often presented as a textbook example of a deeply divided society (see e.g. Cammett, 2019; Leenders, 2012). It has a political system that not only divides power based on sect³ but also concentrates power in the hands of a small elite who manipulate sect-based divides as a tool to preserve their position (Salloukh, Barakat, Al-Habbal, Khattab, & Mikaelian, 2015). Protesters in the streets denounced this sectarian system explicitly with chants such as: “We are the popular revolution; you are the civil war” (Azhari, 2019), implying that it was the elites, not the religious differences that had kept the nation fragmented. While holding hands, singing the national anthem, and waving the Lebanese flag, protesters proclaimed that the people of Lebanon had finally been unified (Kassir, 2019).

I arrived in Lebanon three days into the uprising. From the onset of my fieldwork, I observed how the uprising was not just a display of unity but also

¹ The proposal was issued by the minister of telecommunications and concerned a taxation would impose a 20% extra cost on the first WhatsApp call users made every day, amounting to \$6 per month. To Lebanese, this illustrated how the political establishment had failed to find sustainable solutions to Lebanon’s economic crisis, and instead let ordinary citizens pay the price of years of economic mismanagement (Amnesty International, 2021; Kraidy, 2019). Hence, the tax proposal was merely the straw that broke the camel’s back.

² The term “*thawra*” or “revolution”, however, was subject to debate, and many protesters believed it was more accurate to call it an uprising or *intifada* (Arabic for uprising). Hence, the term, October Uprising can be considered most neutral term.

³ In Lebanon ‘sect’ refers to the 18 officially recognized religious communities in the country. In the literature on divided societies, the term often has a broader definition and includes ethno-nationalist communities as well. See Chapter 2 for more reflections on the term ‘sect’.

a reflection of underlying divides. When roaming the protest spaces in Beirut, I noted the many disputes between groups of protesters regarding tactics and visions for Lebanon's future. I followed the constant battle over discourses and narratives about the uprising that took place across social and conventional media platforms, and I observed how grassroots journalists worked at full throttle to counter political elites' attempts to provoke fear, suspicion, and sectarian sentiments. Despite the best intentions of trust and solidarity, protesters also displayed prejudices and fears against certain segments of people in the uprising's streets and squares, as illustrated in the field observation below:

[Field note, October 24, 2019, Beirut]

I was walking with X along Riad el Solh, [a main street in Beirut], which had been filled with protesters, when he told me, he felt uncomfortable being in this area. He believed there were many "sketchy types" there as he said. He was afraid that they were followers of Hezbollah, and he did not like being there and felt unsafe. We then went to the Martyrs' Square [located next to Riad el Solh]. There were different types of people there, he told me. He could not explain to me, what the differences was, but there was clearly a difference.

The "sketchy types" X suspected of being Hezbollah members bore no clear signs of party affiliation. They were groups of young men, presumably from lower-class backgrounds, who hung out at the site. It was their appearance, which signified the class- and sect-based traits associated with segments of Hezbollah's followers that made him feel unsafe around them. The field note thus exemplifies how the underlying divides in the October Uprising were not only based on sectarian differences but also on other social fault lines. This again illustrates the complexity of the struggle for solidarity in the uprising that took place from the corner of the square to the prime-time features on national TV stations. The goal of this dissertation is to examine this struggle by posing the following research question:

Which challenges did protesters in the October Uprising encounter when seeking to forge solidarity between citizens across sect and other salient boundaries in Lebanon?

By addressing this question, I not only offer a thick empirical analysis of a key moment in Lebanon's history. The October Uprising is also a recent and important case of an *anti-sectarian movement*, a phenomenon that has occurred in several divided societies (see e.g. Nagle, 2016). Anti-sectarian movements are characterized by mobilizing citizens around social and political issues that cut across sect with a genuine aim to challenge the politicization of sect-based

identities.⁴ In recent years, these movements have been subject to increasing scholarly attention, as they are seen to hold a potential to mitigate sectarian conflict and division and reduce the political salience of sect-based identities. Their potential to drive such processes of *de-sectarianization* lies in their ability to promote solidarity between citizens and thus pave the way for new forms of political community to emerge that can replace the sectarian (Cammett, 2019; Costantini, 2021; Geha, 2019b; Marie-Noëlle & Yammine, 2020; Nagle, 2016; J. Nagle, 2017a). The ambition of my dissertation is to use insights about challenges to solidarity in the Lebanese October Uprising to inform the wider research on anti-sectarian movements in divided societies and to qualify discussions about the potential of these movements to promote de-sectarianization.

My observation that challenges to solidarity are rooted in a range of other social fault lines than sect falls in line with a recent tendency among scholars of anti-sectarian movements to adopt an intersectional approach. This approach recognizes that all social identities are reciprocally constructing phenomena, and that this reciprocity shapes complex social inequalities (Collins, 2015; Nagle, 2021b). So far, intersectional studies of anti-sectarian movements have focused mainly on the link between sect, gender, and sexuality (Ali, 2021; Nagle, 2021b; Nagle & Fakhoury, 2021). However, my initial observations from the October Uprising indicated that other thematics were important to the struggle for intersectional solidarity as well, namely class, spatiality, and media. Class was a salient topic in protesters' discussions, and as I alluded to before, it seemed that challenges to solidarity were also rooted in class divides. Geographical boundaries in Lebanon were another important theme in the uprising, and protesters deliberately sought to challenge stigma attached to certain cities, neighborhoods, and communities across the country. Physical protest spaces as well as the media appeared to be important arenas, each of which offered unique opportunities and obstacles to promoting solidarity. In the wider literature on divided societies, class, spatiality, and media feature as important theoretical and empirical thematics (see e.g. Al-Rawi, 2014; F. Haddad, 2011; Harb, 2016a; Nucho, 2016; Salamandra, 2013). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that these themes also mattered to protesters in the October Uprising. However, no studies so far have examined how they matter for the promotion of intersectional solidarity and explored how they can work as prisms, assisting scholars in uncovering challenges to solidarity in anti-sectarian movements.

⁴ For a discussion of this definition, see Chapter 2

By using class, spatiality, and media as thematic prisms and by engaging theoretical tools from the social movement literature, the dissertation identifies three main challenges facing protesters in the October Uprising. These challenges are unfolded in the three self-contained papers that form the backbone of the dissertation:

Paper 1 takes its point of departure in the prism of class and examines the challenge of promoting intersectional discourses of solidarity and inclusivity⁵ towards a certain segment of the lower classes in Lebanon, namely young men from the Shiite majority areas of Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq, which are known as strongholds of the main Shiite parties in Lebanon, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement. The paper explores this challenge from the perspective of protest organizers in Beirut and shows that organizers faced a difficult dilemma when searching for ways to challenge prevailing class- and sect-based stereotypes about young, disadvantaged men from these areas. While seeking not to be classist, organizers were afraid that addressing the sect-specific grievances and situation of these segments could put the uprising's anti-sectarian integrity at risk.

Paper 2 uses the prisms of both media and spatiality as points of departure. The paper concerns the challenges that the so-called independent media posed on changing the representation of Lebanon's second largest city, Tripoli. Prior to the uprising, Tripoli was known as the Kandahar of Lebanon, and its reputation as a hotbed of terrorism had isolated it from the rest of the country. The media represented a seemingly positive image of the city as "bride of the revolution". However, the paper shows that this image did not reflect the way Tripolitan protesters wanted their city to be represented. It also shows that the image was co-opted by politicians later in the uprising in an attempt to re-install the city's old stigma.

Paper 3 investigates the challenge related to internal divides in tactical orientations through the prism of spatiality. It analyzes how protesters in Tripoli through processes of spatial meaning making handled internal divisions and conflicting tactical orientations in a way that enabled them to coexist within a shared urban protest space. Drawing on theories of spatiality of protests, I show how two underlying processes of spatial meaning making formed the interactions and relations between protesters and provided a way for them to tackle their internal differences. First, I show that protesters divided the urban space into different zones that reflected different approaches but at the same

⁵ In the paper, I use the term, "inclusivity", which is sometimes used synonymously with solidarity in the literature on intersectionality and social movements (Gökarıksel & Smith, 2017; Terriquez, Brenes, & Lopez, 2018). Throughout the summary, I use these two terms interchangeably when presenting insights from Paper 1.

time facilitated opportunities for different segments to coexist in the protest. Second, I show how protesters also linked the different zones together and, despite disagreements, assigned them functions for the movement at large and thus forged a thin sense of cohesion and solidarity.

Overall, the dissertation offers three main contributions. First, it provides thick empirical descriptions of three main challenges to solidarity in the October Uprising, which inform the debates about a key historical event in Lebanon and bring attention to voices and aspects that have so far been overlooked in popular and academic narratives. Second, it illustrates the utility and relevance of three thematic prisms – class, spatiality, and media – which can be employed to study challenges to solidarity in anti-sectarian movements more generally. Third it provides a set of key lessons about the nature of solidarity challenges and the opportunities to address them, which can inform discussions about the potential of anti-sectarian movements to drive processes of de-sectarianization.

1.1 Structure of the summary

The purpose of the summary is twofold: It explains the empirical, theoretical, and methodological underpinnings of the dissertation, and it binds the three papers together and discusses the overall contributions of their central findings. The summary is comprised of seven chapters of which this introduction is the first.

In Chapter 2, I situate the dissertation within the research on de-sectarianization and anti-sectarian movements. The chapter begins with a conceptual discussion of the term de-sectarianization followed by a mapping of existing studies of the phenomenon. I then elaborate on my definition of anti-sectarian movements and discuss how we can determine whether a movement is anti-sectarian. Finally, I review existing research on anti-sectarian movements across a range of divided societies and provide an overview of the central debates and findings from these studies. I conclude the chapter by arguing that there is a need to expand the intersectional approach to anti-sectarian movements and reflect on the wider theoretical and empirical relevance of class, spatiality, and media.

In Chapter 3, I set the scene of the dissertation by introducing the October Uprising and its context. The chapter begins with a section on the Lebanese sectarian system, in which I show how sectarianism stretches into various sectors of society and how it plays out across the prisms of class, spatiality, and media. I then explain previous anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, which form an important backdrop of the October Uprising. The chapter ends with an overview of the October Uprising. In this overview, I argue why the uprising

can be seen as an anti-sectarian movement and elaborate on the centrality of class, spatiality, and media in the uprising.

In Chapter 4, I present key insights and concepts from the field of social movement studies, which form the theoretical toolbox I drew on to study and analyze the struggle for solidarity in the October Uprising. As I explain in the first part of the chapter, I used these theories as heuristics, which enabled me to make choices about my direction in data generation and how to interpret my data. The chapter then presents four theoretical strands concerning intersectional solidarity, political opportunity structures, spatiality, and the role of media in the representation of social movements.

Chapter 5 outlines the dissertation's methodology, starting with its interpretivist and abductive approach. The remainder of the chapter contains reflections on major choices throughout the research process and reviews the data I generated during my fieldwork and in periods when external conditions forced me to be absent from the field. Finally, this chapter explains the abductive process, through which I generated and analyzed data for each of the three papers.

In Chapter 6, I present the central findings of the dissertation and explain how these contribute to answering the overall research question. The chapter summarizes and ties together Papers 1, 2, and 3, and supplements with reflections on the background and context of the three main challenges presented in the papers. Furthermore, it provides additional details on how I identified the three particular challenges to solidarity, and how I utilized theoretical tools from the social movement literature to inform my analyses. The chapter concludes by discussing three wider lessons about challenges to solidarity based on the dissertation's findings.

In Chapter 7, I reflect on the contributions and transferability of the central findings presented in the previous chapter. The section first discusses how and whether class, spatiality, and media are relevant as analytical prisms to study anti-sectarian movements beyond Lebanon, drawing on insights from movements in Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Second, it discusses how the wider lessons from my study of the October Uprising regarding challenges to solidarity can inform debates about de-sectarianization. The chapter rounds off with a brief discussion of contributions to the social movement literature and concluding remarks.

Chapter 2. Situating the Dissertation

The goal of the dissertation is to contribute to the scholarship on anti-sectarian movements, which is embedded in a wider literature on de-sectarianization. The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, it discusses how we should understand de-sectarianization and anti-sectarian movements. As I show, a range of conceptual challenges are related to these terms. Second, the chapter reviews existing research about de-sectarianization and anti-sectarian movements and explains how the dissertation addresses prevailing knowledge gaps.

Scholarly interest in de-sectarianization and anti-sectarian movements has grown rapidly in recent years and given rise to a cross-disciplinary research field that draws on insights from peace and conflict studies, international relations, sociology and political philosophy.⁶ Studies of de-sectarianization and anti-sectarian movements are motivated by two overall goals: The first is to draw attention to ideas and practices of coexistence in contexts that have mainly been associated with divides and hostility (Davis, 2009; U. Makdisi, 2017, 2019; J. Nagle, 2017a). The second is to explore possible ways in which sectarian conflict and tension can be reduced in order to make room for more inclusive politics (Cammatt, 2019; Mabon, 2019a; Valbjørn, 2020c). While much of the existing work is anchored within Middle Eastern studies,⁷ research on de-sectarianization and anti-sectarian movements is not confined to this region. Rather, the notions can apply more generally to deeply divided societies, which are riven by ethnic and/or national cleavages across all areas of political and social life (Nagle, 2016; Nagle & Clancy, 2010).

In the next section on de-sectarianization, I discuss what the term means, how it has been studied, and what we can learn from existing research. Afterwards, I zoom in on anti-sectarian movements. I start out by defining the concept and discussing how we determine whether a movement is “anti-sectarian”. This is followed by a more detailed literature review in which I show how the research on anti-sectarian movements has developed over the years.

⁶ See e.g. Project SEPAD: Sectarianism, Proxies and De-sectarianization at Lancaster University: <https://www.sepad.org.uk/>

⁷ For example, researchers have also studied de-sectarianization and anti-sectarian movements in Northern Ireland (J. M. Nagle, 2017) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Touquet, 2015). Moreover, scholars have recently started exploring how existing insights on de-sectarianization can be transferred to countries such as India (Mabon, 2022).

I argue that recent studies have started to adopt a more intersectional approach but so far have focused mainly on the interplay between sect, gender, and sexuality. This reveals a knowledge gap regarding the role of other identities, which I will address in the dissertation. As explained in the concluding section of the chapter, I do so by studying challenges to solidarity through the prisms of class, spatiality and media, which are theoretically and empirically central themes in the wider literature on divided societies.

2.1 Conceptualizing de-sectarianization

As I explained in the introduction, the underlying assumption of the dissertation is that anti-sectarian movements can facilitate processes of de-sectarianization in the long run by forging ties of solidarity. De-sectarianization has been defined as a reimagining of the role sect-based identities play in the socio-political landscape (Mabon, 2020a). It is also often described as the reversed process of “sectarianization” (Heinrichs & El-Husseini, 2020; Mabon, 2019a), a term that refers to the different ways in which political actors deliberately manipulate identities as a strategy to perpetuate their power (Hashemi & Postel, 2017). These definitions teach us three initial things about de-sectarianization: First, that it is a broad concept that encompasses many other empirical phenomena than protest movements; second, that it is a process rather than a pre-defined outcome. Even if it remains unclear what a post-sectarian society would ultimately look like, we can still observe processes of de-sectarianization. Third, the short definitions above reveal that the concept of de-sectarianization rests on a constructivist approach that assumes that sect-based identities are sticky yet not fixed and can therefore be manipulated and mobilized.⁸ As Mabon (2019b) notes, processes of de-sectarianization can take long, they are not necessarily linear, and they should not be regarded as normatively good. While sectarianism is often considered undesirable,⁹ transitions away from sectarianism may not change things to the better. In fact, they may create new boundaries, which autocratic leaders can manipulate to preserve their power, just as they do with sect (Valbjørn, 2020a). While these conceptual reflections provide a starting point, the elephant is still in the room: the definition of sect and sectarianism.

⁸ The constructivist approach to identities stands in contrast to the primordial view, which assumes that sect-based identities are deeply rooted in biology, culture, history, and traditions and hence cannot be dismantled or reimagined. Likewise, it differs from an instrumentalist view, which assumes that identities are more malleable. For a detailed account of the debates between primordial, instrumental, and constructivist understandings of sectarianism, see Valbjørn (2020b).

⁹ For a critique of this argument, see F. Haddad (2017).

“Sects” originally referred to Christian groups outside the church in Europe (Valbjørn, 2019a, p. 14), but the term has been adopted by scholars of divided societies and Middle East politics to describe everything from the Sunni-Shia division within Islam to wider ethno-religious, national, or tribal identities.¹⁰ Hence, there is no agreement as to what distinguishes sect from other identities. The term sectarianism has suffered a similar, if not worse, fate.¹¹ In fact, F. Haddad (2017) argues that the term has become so eroded that it is now useless. Studies of de-sectarianization, I argue, cannot and should not necessarily seek to solve the conceptual problems regarding sect and sectarianism. However, the conceptual ambiguities require that we are explicit about which identities we include under the label of sect. In this dissertation, I propose a wider understanding of sect that includes ethno-nationalist identities in addition to those based on religious belonging. This understanding allows us to discuss how insights from the Middle East can be transferred to divided societies outside the region. In my case, it provides the basis for an important discussion about the transferability of my findings to Bosnia-Herzegovina, which shares important similarities with Lebanon.¹² I take up this discussion in Chapter 7.

De-sectarianization applies to many contexts and can manifest in a variety of ways, ranging from the de-escalation of geopolitical rivalries to local-level peacebuilding processes (see e.g. Dodge & Mansour, 2020; Mabon, 2019a; Valbjørn, 2020c). Along with Mabon (2020a), I therefore contend that we should view de-sectarianization as an umbrella term that captures a broad spectrum of ways in which the political role of sectarian identities can be contested. In the next section, I provide an overview of approaches to the study of de-sectarianization.

What do we know about de-sectarianization?

Research on de-sectarianization, I argue, can be structured around five main dimensions: 1) level of analysis, 2) time perspective, 3) type of sectarianism,

¹⁰ For reviews of the discussions about definitions of sect and sectarian politics, see e.g. Valbjørn (2019b, 2021), F. Haddad (2017), and Bishara (2018)

¹¹ However, it is relevant to note that the conceptual debate has become more sophisticated in recent years (Valbjørn, 2021). A significant conceptual contribution is the distinction between radical, instrumental, and banal sectarianism, which I explain later in this chapter.

¹² With a few exceptions (see e.g. Belgioioso, Gleditsch, & Vidovic, 2018), the term “sectarianism” is rarely used in the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Instead, divides between the country’s three main communities are most often described with the term ethno-nationalism (Milan, 2019).

4) agents of de-sectarianization, and 5) types of de-sectarianization strategies. These dimensions reflect the diversity of existing work relating to de-sectarianization¹³ and provide a tool for situating new studies within the emerging literature. Below, I unfold the dimensions, present key insights from existing research and relate these insights to my dissertation.

Levels of analysis

With regards to level of analysis, de-sectarianization has been explored on a regional, domestic, and local level as well as across levels. Most studies of de-sectarianization on a regional level focus on the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran (see e.g. Mabon, 2019b; Nasirzadeh & Wastnidge, 2020). Studies at the domestic level mainly examine the role of national institutions, political economy, and social movements (see e.g. Baumann, 2016; Nagle, 2016; Salloukh & Verheij, 2017; Wimmen, 2018). Finally, studies at a local level tend to focus on community-based peace and reconciliation initiatives in specific cities or districts (see e.g. Alaaldin, 2018; Martini et al., 2019; Nagle, 2013). Studies of de-sectarianization across levels of analysis stress how regional events such as the Arab Uprisings can trigger domestic efforts to reimagine the role of sect-based identities (Fakhoury, 2011; Meier, 2015). Another important cross-level insight is that domestic-level de-sectarianization may manifest differently across regions and cities within the same country. For instance, Milan (2019) argues that challengers to ethno-sectarian politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina face more difficult conditions in the country's Serb-majority entity, Republika Srpska than they do in the Bosniak/Croat-majority entity, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁴ In another study, on resilience to sectarian violence in Iraq, Carpenter (2019) argues that the cure to sectarian violence is highly context dependent. While informal mediation and social capital were more important to the de-escalation of sect-based conflicts in Baghdad, international security and development efforts were a key driver of resilience in Dohuk. My dissertation speaks to these insights, showing how local contexts within the same country provide unique milieus for anti-sectarian movements.

¹³ Not all studies included in this review use the term de-sectarianization explicitly. However, as they concern processes of reducing sectarianism, I argue that they should be regarded as part of the de-sectarianization literature.

¹⁴ The 1995 Dayton Accords, which ended the Bosnian War, divided Bosnia into two geographical entities: Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a small autonomous region, Brčko. For more about Dayton and the partition of Bosnia, see McMahon and Western (2009) .

Time perspective

Although most research focuses on contemporary cases, a series of studies examine processes of de-sectarianization in a historical perspective (see e.g. Cuyler, 2019; U. Makdisi, 2019; Visser, 2007). The time perspective is another important dimension, along which we can navigate in research on de-sectarianization. In his book, *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World*, U. Makdisi (2019) shows how a culture of coexistence developed in the modern Middle East that transcended religious differences in the name of anti-sectarian national unity. Moreover, he argues that these anti-sectarian thought traditions provide the legacy for new politics of communalism and new secular nationalisms, which exist in today's Middle East. The significance of historical developments and ideological movements for contemporary processes of de-sectarianization is further illustrated in studies of the Lebanese left, which continues to play a major role in challenging sectarian politics based on secular thoughts (Haugbolle, 2013b; Haugbolle & Sing, 2016). These studies show how influential historical figures and movements have shaped what it means to be leftist in today's Lebanon. Although my dissertation is not a historical study, these insights illustrate the importance of keeping attention to how past events and thought traditions influence the ways citizens challenge sectarianism today.

Different types of sectarianism

To address the conceptual unclarity in studies of sectarianism, Valbjørn and Hinnebusch (2019) propose, we distinguish between three forms of sectarianism: radical sectarianism, which refers to doctrinal and violent conflict, instrumental sectarianism, which is the politicization of sect-based identities, and banal sectarianism, which involves the role of sect-based identities, rituals and norms in people's everyday lives. This distinction can also help scholars navigate studies of de-sectarianization based on the form of sectarianism they take departure in. The October Uprising sought mainly to depoliticize sect-based identities in Lebanon and was less concerned with addressing sectarian violence, doctrinal disputes, or people's private practicing of religion or adherence to sect-based traditions. Hence, the present dissertation is first and foremost a study of attempts to mitigate instrumental sectarianism. A strand of research on how to reduce instrumental sectarianism revisits the old debates about consociational power sharing (see e.g. Belloni, Kappler, & Ramovic, 2016; Horowitz, 2014; Lijphart, 1969; O'leary, 2005) and contributes to sophisticating the debate about the link between power-sharing institutions and sectarian politics (see e.g. Dawisha, 2010; S. Haddad, 2009; Nagle, 2020; Salamey & Tabar, 2012). A main argument in these studies is

that while consociationalism freezes sect-based identities, sectarian power-sharing systems can be altered to make room for the emergence of political communities that are based on other identities. Hence, even if consociational systems cannot be abolished at once, electoral, legislative, political, and administrative reforms can reduce the political salience of sect-based identities (S. Makdisi & El-Khalil, 2013; Salloukh & Verheij, 2017). As I explain in the next section, these debates form a basis for studies of anti-sectarian movements.

Agents of de-sectarianization

A diversity of actors, from dictators to NGOs, have presented themselves as challengers of sectarianism (see e.g. F. Haddad, 2017, p. 374; Menshawy, 2022; Nagle, 2016). Agents of de-sectarianization are thus another dimension we can use to navigate the literature. Yet, it is a dimension that requires a critical approach. A range of studies show that one should be careful about trusting political and religious leaders when they speak out against sectarianism (see e.g. Geha, 2019a; Menshawy, 2022). In a recent report, Menshawy (2022) concludes that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and former Kuwaiti Emir, Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah built discourses that deny, falsify, or hide sectarianism as a deliberate strategy to ensure the security of their regimes and consolidate their power. In some instances, declared intentions of de-sectarianization might simply be sectarianism in disguise. The same skepticism prevails around religious leaders, some of whom have played an active role in cross-religious dialogue initiatives (Mohseni, 2019) or even, like the Shia cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr¹⁵, who expressed support for popular movements against sectarian elites in Iraq (Lovotti & Proserpio, 2021, p. 651). While NGOs and civil society are arguably less likely to promote ideas of de-sectarianization disingenuously in a quest for power preservation, several studies argue that international donors have undermined civil society's efforts to reduce sectarianism, rendering these actors passive and ineffective (see e.g. Aoun & Zahar, 2017; P. Kingston, 2012; Nagel & Staeheli, 2015). A little more optimism can be found when it comes to the potential of social movements to drive processes of de-sectarianization. These types of actors, which include protest movements and political grassroots organizations, are believed to be able to foster

¹⁵ Muqtada Al-Sadr is a Shiite cleric, militia leader, leader of the so-called Sadrist Movement and one of Iraq's most influential political figures. He supported the Iraqi anti-sectarian protests in 2019 but later withdrew his support and opposed the movement. For more about Sadr and his followers' relations with the recent Iraqi anti-sectarian movement in 2019, see EPIC (2021, pp. 51-54).

a sense of shared solidarity, pressure the political class to manage the distribution of public services in a collective and cohesive fashion (Nagle, 2016, p. 27), and cultivate new cadres of leaders (Rizkallah, 2019). For these reasons, it is hardly surprising that social movements have been a main focus in research on de-sectarianization so far (Alrefai, Kumarasamy, Ghazal, & Nasirzadeh, 2021). However, the continuous emergence of new anti-sectarian movements creates a need for new research that challenges and expands existing knowledge and maintains a critical stance to the potential of anti-sectarian actors to promote de-sectarianization. For instance, as argued by Haddad (2014), anti-sectarian civic actors can, in their eagerness to abolish sectarianism, turn into “secular sectarians”, displaying an exclusionist secular elitism aimed at religious subcultures.

Strategies of de-sectarianization

Finally, recent work on de-sectarianization has drawn attention to the multiple strategies and approaches that can be used to counter sectarianism (see e.g. Mabon, 2019b; Nagle, 2016; Valbjørn, 2020c). These strategies add another dimension, based on which we can distinguish internally between similar categories of de-sectarianizing agents. Altogether, the existing work suggests that strategies of de-sectarianization can differ greatly in their approach to identities. At one end of the spectrum, some actors have sought to challenge sectarianism through accommodationist strategies, which merely seek to manage sect-based identities and make them less conflictual. Such strategies can promote a more “banal” – rather than “radical doctrinal” – form of sectarianism, sometimes even based on ideas of sect-based representation (Valbjørn, 2020c). At the opposite end of the spectrum, we find transformationalist strategies, which aim to render sect-based identities irrelevant and promote new forms of community based on factors such as ideology or nationalist belonging (Valbjørn, 2020c). Between these two ends, we find strategies that take a moderate position concerning the role of sect-based identities or simply downplay the question of identity. An example of the latter is what Nagle (2016, pp. 21-22) terms commonist strategies, which seek to foster momentary cross-cleavage unity on certain political issues that are of salience to all ethnic groups. Summing up, the distinction between these strategies can provide a useful lens for understanding the vast disagreement between groups and actors involved in anti-sectarian movements. As I discuss in Chapter 7, they can also provide a backdrop for discussing the role of different types of anti-sectarian movements for processes of de-sectarianization.

Moving from de-sectarianization to anti-sectarian movements

So far, I have clarified and elaborated on the research about de-sectarianization and shown how the study of anti-sectarian movements is linked to this research. Evidently, anti-sectarian movements represent one of many potential paths towards de-sectarianization. However, as I have shown, they are considered an important one. Furthermore, when studying anti-sectarian movements, scholars can draw important insights from the wider literature on de-sectarianization, including the importance of historical awareness, the distinction between different strategies that can be used to counter sectarianism and the reminder not to regard de-sectarianization as normatively good. Against this backdrop, I now move on to the literature on anti-sectarian movements and situate my study within this.

2.2 Anti-sectarian movements

In this section, I explain what an anti-sectarian movement is, and what we know about the phenomenon from existing research. Before elaborating on what I mean by “anti-sectarian”, a brief note on the term “movement” is needed. In the social movement literature, the term “social movement” has been defined as “networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities” (Diani, 1992). However, in this dissertation, I also use “movement” when referring to single and time-bound events such as protests, electoral campaigns, or strikes that are part of larger overarching anti-sectarian social movements. This is a not an uncommon way to use the term (see e.g. AbiYaghi, Catusse, & Younes, 2017a; Murtagh, 2016) and it makes the dissertation’s language more accessible to readers, who are unfamiliar with the terminology of the social movement literature. However, it is worth noting that theoretical works on social movements often use terms such as “episodes of contention” or “mobilizations” as collective labels for phenomena such as protests, revolutions, or grassroots campaigns (see e.g. McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2003). To clarify, I refer to anti-sectarian *social* movements when describing wider networks between a plurality of actors who promote anti-sectarian agendas and mobilize in different ways across time and space.¹⁶ Hence, the October Uprising is an anti-sectarian

¹⁶ In this dissertation, I mostly refer to anti-sectarian movements as domestic phenomena. However, anti-sectarian movements often have transnational dimensions. For example, the Lebanese October Uprising saw solidarity movements organized by members of the large Lebanese diaspora across the world (Dagher, 2021, p. see e.g.).

protest movement embedded within the larger Lebanese anti-sectarian social movement, which I will explain more about in Chapter 3.

What does it mean to be anti-sectarian?

While the term “anti-sectarian” is increasingly used (see e.g. Halawi & Salloukh, 2020; Harb, 2021; Khattab, 2022), scholars and observers often refrain from defining it explicitly when they use it. Adding to the confusion, related terms, such as non-, post-, cross-, and trans-sectarianism, have been used to describe phenomena I would categorize as anti-sectarian movements (Valbjørn, 2020c). I have chosen the term “anti-sectarian” over other related terms to not confuse movements against sectarianism with the types of cross-sectarian alliances that are a common strategy for sectarian actors and parties in Lebanese politics.¹⁷ Moreover, I propose we define anti-sectarian movements as: *movements that mobilize citizens around social and political issues that cut across sect and have a genuine aim to challenge the politicization of sect-based identities.*

While protesters and observers in some settings use the term anti-sectarian, I still primarily consider anti-sectarian movements to be what Geertz (1975) calls an experience-distant concept, i.e. a concept that specialists use to capture abstract social phenomena, which may not resonate with ordinary language. Consequently, the term anti-sectarian can refer to phenomena that are not labeled as such in daily speech.¹⁸ Furthermore groups that identify as anti-sectarian may not meet the criteria of my definition. In what follows, I discuss how we can determine whether a movement is anti-sectarian.

First, my definition acknowledges that the primary demands of anti-sectarian movements can be centered on any social and political issues that cut across sect, as long as there is a genuine underlying aim to challenge the politicization of sect-based identities. A main reason for this, which I elaborate on in Chapter 3, is that sectarian politics often penetrate various sectors of society. Consequently, issues of welfare provision, tax reforms, urban heritage, and even garbage collection are often linked to sectarianism. This does not per se make any struggle for social, economic, or cultural rights in divided

Due to the limitations of this dissertation, I refrain from going into more details with the transnational dimension of anti-sectarian movements.

¹⁷ For more about cross-sectarian alliances between sectarian elites, see Karam (2017).

¹⁸ I argue that the term anti-sectarian movements can be used to describe social movements in settings where the term sect is not used. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, movements against divisive politics have been termed “beyond-ethnic” or “non-ethnic” movements (Milan, 2019; Touquet, 2015).

societies anti-sectarian. However, it means that sectarianism can be challenged implicitly through the struggle for other goods. Examples of more implicitly anti-sectarian movements include the so-called garbage protests in Lebanon in 2015, which used the slogan “You Stink” to signify that the country’s entire political elite was just as smelly as the garbage, which had piled up in the streets due to a deadlock in inter-sectarian negotiations over trash collection. Another example of more implicit anti-sectarianism is the slogan “we are hungry in three languages”¹⁹, which was used in the so-called Protest and Plenum Movement that erupted in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2014 (Milan, 2017b). Rather than criticizing the political manipulation of ethno-nationalist identities directly, the protests stated that Bosnian citizens were united in their deprivation. Examples of more explicit anti-sectarianism include the famous slogan “in the name of religion the thieves have robbed us”, which was used in anti-sectarian protest movements in Iraq in both 2015 and 2019 (Ali, 2019b; Majed, 2021b) and “The people want the downfall of the sectarian regime” from the 2011 protest movement in Lebanon (AbiYaghi et al., 2017). Summing up, the underlying aim to challenge the politicization of sect-based identities is the main feature that distinguishes anti-sectarian movements from other mobilizations around common social and political issues.

So, how do we tell whether a movement genuinely intends to challenge sectarianism? Since anti-sectarian discourses are often used disingenuously, we cannot judge movements based on their proclaimed intentions. Rather, we should examine whether they practice what they preach. If members of a self-proclaimed anti-sectarian group or movement exclude individuals based on their sect, or if they receive their funding from a sect-based party or political actor, this seriously questions their anti-sectarian intentions. At the same time, a genuine anti-sectarian movement may not lead to any visible anti-sectarian outcome. As mentioned in section 2.1, de-sectarianization is a long, non-linear process, and it may therefore be difficult, if not impossible, to observe any direct effect of a single anti-sectarian protest movement. Furthermore, anti-sectarian movements can be infiltrated and co-opted by sectarian groups and thus end up reproducing sectarianism on certain aspects (Geha, 2019a; P. W. Kingston, 2013; Meier, 2015). They also may attract support from individuals who maintain some degree of sectarian orientation or loyalty to sectarian politicians. This all blurs the line between what is sectarian and anti-sectarian. Yet, I contend that there will be few, or even no, anti-sectarian

¹⁹ Bosnia-Herzegovina has three official languages, Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian. However, the three languages are very similar and can be considered dialects (Mujkić, 2016).

movements left to study if we do not acknowledge the existence of some sectarian elements within these movements.

While anti-sectarian movements are an overall analytical category, this does not mean that they are similar. In fact, they range from electoral campaigns to mass protests. While this dissertation focuses mainly on protests, it is important to be aware of this diversity. Moreover, it is essential to be aware that members of anti-sectarian movements may not agree on how to counter sectarianism. In fact, they often have fierce debates about what it means to be against sectarianism (Rønn, 2020a), and they sometimes accuse each other of holding sectarian views (see e.g. AbiYaghi et al., 2017, pp. 82-85). I acknowledge that some movements or actors may be so conservative in their approach to identities that they do not de facto challenge the politicization of sect-based identities. However, to encompass a broad range of cases, I argue that it is more fruitful to distinguish between more and less radical anti-sectarian groups or strategies within the larger population of anti-sectarian movements. Following this discussion of the definition of anti-sectarian movements, the next section reviews findings from the wide range of books, research articles, and scientific reports which examine movements that comply with my definition.

Existing research on anti-sectarian movements

Most research on anti-sectarian movements consists of qualitative single-case studies. While Lebanon is an overrepresented case in the MENA region, significant research has also been conducted on Iraq (see e.g. Ali, 2021; Dodge & Mansour, 2020; Lovotti & Proserpio, 2021). Fewer, yet important, studies have been conducted on Kuwait (Gause III, 2013), Bahrain (F. Wehrey, 2013), Saudi Arabia (F. M. Wehrey, 2013) and Syria (Hinnebusch, 2020; Ismail, 2011), which show that anti-sectarian movements have existed, even in countries that are highly authoritarian and have mainly been associated with sectarian contention. Outside the MENA region, scholars have primarily analyzed anti-sectarian movements in Northern Ireland (J. Nagle, 2017b) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Lai, 2019; Milan, 2019). While I include studies from all these settings in the review, I mostly focus on studies of Lebanon, Iraq, and Bosnia. I structure the review according to three main sets of debates to emphasize how the research focus has developed over time, reflecting the main empirical developments of anti-sectarian social movements.

The first debates: consociationalism and political ineffectiveness

Research on anti-sectarian movements started to take speed after the Arab Uprisings. Many early studies explored these movements in relation to the larger debates about the implications of consociational power sharing and the potential for institutional reforms in divided societies, which I referred to in section 2.1 (see e.g. Fakhoury, 2015, 2019; Salloukh & Verheij, 2017). A central argument in these studies is that anti-sectarian movements, in theory, can push decision makers to introduce reforms that reduce the political salience of sect-based identities, but that the current institutions prevent movements from growing strong enough to exert significant pressure (Clark & Zahar, 2014; Deets, 2018; El Machnouk, 2018; S. Haddad, 2009; P. W. Kingston, 2013; Salloukh, 2006). While the type of political system and institutions has been found to impact the opportunities for anti-sectarian movements (Nagle, 2016; Nagle & Fakhoury, 2018), the main argument was still that the context of divided societies generally provides very narrow room for oppositional agency (P. W. Kingston, 2013; S. Makdisi & El-Khalil, 2013). Hence, early case studies of anti-sectarian movements mainly illustrated the resilience of sectarianism (Bray-Collins, 2016; Clark & Salloukh, 2013; Karam, 2018; P. W. Kingston, 2013). Overall, the first debates contributed to explaining why anti-sectarian movements had yielded little change compared to the Egyptian and Tunisian revolts, which took place in more ethnically and religiously homogeneous societies (Fakhoury, 2014a; Geha, 2016; Mhanna, 2011; Mitri, 2015; Moaddel, Kors, & Gärde, 2012; Mouawad, 2017).

The second debates: strategic agency and cumulative change

The emergence of a series of new and large anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, Bosnia, and Iraq between 2014 and 2016 sparked new debates (Kassir, 2015; Milan, 2017a; Yahya, 2017). In general, scholars became more interested in understanding the dynamics of anti-sectarian mobilization rather than the outcomes of single movements. Recognizing that these single movements were unlikely to foster significant political changes, a range of studies set out to examine strategies of anti-sectarian mobilization and discuss how these could foster gradual change over time (see e.g. Cambanis, 2017; Costantini, 2021; Z. Helou, 2018). A main argument was that anti-sectarian movements, in order to foster cumulative change, must expand their base of support, build organizational structures, and create links of solidarity throughout society (Cammatt, 2019; Deets, 2018). This argument also lies at the core of the present dissertation.

The debates about strategic agency yielded important new insights on challenges related to discursive tactics (Marie-Noëlle & Yammine, 2020), political organizing (Halawi & Salloukh, 2020; Kerbage, 2017), and internal divides within anti-sectarian movements (Chérif-Alami, 2019). A number of studies illustrated how and why anti-sectarian movements were able to address these challenges and achieve smaller social and discursive outcomes, despite not managing to dismantle the sectarian establishments (see e.g. Battah, 2016; Cambanis, 2017; Geha, 2018, p. 83). For instance, Costantini (2021) argues that the recurring Iraqi anti-sectarian protests despite the challenging context managed to articulate an increasingly mature narrative against the country's sectarian political system and elites. Moreover, studies by Herzog (2016) and Musallam (2016) stress that movements through social relations and training contributed to consolidating oppositional cultures and fostering new generations of skilled activists. These insights suggest that the overarching anti-sectarian social movements in divided societies are not powerless and paralyzed but can grow stronger over time. By mobilizing repeatedly, they gain important experiences and resources, which contribute to enhancing their ability to address major challenges confronting them (Costantini, 2021; Geha, 2019b; Marie-Noëlle & Yammine, 2020; Mustafa, 2022; J. Nagle, 2017a; Rønn, 2020a). This again points to the importance of examining the challenges to fostering solidarity, as I do in this dissertation.

Along with the general interest in mobilization dynamics, a growing number of studies also started to explore how anti-sectarian movements addressed the issues of specific identity-based groups other than sects. Youths as a category of citizens became a focus in a series of studies (see e.g. Harb, 2016b; Harb, 2018; Khalil, 2017; Kiwan, 2020; Krastrissianakis, Smaira, & Staeheli, 2019). The LGBTQ+ communities in Lebanon and Northern Ireland became another major focal point (Nagle, 2018a; Nagle & Fakhoury, 2018). The above-mentioned studies took a first step towards directing attention to the role of other fault lines and identities than the sectarian and paved the way for a third set of debates concerning how to study anti-sectarian movements through a more intersectional approach.

Towards an intersectional approach to anti-sectarian movements

The turn towards an intersectional approach to identities in divided societies is not only seen in studies on anti-sectarian movements. Rather, it reflects a growing tendency among social scientists to challenge the a priori importance of sectarianism in the Middle East and beyond (Deeb, 2020; Ghosn &

Parkinson, 2019; Majed, 2016, 2021a; U. Makdisi, 2017; Nucho, 2016; Ozcelik, 2022).

While the attention to the intersection between sect and other identities was not absent in earlier studies of anti-sectarian movements (see e.g. J. Nagle, 2017b), scholars have now increasingly started to apply the intersectional lens more explicitly and focused to study how sectarian divisions links to other boundaries and what this means for contentious politics in divided societies (see e.g. Al-Ali, 2020; Ali, 2021, 2022; Deiana, 2018; Esposito & Sinatora, 2021; Majed & Salman, 2019; Nagle, 2021b). For instance, Nagle (2021a) calls for increased attention to how sect intersects with sex, ethnicity, race, class, and other forms of social position in these societies. Moreover, he observes the rise of “intersectionalists” in divided societies, i.e. grassroots actors who “seek to identify the multiple pinpoints through which the sectarian system creates inequalities while simultaneously creating alliances across marginalized groups to attack the system at its weak points” (Nagle, 2021, p. 7). The intersectional approach is also taken up in Nagle and Fakhoury’s (2021) recent book, which addresses the role of the LGBTQ+ community in Lebanon in anti-sectarian movements. Furthermore, the term ‘intersectionality’ has featured in activist discussions, essays, and reports on anti-sectarian movements²⁰. So far, however, the main focus of the above-mentioned studies has been on the intersection between sect, gender, and sexuality. While these identities are important, I argue that there is a need to expand the scope of the intersectional approach to anti-sectarian movements in order to encompass other identities and to bring the intersectional approach into dialogue with existing debates about the dynamics of anti-sectarian mobilization and the different arenas in which it takes place. This argument is first of all based on the observation that other identities, such as class and geography featured as important topics in the Lebanese uprising, and that the struggle for intersectional solidarity appeared to be shaped by the arenas of protest spaces and media.

2.3 Bringing in class, spatiality, and media

As I explained in the introduction, my decision to study challenges to solidarity in the October Uprising through the prisms of class, spatiality, and the media is mainly based on observations from the field. However, another reason for selecting these thematics is their salience within the wider literature on

²⁰ The tendency has mainly been notable in Lebanon. See e.g. WILPF (2019) and Majed and Salman (2019).

divided societies. In this section, I explain what makes the three prisms theoretically and empirically relevant to the study of sectarianism and anti-sectarianism.

Class and spatiality, in the form of geographical boundaries, are two identity categories, which are highly salient to political developments in divided societies. Several pioneer studies of sectarianism not only highlight the intersection between sect and other identities as part of their main conclusion but also note the particular salience of class and geography (see e.g. Haddad, 2011; Nucho, 2016; Salamandra, 2013). In his study of Syria, Hinnebusch (2019) contends that the country's identity pattern is affected by the relative power of other identities that compete with sectarianism and mentions tribe, region, class as the most dominant sub-state identities. In a similar vein, Phillips (2015) notes that Syrians have multiple layers of identities and are at varying times motivated by sect, nation, region, ideology, tribe, and class. Haddad (2011) mentions class, geography, and tribe as the most important identities, which transcend sect, and lists numerous events from the history of Iraq in which these identities have been main drivers of both unity and conflict. Since there is ample evidence that class and geographical boundaries are among the most influential identities besides sect, I argue that these represent theoretically relevant targets for expanding the intersectional approach to anti-sectarian movements. The relevance of class and geography is furthermore strengthened by insights from analyses of anti-sectarian mobilizations, which provide empirical evidence suggesting the relevance of these identity categories (AbiYaghi, Catusse, & Younes, 2017b; Geha, 2019b). Class is also central in Bou Khater's (2021) recent book on labor-based organization of middle-class professions in Lebanon and its role in contesting sectarianism. Khater analyses class-based identity and grievances as a common denominator, which can form the basis of collective organization across sect. This dissertation sheds light on class from a different angle by exploring struggles for solidarity across the divide between the middle classes and the lower, often un- or underemployed classes.

Spatiality and media have already been highlighted as important arenas for anti-sectarian contention. The importance of spatiality, in the form of protest spaces, is illustrated by the vast number of studies conducted on this topic (see e.g. Harb, 2016a; Mabon & Nagle, 2020; Musallam, 2020a; Nagle, 2018b, 2019). These studies have shown how reclaimed public urban spaces have played a central role in facilitating anti-sectarian mobilization (Ghanem, 2021; Naamani & Simpson, 2021; Naeff, 2017), and how urban spaces can provide opportunities for certain groups such as sexual minorities to mobilize against the sectarian system (Deets, 2018; Deets & Skulte-Ouaiss, 2016; Nagle, 2021b). In their book, Nagle and Fakhoury (2021) explicitly stress the

role of urban spaces as arenas for Lebanon's LGBTQ+ community to promoting narratives of intersectional solidarity and mark their presence. The aforementioned studies show how space as an analytical prim can shed light on dynamics of anti-sectarian mobilization. In this dissertation, I look at protest spaces in a new way, by examining how these spaces both reflect and provide opportunities for addressing internal divides within anti-sectarian movements. Media, both social and traditional, has been seen as a main battleground between anti-sectarian movements and sectarian elites (see e.g. Battah, 2016; Salloukh et al., 2015, pp. 136-154). Generally, studies of anti-sectarian movements tend to regard social media and online activism as main ways for activists to get their messages across to a wider audience (Al-Rawi, 2014; Aouragh, 2016; Battah, 2016; Melki & Mallat, 2014), whereas mass media is typically seen as a tool of elites to delegitimize challengers (Kurtović, 2015). As I will explain in the next chapter, it was more difficult to determine the role of mass media in the October Uprising, as several stations sided with the protests. This calls for a more nuanced analysis of the role of traditional platforms in channeling and distorting narratives of solidarity between sects and other salient fault lines.

Overall, class, spatiality (understood as both geographical divides and protest spaces), and media are salient thematics in academic debates on sectarianism and divided societies in general and anti-sectarian movements in particular. However, as I argue, they have yet to be incorporated into the intersectional study of anti-sectarian movements.

Chapter 3.

Setting the Scene

When the Lebanese October Uprising broke out, shortly after I embarked on my PhD research, it offered a unique opportunity to observe an anti-sectarian movement firsthand and to study a new and relevant case. The uprising was both interesting due to its status as a historical juncture for Lebanon (Geha, 2021), and due to the variety of tactics, the geographical spread, and the social diversity of protesters, which offered new opportunities to explore aspects of anti-sectarian contestation. In this chapter, I introduce and contextualize the October Uprising. The chapter is structured around three sections. In the first section, I introduce the context of Lebanon and explain how the politics of sectarianism reaches into all domains of Lebanese society. I also show how sectarianism intersects with fault lines based on class and geography and describe the mediascape in Lebanon. In section two, I explain the larger Lebanese anti-sectarian social movement and the major anti-sectarian mobilizations that preceded the October Uprising. In the final section of the chapter, I provide an overview of the October Uprising, in which I argue why it was anti-sectarian, and why the prisms of class, spatiality, and media were empirically salient topics in the uprising.

3.1 Political sectarianism in Lebanon

Lebanon is a small country on the Mediterranean coast with a highly religiously heterogeneous population. Discounting the large number of refugees and migrants,²¹ Lebanese nationals represent 18 different officially recognized sects. The three largest are Shia Muslims, Sunni Muslims, and Maronite Christians, each of which is said to constitute about 30% of the Lebanese nationals in the country.²² Lebanon has often been highlighted as a textbook example of sectarian politics (see e.g. Cammett, 2019; Leenders, 2012) and is

²¹ According to Lebanese government estimates, there are 1.5 million Syrian refugees in the country at this writing (UNHCR, 2022). Moreover, an estimated 250,000 Palestinians live in refugee camps across Lebanon with highly restricted access to labor market and public services (Andersen, 2016). While the official number of domestic migrant workers in Lebanon is 250,000, this population group might be significantly larger (Salka, 2021).

²² Most of the 18 sects represent different sub-groups within Islam and Christianity. The exact proportion remains unknown, as the last official census in Lebanon was

known for its corporate consociational institutions,²³ which are shaped around the principle of quota-based power sharing. However, the sectarian system in Lebanon is about much more than the division of political offices. In fact, it has been described as a hegemonic ideology (Saouli, 2019) and a biopolitical machinery of sovereign power, which regulates the life of citizens (Mabon, 2020b).²⁴

While sect-based quotas on Lebanese soil can be traced back to the Ottoman Era (Weiss, 2009), power sharing became a fundamental part of the political system at the country's independence in 1943, when negotiations between Sunni Muslim, Shiite Muslim, and Maronite Christian leaders resulted in the unwritten National Pact. The pact introduced sect-based division of seats in Lebanon's parliament and stipulated that the country's president must be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni, and the speaker of parliament a Shiite. At the end of the Lebanese civil war, which lasted from 1975 to 1990,²⁵ a second power-sharing agreement – the 1989 Ta'if Accord – was adopted, which stipulates that the 128 seats in parliament should be divided equally between Christians and Muslims.²⁶ The contemporary power-sharing system in Lebanon was not meant as a permanent solution but rather as a transitory arrangement, which should gradually pave the way to overcoming sectarian division and moving towards inter-communal cooperation and

conducted in 1932, and the statistical enumeration of the population is a highly salient topic. See Maktabi (1999).

²³ The term consociationalism was first coined by Lijphart (1969) and refers to political systems in deeply divided countries, in which different groups (e.g. ethnic, religious or classes) have autonomy over their own issues, while a grand coalition representing all groups takes decisions on common concerns. Scholars distinguish between corporate and liberal forms of consociationalism. The former is based on fixed quotas, while the latter rewards whatever salient political identities emerge in democratic elections. For a comparison of liberal and corporate consociationalism, see O'leary (2005) and McCulloch (2014). For recent reflections on corporate consociationalism in Lebanon, see Nagle (2020).

²⁴ These views are presented in recent studies, which apply the work of political philosophers such as Agamben, Gramsci and Foucault to explain nature of political sectarianism. For more examples of these theoretical arguments, see Halawi and Salloukh (2020) and (Mabon, 2017); Mabon (2019c).

²⁵ The Lebanese civil war is often presented as an armed conflict between sectarian militias. However, it is important to highlight that the war was triggered by a conflict over the presence of Palestinian armed groups, that it was characterized by intra-sectarian rivalries and battles, and that it was influenced by heavy involvement by foreign actors, notably Syria and Israel. See Fisk (2001).

²⁶ This was a change in the distribution from the National Pact, which had a 6:5 distribution of seats between Christians and Muslims (Bogaards, 2019, p. 31).

secular institutions (Rosiny, 2015). Hence, the Taif agreement explicitly states that sect-based quotas should be in place only until the Chamber of Deputies passes an election law free of sectarian restriction.²⁷ However, several scholars argue that the power-sharing formula, despite its intended temporality, has frozen sect-based cleavages, concentrated power in the hands of a post-war elite, and allowed sectarian politics to permeate all sectors of Lebanese society (Salloukh et al., 2015).

Furthermore, a range of studies document how the sectarian system in Lebanon produces severe gridlocks that prevent necessary political reforms and decisions. In 2015, for instance, sectarian bickering over garbage collection resulted in mountains of trash piling up in the streets of Beirut (Abu-Rish, 2015). A large bulk of research documents that sectarianism fosters endemic levels of corruption (Leenders, 2012), makes the country prone to foreign interference (Fakhoury, 2014b; Hinnebusch, 1998), and impedes generalized trust (Alijla, 2016). Finally, the sectarianization of politics also weakens Lebanon's economy indirectly, as it preserves the power of an elite whose neoliberal policies has produced an inefficient public sector, contributed to accumulating a national debt of over 150% of GDP, and created some of the highest levels of inequality worldwide (K. Makdisi, 2021). Hence, sectarianism helps explain the nature of the current crisis in Lebanon (Baumann, 2019). Due to these maladies, Lebanon's sectarian system has been the cause of significant popular dissatisfaction. For instance, the Arab Barometer Survey from 2016 shows that 94 percent of Lebanese believed that corruption is found within the state agencies and institution, and only 11 percent trusted the parliament (Ceyhun, 2017). However, as I elaborate below, many Lebanese also depend on the system in their daily lives, making it costly for them to go against their leaders.

Sectarianism at multiple levels

Critics have often described the sectarian system in Lebanon as an octopus whose arms reach from the top institutions and all the way down to the households (see e.g. Helou, 2015). This explains why issues like public spaces, healthcare, and waste management, which offhand may seem unrelated to sect-based identities, can be domains for anti-sectarian contestation, as I alluded to in Chapter 2. Below, I explain how sectarianism unfolds across the levels of electoral politics, the public sector, welfare services, civil society, and the private lives of citizens.

²⁷ National Legislative Bodies/National Authorities, Lebanon: National Reconciliation Accord – Taif Agreement (1989), 5 November 1989, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5b3e376f4.html>

At the level of electoral politics, sectarianism is reflected in the dominant political parties. Many of these parties are born out of sect-based militias that fought in the civil war (El Khazen, 2003),²⁸ and it is therefore not surprising that their membership and political candidates tend to be mono-sectarian. However, it is important to note that the party system in Lebanon also reflects intra-sectarian divisions, as several parties typically compete to represent each sect (Cammett, 2014; Majed, 2021a)²⁹. Furthermore, parties position themselves along fault lines based on ideology and foreign policy. The most salient fault line concerns Lebanon's relations with Syria and the West as well as the status of Hezbollah as an extra-legal military organization. These questions divide Lebanese parties into the so-called March 8 and March 14 camps³⁰ and form the basis of cross-sectarian compromises and alliances between parties of different sects, which are an essential tool for Lebanese elites to maintain their power and therefore contribute to preserving the sectarian system (Karam, 2017; Salloukh, 2006).

At the level of the public sector, sectarianism is reflected in the distribution of employment and state resources. As Salloukh (2019a) argues, sectarian power sharing has come to occupy every nook and cranny of the state bureaucracy, from entry-level positions to cabinet portfolios and the board membership of the Lebanese Central Bank, and serves to protect the political, economic, and security prerogatives of the sectarian elite. The logic of power sharing is also mirrored in the allocation of public resources public expenditures,

²⁸ Notable exceptions include Rafik Hariri's Sunni Future Movement and Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement, which were established in the post-war period. For a detailed descriptions of Lebanese parties, see El-Husseini (2012, pp. 38-85).

²⁹ Intra-sect competition, however, varies. The two main Shiite political players, Hezbollah and Amal Movement are allies. The main Christians parties are divided between a pro- and anti-Syrian axis. The Sunni community continues to be fragmented, as no leader has been able to fill the unable to fill the political vacuum created by the assassination of former prime minister, Rafik Hariri's in 2005 (Meier & Peri, 2017).

³⁰ The March 8 camp currently includes the Shiite parties Hezbollah and the Amal Movement as well as the Christian Free Patriotic Movement and is named after a large pro-Syrian demonstration following the assassination of then Prime Minister Rafik al Hariri in 2005. The March 14 camp includes the Sunni Future Movement and the Christian Lebanese Forces and is named after another, larger demonstration on March 14 the same year, which became the start date of the so-called "Cedar revolution," that resulted in the expulsion of Syrian troops from Lebanon (S. Haddad, 2009).

which reflect the relative size of confessional groups rather than considerations of equity or efficiency in addressing the country's basic needs in poverty alleviation (Salti & Chaaban, 2010).

At the level of welfare services, sect-based elites use their political offices to distribute state resources to their constituencies and deliver additional services through private welfare providers. This forms the basis of a patronage-based welfare system, where citizens' access to services such as healthcare, education, social security, and legal assistance depends on their connections to political organizations and often demonstrated loyalty to a certain party (Cammett, 2014).³¹ The literature on sectarian clientelism provides a myriad of examples of how the exchange of welfare for political loyalty unfolds in practice, especially in relation to elections (see e.g. Corstange, 2016). Some of the most extreme examples include politicians who openly declare what their parties pay people to vote for them and admit that they prevent medical treatment for undecided voters (El Kak, 2019). The system of sectarian clientelism forces large segments of Lebanese, including the working and poor classes as well as public-sector employees, to abide by the rules of sectarian politics to sustain their living standards (Majed, 2017). At the level of civil society, it is documented how sectarian parties and organizations dominate various civic organizations from taxi drivers' unions to student clubs, meaning that civil society to a large extent mirrors sectarian boundaries (Salloukh et al., 2015). In fact, because of their power monopoly, sectarian elites have successfully co-opted attempts to establish alternative organizations and NGOs (Clark & Salloukh, 2013). Finally, sectarianism affects individuals' private lives by guiding marriage and divorce legislation and regulates individuals' personal status (Mikdashi, 2014).

Media and sectarianism

As media is a focus of the dissertation, background information on how the mediascape in Lebanon is linked to the sectarian system is relevant. The media in Lebanon can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of the TV stations and newspapers that act merely as mouthpieces of the political elites (Trombetta & Pinto, 2018). The sectarian elites have invested large sums in these platforms, particularly television stations, with an aim to establish control over public opinion (Traboulsi, 2014, p. 95). However, some of the major politically affiliated newspapers and television channels have faded over the recent years due to lack of finance and audiences (Kraidy, 2019). The

³¹ While Lebanese elites present themselves as patrons of sect-based groups, parties also cater to outgroup citizens to varying extents to secure electoral support. For more about sectarianism and welfare, see Cammett (2014)

second group consists of so-called “independent”³² media outlets, which I focus on in Paper 2. These outlets include the three large TV stations, MTV, Al-Jadeed, and LBCI,³³ which have substantial freedom of coverage and employ several prominent reporters who are known for their critical stance against the sectarian elites. Still, they tend to reflect moderate political biases (Salloukh et al., 2015) and are owned by prominent families with ties to Lebanese politics and institutions (El-Richani, 2016; Haimoni, Maarouf, Awad, Abdelfadil, & Al Sahili, 2020; Trombetta & Pinto, 2018), which makes their role tricky and continues to question their labelling as “independent”. The third group consists of alternative grassroots platforms. These platforms have expanded their audiences in recent years (Lteif, 2020) but are still new and rely on donor grants (SKeyes Media, 2021). Overall, while Lebanon’s postwar mediascape has traditionally been seen to reproduce sectarian modes of subjectification and exacerbate inter-sectarian animosity (Salloukh et al., 2015; Traboulsi, 2014), it has also changed drastically over the past years, adding nuances to the picture.

The intersection between sect and other salient boundaries

While Lebanon is known as a sectarian society, it is also marked by deep class-based cleavages. The country has an extreme level of economic inequality, which is reinforced by the politics of sectarian neoliberalism, mentioned in the previous section (Traboulsi, 2014). At the top of the class system is a closely networked political and business elite, often described as Lebanon’s “political” class, which consists of families from different sects who exercise control over the main industries and the country’s banking sector. Generally, this class benefits from the prevailing political and economic order (Baumann, 2019) and deliberately contributes to manipulating sect-based divides as a strategy to undermine opposition (Khattab, 2022). Lebanon’s middle class has traditionally spanned from an upper section of mid-level industrialists to a lower section including shopkeepers and taxi drivers (Traboulsi, 2014). In the wake

³² The term “independent” reflects the popular description of these channels Fanack (2017), but their de facto independence is questioned due to their ownership structures.

³³ While the three stations typically fall under the label “independent” today, it is important to note that LBCI and MTV historically have been associated with Christian politicians. LBCI was launched in 1985 and was owned by the Christian party Lebanese Forces until 1992. MTV was founded by Gabriel Murr, member of an influential Christian family with political ties. Al-Jadeed initially had a leftist agenda and has traditionally leaned towards the pro-Syrian March 8 coalition (Salloukh et al., 2015, pp. 138-139).

of the deteriorating economic crisis, however, it has been shrinking dramatically (ESCWA, 2020). Traditionally, the upper and lower strata of the middle class have differed in their relationship to the sectarian system. In the postwar period, Lebanon's urban middle class became increasingly autonomous from the sectarian elites and was leading calls against sectarianism (Khattab, 2022). Meanwhile, a large part of the remaining middle class continued to rely on welfare services, jobs, and assistance provided through the system of sectarian clientelism (Baumann, 2012, p. 162). At the bottom of Lebanon's class structure is a "working class", or "poor class", which consists of low-skilled workers, unemployed, underemployed, and informally employed.³⁴ In contrast to other countries in the region with significant workers' mobilization, such as Egypt and Tunisia (Beinin, 2009, 2011; Goldstone, 2011), the organization of Lebanon's workers has been scarce and weak, and attempts to mobilize for their interests have efficiently been suppressed, infiltrated, and co-opted by the sectarian elites (Clark & Salloukh, 2013). While there has been a small degree of labor struggle in postwar Lebanon, this has largely been limited to middle-class groups, state employees, and teachers (Tabar & Longuesse, 2014).

While social insecurities reach deep into the middle class, the poor classes are often said to be most severely affected by the policies of sectarian neoliberalism in Lebanon (Baumann, 2012, p. 162). At the same time, the lower classes risk paying a higher price for abandoning their political patrons to express discontent with their livelihood. Lebanese living below the poverty line typically rely on financial support from politically connected charities to cover their most basic needs (Baumann, 2012, p. 157). This makes them more vulnerable to vote-buying strategies (Corstange, 2012) and to possible sanctions if they speak out openly against their leaders (Meier, 2015). This illustrates that the relation between individuals and the sectarian system depends on the individual's class. Classes benefit from and suffer under the system in different ways. Moreover, the degree and type of risks individuals face when they go against their sectarian leaders depends, in part, on their social class. The urban higher middle classes may not put their personal security at risk by going to an anti-sectarian protest, expressing discontent on social media, or joining an oppositional grassroots organization. However, the poorest citizens may lose access to services that are fundamental to their survival. This can help to explain why social classes have different grievances vis-à-vis the sec-

³⁴ Migrant workers and refugees from Syria and Palestine also constitute a significant part of the unemployed, underemployed, and informally employed in Lebanon (Malaeb & Wai-Poi, 2021).

tarian system, and why they may sometimes participate in anti-sectarian contention in different ways and for different reasons. The class divides in Lebanon also manifest culturally. As Haugbolle (2013a) argues, there are large differences in the media consumption and lifestyle choices across social class. Sometimes, class-based divides may be invisible or be confused with sectarian boundaries. For instance, in a study of mixed-religion marriages, Deeb (2020) argues that biases against marrying people of other sects in reality may be grounded in ideas about status and hierarchy related to class and regional origin. This provides a segue to the role of geographical divides in Lebanon.

Lebanon's geography partly mirrors sectarian divisions. Many regions, cities, and villages are known to be Sunni, Shiite, Christian, and Druze, and people, especially youth, are found to avoid going to territories affiliated with the "other" political group in times of heightened sectarian tensions (Harb, 2016b). However, geography and sect are not merely overlapping. The geographical division in Lebanon also reflects intra-sectarian divides as well as socio-economic, cultural, and historical fault lines (Harb, 2016b). Take the example of Lebanon's second- and third-largest cities, Tripoli and Saida. Both cities have a Sunni Muslim majority population but differ on a range of historical, political, economic, and cultural parameters. Tripoli is located in North Lebanon, which is one of the country's poorest regions (Traboulsi, 2014, p. 74), and its history is marked by the presence of Islamist movements and a complicated and shifting relationship to the Syrian regime (Gade, 2015). Saida is located in the south, has been run by different local political families than Tripoli, and has been directly affected by the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon in 1982 (Mowles, 1986). While the above information does not entirely account for the differences between Tripoli and Saida, it illustrates how we cannot regard two cities as similar environments, just because their main populations belong to the same sect. The geographical boundaries not only manifest as differences between cities or cleavages between rural and urban areas; they are also highly salient at the level of neighborhoods. Particularly in the larger cities, neighborhoods are often characterized by distinctive features related to the class, sect, and culture of their inhabitants (Deeb & Harb, 2013; Nucho, 2016). In fact, everyday social relations in Lebanon are influenced by a long range of stereotypes, based on the intersection between class, sect and geographical belonging, which are often associated with particular dialects or physical traits. These stereotypes are reproduced in TV programs, theatre, political statements, and everyday language, and include the image of the snobbish urban French-speaking bourgeoisie in the rich Christian neighborhoods

of inner Beirut³⁵ or those attached to young working-class males from particular suburbs, who are described as being prone to substance abuse, harassment, and unruly behavior (AbiYaghi et al., 2017; Harb, 2016b).

A note on the meaning of “class” in Lebanon

In order to analyze the intersection between sect, class, and geography, it is also important to be aware of how Lebanese protesters talked about these categories. In particular, it is relevant to be aware of how class is being described and understood. When I discussed the topic of class with interviewees, many stated that a Western understanding of class did not apply to Lebanon, especially since middle class had almost vanished due to the economic crisis. Instead, some interlocutors distinguished between those who were “comfortable”, i.e., could uphold a basic standard of living during the crisis, and those who were “suffering”, i.e., struggled to cover their basic needs. Moreover, differences in level of education were highlighted as a primary marker of class. Particularly in Tripoli, interviewees often stressed the difference between “educated” and “non-educated” when distinguishing between social classes in the city. Finally, neighborhoods were frequently used as references of class. In Tripoli, the lower classes were typically referred to as people from the “populated areas”. In Beirut, where many neighborhoods are associated with sect-based communities, interlocutors often distinguished between lower-class individuals from neighborhoods with different sect-based demographics. This point is crucial for understanding how the intersection between sect, class and geography was understood by protesters.

3.2 Lebanon’s anti-sectarian movement

While the October Uprising was a unique moment in Lebanon’s recent history, it was not an isolated event, which happened out of the blue. Rather it was the culmination of years of mobilization against the sectarian system. Since the civil war ended in 1990, an anti-sectarian social movement has gradually expanded its presence in Lebanon.³⁶ When the Syrian troops withdrew from the

³⁵ For an illustration of these stereotypes, see Fares (2017).

³⁶ Anti-sectarianism in Lebanon is not restricted to the postwar period. As U. Makdisi (2019) shows, traditions of anti-sectarian thought can be traced all the way back to the Ottoman era, and many anti-sectarian initiatives took place in Lebanon’s pre-war years (see e.g. Clark & Zahar, 2014; Cuyler, 2019; Maaroufi, 2014, p. 9; Ofeish, 1999). The civil war disrupted the momentum of these initiatives (AbiYaghi, 2012, p. 20).

country in 2005,³⁷ this opened new opportunities for civic activism and made room for campaigns and NGOs to challenge sectarian politics on a range of domains, including urban heritage and memory (Deets, 2018; Nagle, 2018b), environmental preservation (AbiYaghi, 2012), electoral accountability, voters' rights (Bahlawan, 2014), anti-globalization, and anti-warfare (AbiYaghi, 2012). However, these campaigns did not attract much attention among the wider Lebanese public and mobilized mainly within a segment of urban activists concentrated in Beirut (AbiYaghi et al., 2017). Many observers and members of Lebanon's anti-sectarian movement therefore consider the so-called anti-sectarian protests 2011 the starting point of Lebanon's contemporary anti-sectarian movement.³⁸ The 2011 protests were inspired by the Arab Uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia and borrowed the popular slogan from the Tahrir Square in Cairo: "the people want the downfall of the regime", adding "sectarian" before "regime". However, they did not grow larger than some ten thousands (Bahlawan, 2014, p. 44) and were dominated by leftist grassroots and opposition parties (Bray-Collins, 2016, p. 303).³⁹

The next large-scale anti-sectarian movement was the garbage protests in 2015. This time, up to 100,000 people took to the streets to show their dissatisfaction with the sectarian leaders (Rønn, 2020a). While the numbers were massive, the garbage protests still highlighted how difficult it was to unite citizens across sect, class, and geographical divides. First, the protest movement was centered in Beirut and managed only to a limited extent to link the issue of garbage in the capital area to social and environmental struggles in other regions (AbiYaghi et al., 2017). Second, several observers as well as voices from within the movement criticized it for displaying class-blindness and using excluding rhetoric against certain segments of the lower classes who joined in the streets (Majed, 2017). A major point of criticism was that protesters dismissed these segments as rioters and thugs, and thus reproduced a more general discourse that labels lower-class people from party strongholds as "sheep", "lumpenproletariat", or "brainwashed" followers of the sect-based parties, stripping them of political consciousness and agency (Ghazali, 2020).

³⁷ For more about Syria's intervention in Lebanon and pax Syriaana, see Hinnebusch (1998).

³⁸ Observations from workshop with members of anti-sectarian groups in Lebanon, September 2019, Beirut.

³⁹ These parties were the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), which are described as non/anti-sectarian (Hermez, 2011). The role of SSNP has also been problematized. See e.g. Musallam (2020b). See also Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (2018, pp. 8, 21).

In particular, the classist discourses targeted young men from the Shiite majority areas around Beirut (AbiYaghi et al., 2017; Wehbe, 2017).

Following the 2015 garbage protests, some activists exploited the momentum to build another anti-sectarian campaign, this time in the form of a political list, Beirut Medinati (Beirut my City), which ran for local elections in Beirut against the ruling sectarian parties in May 2016 with a program that focused mainly on local environmental issues and urban planning. The list galvanized almost 40% of the votes cast in the city (Cambanis, 2017; Geha, 2019b). However, as I point out in a previous study (Rønn, 2020a), it mainly gained popularity among the well-educated segments in Beirut, who were easiest to penetrate. Although Beirut Madinati's members sought to open offices and conduct campaign activities in neighborhoods that represented other social and class segments, this effort failed due to lack of resources and several instances of threats and intimidation (Cambanis, 2017; Rønn, 2020a).

In 2018, another anti-sectarian electoral campaign sought to mobilize voters, this time for the national parliamentary elections. The so-called Watani (My Nation) coalition gathered eleven anti-sectarian grassroots groups against the sectarian system (El Kak, 2019; Khneisser, 2018). The campaign showcased once again how difficult it is for new challengers to gain ground in an electoral system designed to preserve the power of the sect-based elites. However, the electoral system alone cannot account for the fact that the coalition won only one out of 128 seats. The coalition also faced huge problems due to internal conflict between groups and candidates who had very little in common except their dissatisfaction with the sectarian regime (El Kak, 2019). This stressed how tactical and ideological differences weaken anti-sectarian movements and take up resources that could have been used to mobilize support across division lines in the broader population. Like Beirut Madinati, the Watani coalition struggled to attract support outside the middle classes, and although it offered new opportunities to build cross-regional solidarity, it revealed how difficult it was to unite Lebanese across geographical boundaries around a shared platform (El Kak, 2019).

Overall, the previous anti-sectarian protest movements and electoral campaigns contributed to the gradual build-up of an overarching anti-sectarian social movement in Lebanon, whose resources, organizational capacity, oppositional vocabulary, and strategic lessons fed into the October Uprising (LCPS, 2021b). Moreover, they provide insights about previous challenges to forging solidarity across sects and other salient boundaries.

3.3 Overview of the October Uprising

The October Uprising was triggered by a proposal to introduce a new value-added tax on the online communication platform, WhatsApp. However, calls to protest the tax on October 17, 2019 almost immediately evolved into a wider struggle for social and economic justice against Lebanon's ruling elites and their politics of sectarianism (Bou Khater & Majed, 2020).⁴⁰ While there are no official counts, analysts claim that approximately 1 million people participated in the uprising at its peak. If the largest estimates hold true, it means that up to one-third of the country took to the streets (Rose, 2019). In a survey conducted during the first two weeks of the uprising, Bou Khater and Majed (2020) find that the background of protesters reflected the demographic distribution of the Lebanese population, only with a slight over-representation of Sunni Muslims.⁴¹ The uprising also encompassed a diverse range of organized actors, including anti-sectarian grassroots parties and CSOs with different agendas and modes of action (Marie-Noëlle & Yamine, 2020). While members of these groups performed coordinating tasks on the ground, protesters at large insisted that the uprising was leaderless (Marsi, 2019).

There is no consensus about when the uprising ended. Some see the outbreak of Covid 19 as the deathblow to protests, since the lockdown drew people off the streets and led the police to clear the squares of tents and protest infrastructure. Others, including myself, merely see the lockdown as marking the beginning of a second period of the uprising in which primarily the poor segments and key activists continued mobilizing against the sectarian elites under the banner of the uprising, while adjusting their demands to the changing economic and political realities (El Kak, 2020; Rønn, 2020c). That being said, the first period before the lockdown remains the primary focus of the dissertation.⁴² This period was marked by a number of key events, including the resignation of then Prime Minister Saad Hariri and the announcing of sev-

⁴⁰ The survey did not provide the option of stating sectarian solidarity and unity, or anti-sectarianism as the reason for participation.

⁴¹ 36% of interviewed protesters were Sunni, 25% Shiite, and 17% Maronite. Characterizing protesters based on their sectarian background is controversial, however, as it can be seen to stress that individuals should be characterized by sect. However, it is worth mentioning here, as it demonstrates the diversity of protesters.

⁴² However, in Paper 2, I expand the time perspective to Summer 2020, when I explore how political elites co-opted media discourses when responding to more violent protests that erupted in Tripoli in response to the deteriorating economic situation in the country.

eral new prime minister candidates, including Hassan Diab, who was nominated on December 19, 2019.⁴³ The pre-lockdown period can be divided into four main phases of which the first lasted only the initial two days. Here, protests were predominantly disruptive, and main tactics included blocking roads with burning tires and dumpsters. The first days of protests also escalated into clashes with security forces, which used water cannons and tear gas to disperse protesters.⁴⁴ After these initial couple of days, the uprising entered a longer and more peaceful phase that lasted into the first part of November. During this phase, tens of thousands poured into the streets, and large stages were erected in squares in the major cities. Towards the end of the year, the uprising entered its third phase in which protests became increasingly diversified and dispersed. The daily mass gatherings in the main squares were replaced with marches and smaller manifestations outside key public buildings, main infrastructure, and bank offices. In this phase, protests were also increasingly subject to counter-attacks by sectarian party supporters (Molana-Allen, 2019). The fourth period, which began after New Year, was more disruptive. Across the country, banks were burned to express anger with the financial system. Clashes between protesters and security forces intensified in Beirut and other locations, and in some areas, like Tripoli, the army was sent in to counter protesters (Amnesty International, 2020).

Why was the uprising anti-sectarian?

The October Uprising was, to a large extent, explicitly anti-sectarian. Across the country, calls for the abolishment of political sectarianism appeared on banners and on walls with spray-painted statements such as “no to sectarianism”.⁴⁵ The chant, “We are the popular revolution, you are the civil war,” which I mentioned in the introduction, is another example of explicit anti-sectarianism in the October Uprising. This, however, does not mean that protesters only focused on the politicization of sect-based identities. In fact, economic and social justice was at the center of the demands, and the uprising was a clear reaction to the years of corruption and mismanagement of the economy

⁴³ For a detailed overview and timeline of the uprising, see e.g. AUB Library (2021) or Al Sharq Strategic Research (2020).

⁴⁴ From 17 October 2019 to 15 March 2020, the NGO, Legal Agenda’s documentation team recorded 732 injuries, 88% of them due to violations and aggressions by Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) and the Lebanese Military. For the full report, see Haidar (2021). In the period after the lockdown, the number of total injuries increased, and two young men lost their lives in clashes with the military in Tripoli (Amnesty International, 2021).

⁴⁵ Field observations, Beirut, October 20-31, 2019.

as well as the escalating economic crisis⁴⁶. Still, the underlying anti-sectarian agenda was evident in the way protesters attributed blame for the country's economic failure to the sectarian elites at large. For instance, they reused the slogan "all of them means all of them" from the anti-sectarian garbage protests in 2015 to stress that no sectarian leader was better than the other and could avoid blame.⁴⁷ That being said, the approaches and orientations of different groups in the uprising varied considerably. Some groups took a transformationalist and progressive stance, called for a secular state and posed demands for civil marriage, LGBTQ+ rights. Other groups were more reformist and accommodationist in their demands and called for a civil state, while acknowledging the need to form coalitions with some parts of the establishment.⁴⁸

The salience of class, spatiality, and media in the October Uprising

As I explained in the introduction, class, spatiality and media were highly salient topics in the uprising. In contrast to previous anti-sectarian movements, the October Uprising was not initiated by the urban middle classes. In fact, it was mainly young men from deprived backgrounds who took to the streets in Beirut in the early evening of 17 October 2019 and blocked main roads with burning tires and dumpsters (Bou Khater & Majed, 2020, p. 8), and the lower classes remained highly present throughout the uprising. According to a survey conducted by Bou Khater and Majed (2020), the majority of protesters had achieved less than undergraduate studies and had a relatively low income. This, the authors argue, indicates a clear class aspect in the protests. The strong presence of the lower class was seen as a major achievement, and protesters directed explicit attention to class through slogans such as "our revolution is class-based" and "this country is for the workers, down with capital's power" (Khattab, 2022). In political discussion sessions, the topic of social

⁴⁶ More than 87% of the respondents indicated that they participated for economic reasons; 61% indicated corruption, which came in second (Bou Khater & Majed, 2020).

⁴⁷ This slogan has also been subject to debate. Some see it as not explicitly anti-sectarian; others criticize it for stressing the significance of sect-based identities, as it insinuates that there should be a sectarian balance in everything the protest movement does. Likewise, the slogan "Shia, Sunni, against sectarianism" was criticized for highlighting the salience of sect-based identities rather than challenging the need to view people based on their sect.

⁴⁸ For analyses of groups and their differences, see e.g. Heller (2021) and Issam Fares Institute (2019).

class was frequently brought up⁴⁹, and podcasts commenting on the uprising devoted entire episodes to the subject (Hassan & Red, 2019). The uprising was also resented as good opportunity to organize along class lines, aiming for solidarity between the poor and middle classes against the ruling political class (Red Flag, 2020). However, analysts also echo my initial observation that the movement showed a deep polarization along sectarian, class and political lines (Naamani, 2020).

In terms of bridging spatial boundaries in Lebanon, the uprising constituted a critical juncture, as it swept the entire country. By day three, the protests had spread to more than 70 cities and villages (Hodges, 2019). According to Fawaz and Serhan (2020), people across Lebanon learned for the first time to recognize and name public squares of other cities, and this contributed to forge a shared national identity across geographical boundaries. The city of Tripoli, which is examined more closely in this dissertation, is only one example of an area that was celebrated for its surprisingly high protest activity. The city of Nabatieh in South Lebanon also challenged its reputation as a religiously conservative Shiite community and a stronghold of Hezbollah and Amal Movement, when large demonstrations erupted at the square next to the municipal headquarters (Fahs, 2020). When protesters in the city were attacked by party supporters, citizens across Lebanon reacted with the chant, “Nabatiyeh, we are with you to death”, showing solidarity and unity (Said, 2019).

Another aspect of spatiality, namely the takeover of urban spaces, was another focal point in the uprising. Occupations of buildings were seen as a new repertoire of action (Fawaz & Serhan, 2020), and the protest squares were considered an important strategic element (Arab Reform Initiative, 2020; Fawaz & Serhan, 2020). Moreover, buildings and other symbolic places became trademarks of the uprising and featured in drawings, artwork, and cartoons (see e.g. Naji, 2019). How to make best use of the protest spaces became another popular topic in the discussions between protesters. For instance, there were ongoing debates between protesters about the relative importance of squares and roadblocks and about which buildings and houses should be the main targets of demonstrations.⁵⁰

Finally, the role of the media in the October Uprising was remarkable in several ways. In contrast to previous anti-sectarian mobilizations, the uprising attracted intense media coverage from international outlets as well as local “independent” media platforms. In the beginning of the protests, TV screens

⁴⁹ Field observations, Beirut, October 20-31, 2019.

⁵⁰ Field observations, Beirut, October 20-31, 2019.

showed live coverage from these platforms most of the day, typically with simultaneous live feeds from different sites in Lebanon. Furthermore, the channels listed times and locations of upcoming protests, encouraging viewers at home to join in the streets, and some journalists even started to participate in rallies (Battah, 2020).⁵¹ Because of this, MTV, Al Jadeed, and LBCI were sometimes described as the “revolution media” (Ahwach, Farhat, & Mallat, 2021, p. 15). This was unprecedented in Lebanon and drew general attention to the role of the media. Alongside the traditional “independent” media, new grassroots platforms appeared and gained traction, and generally, journalists and cameras were part of the “picture” on the ground.⁵²

Altogether, the above observations reveal a relevance of class, spatiality, and media as thematics in the uprising and important to solidarity. While the thematics were sometimes brought up in discussions of challenges to solidarity, the point of this section has merely been to show that they were considered important to the uprising at a general level.

⁵¹ Journalist Dima Sadek, who worked for the LBCI, participated in rallies and attacked the president and his party on Twitter. Afterwards, the station’s management limited her on-air appearances, and she resigned in reaction to this (Battah, 2020).

⁵² Field observations, Beirut, October 20-31, 2019.

Chapter 4.

Engaging Social Movement Theory

In this chapter, I present theories from the field of social movement studies that guided and informed the dissertation. Given that my main ambition is to contribute to the literature on anti-sectarian movements, social movement theory plays a secondary role in the dissertation. I did not enter the field with a ready-made theoretical framework for understanding challenges to solidarity that steered my data generation. Rather, I embarked on my research with an ambition to provide theoretically informed accounts of the challenges protesters met when seeking to promote solidarity across sects and other boundaries, and how they addressed these challenges. Social movement theory was therefore merely a toolbox in which I searched for the relevant concepts and analytical instruments. Throughout the research process, I constantly evaluated which theoretical tools could best help me characterize and examine the phenomena I observed and structure my empirical analyses,⁵³ and I made use of a broad variety of tools. In this chapter, however, I confine myself to presenting the four main theoretical strands in the dissertation's three self-contained papers.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section briefly introduces social movement theory and offers a set of overall reflections on my use and contextualization of this theory. The second section presents insights from studies on social movements and intersectionality. These insights informed my general understanding of solidarity throughout the dissertation and provided a point of departure for my analysis of issues in the uprising's discourse towards young lower-class men from Shiite majority areas in Paper 1. The third section introduces key insights from the political opportunity structures perspective, which formed the second half of my theoretical backdrop in Paper 1. More specifically, this perspective assisted me in conceptualizing the external threats facing the uprising and analyze how protesters "translated" these threats when struggling to promote solidarity. Section four introduces theories on the spatial dimension of social movements, which formed the backdrop of Paper 3. More concretely, I focus on theory about spatial meaning making, which assisted my analysis of how protesters in the city of Tripoli handled internal divisions and conflicting tactical orientations. Section five discusses theories about the media framing and social movements,

⁵³ For further reflections on the role of theory in ethnographic research, see Wilson and Chaddha (2009) and Wacquant (2002)

which I drew on in Paper 2 as a conceptual framework and as a point of departure for discussing biases in the Lebanese “independent” media’s misrepresentation of Tripoli. As it appears from this overview, I did not aim to combine the theoretical tools into a coherent model. Rather, I used them separately to shed light on each of the individual challenges to solidarity in the October Uprising.

4.1 Applying social movement theory to study anti-sectarian protests

Social movement theory can be understood as a research field rather than a single coherent theory. It presents a myriad of frameworks, models, and concepts related to contentious politics, which draw on different, sometimes opposing, scientific paradigms ranging from rational choice to post-structuralism (Jasper, 2010; Morris, 2000; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). Most theories and frameworks are partial, i.e., they concern specific aspects of contentious politics. Examples of main perspectives, other than the ones presented in this chapter, include resource mobilization theory, which concerns movements’ acquisition and use of resources (e.g., time, money, skills) (Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Zald, 1977)⁵⁴; theory on collective action frames, which concerns movements’ discourses and communication (Benford, 1997; Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow, Vliementhart, & Ketelaars, 2018); and theory on the role of emotions for mobilization (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2004; Jasper, 2011) as well as repression and mobilization (Davenport, 2005; Earl, 2003).

Why social movement theory?

A main reason behind my choice of social movement theory is obviously that the October Uprising is a case of a protest movement. Moreover, as I indicated above, social movement theory encompasses an expansive and sophisticated conceptual and analytical universe that covers most aspects of social movements. This means that almost no matter what I observed during my fieldwork and data collection, I knew I could expect to find some assistance in social movement theory on how to grasp and make sense of these observations. Moreover, my choice of social movement theory as a main toolbox falls in line with a wider trend among scholars of sectarianism and anti-sectarianism to

⁵⁴ See also Piven and Cloward (1995) for a critique of this theory.

explore the utility of classical theories from sociology, anthropology, and political philosophy.⁵⁵ Lastly, it follows up on calls to bring the study of anti-sectarian movements into closer dialogue with the large scholarship on social movements and contentious politics (Geha, 2019a, 2019b; Milan, 2019).

The role of social movement theory in the dissertation

Social movement theory served two important overall roles in the research process. First, it acted as a kaleidoscope, which helped me realize the many options I had to study and analyze challenges to solidarity in the October Uprising. As Soss (2018, p. 23) argues, “phenomena in the social world do not exist, inherently and really, as a case of any social (science) kind”. Hence, making transparent and informed choices on how to study a case requires knowledge on how empirical observations can be “cased”. From the beginning of my research process, I carefully considered how my empirical observations reflected wider phenomena from social movement theory. While undertaking fieldwork, I continuously adjusted the theoretical kaleidoscope to make certain aspects appear clearer and to explore the potential of using different analytical frames. The second way I employed social movement theories was in the form of heuristic tools (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014), which allowed me to analyze and present my findings and to structure the papers. Throughout the present chapter, I reflect on the abductive logic behind my choice to engage specific insights and theories and explain which aspects of my cases these perspectives served to inform. Moreover, I elaborate further on the abductive approach in the next chapter on methodology.

Contextualization of theory

While most key concepts and models within the social movement literature have been developed through studies of liberal democracies (Foweraker, 1995, p. 1), this does not mean that their utility is restricted to these settings.⁵⁶ As Beinin and Vairel (2013) argue, the past decades of research on contentious politics in the Middle East⁵⁷ have established that key concepts from social

⁵⁵ For example, Dodge (2019) applies Bourdieu’s terminology to explain political contestation in Iraq, while Halawi and Salloukh (2020) apply a Gramscian take on anti-sectarianism in Lebanon.

⁵⁶ However, I echo the critique of Western social movement theories and their assumptions as universally applicable (Beinin & Vairel, 2013; Escobar, 2018).

⁵⁷ Most notably, a vast research has applied SMT to study terrorist organizations (Gunning, 2009) and Islamist movements (Munson, 2001; Tuğal, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2004). Since the Arab Uprisings, social movement has also become a primary

movement theory can be applied successfully to analyze diverse forms of movements in authoritarian and hybrid societies in the region, if done with contextual awareness.⁵⁸ This in turn prompts the question what contextualized use of social movement theory looks like in the case of Lebanon. Social movement theory has been employed in several studies on previous movements against the Lebanese sectarian system and elites (see e.g. Geha, 2018; Khneisser, 2018). To contextualize theoretical insights, I drew inspiration from these. Generally, studies using social movement theories on anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon show that the dynamics of these movements are similar to those of Western social movements on an overall level. However, they also highlight the importance of being aware of how the sectarian system influences the way these more general dynamics unfold. For instance, Geha (2019a) shows how three general counter-strategies – co-optation, counter-narratives, and repression – have characterized the political establishment’s reaction to Lebanese anti-sectarian protests. At the same time, her analysis emphasizes how elites used the Lebanese power-sharing institutions to apply these strategies. I adopt a similar approach in my own study of the development of collective action frames during anti-sectarian movements in 2015 and 2016 (Rønn, 2020a). This article takes its point of departure in three general types of framing challenges that have been found to characterize Western social movements and shows how these challenges provide a tool to identify different framing dilemmas that resulted from the omnipresence of sectarianism in Lebanese society. A second insight on contextualization concerns the meanings of key theoretical concepts. This insight is exemplified in a study by Kiwan (2017) on the role of emotions for discourses and knowledge production related to citizenship and social change in the 2015 anti-sectarian garbage protests. Kiwan borrows the overall idea of emotions as key drivers of contentious politics and uses this to motivate and structure her study. At the same time, she shows how these concepts have different meanings in the Lebanese context. Having reflected on my use of social movement theory more generally, I now turn to the four theoretical strands I employ in the three papers. I begin with intersectionality and social movements in the section below.

lens for understanding popular contention for democratic rights and economic justice.

⁵⁸ Beinin and Vairel (2013) argue that studies of the Middle East and North Africa can enrich the general theoretical knowledge of social movements and call for more studies that focus on theory development.

4.2 Intersectional solidarity and social movements

In recent years, an emerging theoretical literature has explored how the general notion of intersectionality, which has long been used in fields such as law and gender studies, can inform research on social movements (see e.g. Luna, Jesudason, & Kim, 2020; Montoya, 2021). The term intersectionality has been defined by Collins (2015, p. 2) as “the critical insight that identities such as social class, race and gender are reciprocally constructing phenomena, and that this reciprocity shapes complex social inequalities.” Intersectionality is not a theory in itself but rather an analytical approach that aims to shed light on the complex nature of social relations, challenge the assumption that we can study single identity categories as separate, and reveal hidden modes of power, dominance, and discrimination (Belkhir & Barnett, 2001, p. 158; May, 2015, p. 3). This section presents main insights from intersectional studies of social movements. It starts out by elaborating on the intersectional approach to solidarity, from which my dissertation draws inspiration. It then presents key insights from studies of social movements and intersectional solidarity, which assisted me in examining challenges and shortcomings related to inclusivity in the October Uprising and the struggle to promote intersectional solidarity.

The intersectional approach to solidarity

While intersectional analyses in the United States focus mainly on race, gender, sexuality, and class, an intersectional approach can be used to shed light on relations among all identities in a given society (Belkhir & Barnett, 2001; Collins, 2015). Seen through an intersectional lens, solidarity is understood as the ongoing process of creating ties and coalitions across social group differences in a way that recognizes and negotiates differences in positions and power (Ellison & Langhout, 2020; Tormos, 2017).⁵⁹ Thus, to forge intersectional solidarity, it is not enough to unite groups and individuals based on common interests and collective identity. Rather, as pointed out by Einwohner et al. (2021, p. 705), promoting intersectional solidarity means “preventing the powerless from falling through the cracks”, pursuing broad engagement in the movement and countering wider structures of domination.

⁵⁹ Note that other studies use the terms intersectional reflexivity (May, 2015) and intersectional inclusivity (Gökarıksel & Smith, 2017; Terriquez et al., 2018). In Paper 3, I use the term inclusivity, which refers to a way of thinking about oppression that reveals hidden forms of dominance.

Moreover, the intersectional perspective asserts that we should critically examine how privileged individuals speak on behalf of the marginalized. For instance, as Collins (2017) points out, unquestioned solidarity with black women is neither inherently desirable nor effective when it rests on male-dominated, intergenerational gender hierarchies. Part of obtaining intersectional solidarity is therefore to ensure that marginalized and disadvantaged groups are given a voice within the social movement and get to define their position in society. By adopting an intersectional understanding of solidarity, the dissertation draws specific attention to the representation of the voices of marginalized groups in the uprising. Second, it looks beyond mere relations and interactions between groups and individuals in the streets and expands the focus to the movement's discourses, symbols, and language in relation to social problems and segments in the population.

Identifying problems with intersectional solidarity

The literature on intersectional solidarity offers a range of insights on which both scholars and movement members can draw to exercise intersectional thinking and reveal hidden modes of repression and exclusion (Brewer & Dundes, 2018; Gökarkırsel & Smith, 2017; Lopez & García, 2014). Generally, these studies suggest that scholars as well as movement members should be attentive to two overall types of problems. As I explain in Chapter 6, these problems provide a useful lens for analyzing whether organizers in the uprising were attentive to issues of intersectional solidarity.

The first type of problem is generalizations of larger groups of individuals based on single identity markers such as gender or race (Juris, Ronayne, Shokooh-Valle, & Wengronowitz, 2012; Lopez & García, 2014). Social movements have a tendency to mobilize around single shared collective identities and experiences of repression (Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Snow, Rochford Jr, Worden, & Benford, 1986). However, when single identity categories are employed without attention to internal heterogeneity, this can reinforce modes of marginalization and reinforce boundaries in society (see e.g. Chun, Lipsitz, & Shin, 2013; Montoya, 2021). For instance, the American feminist movement has been criticized widely for its failure to accommodate the diversity of women in the United States (Boothroyd et al., 2017; Wrenn, 2019). Brewer & Dundes' (2018) study of the women's anti-Trump march in Washington provides an example of the widespread generalization problem among American feminists and its implications for intersectional solidarity. In the study, they interview a sample of black and colored women who felt alienated by the movement, because it focused on sexism against women but failed to address

issues of police brutality, which were salient to women of the black and colored communities.

The second type of problem regards insensitive symbolism and language. As a range of critical studies have shown, movements often use slogans, posters, and vocabularies that contribute to upholding patterns of exclusion and inequalities (see e.g. Kearl, 2015; Stone & Ward, 2011; Wrenn, 2019). The key logic is that racism, sexism, and other forms of exclusion are often internalized in language and visuals, and that the negative connotations are often only visible to certain groups (see e.g. Gökarıksel & Smith, 2017; Hunt, 2018; Kearl, 2015). The popular image of a woman veiled in a US flag hijab has been highlighted as an example of how messages of empowerment can simultaneously be seen as insensitive and misrepresentative by the groups they mean to empower. The image intended to celebrate Muslim American women but sparked controversy, as critics found that it drew on a nationalist imperialist symbolism that has been used to promote assimilation of Muslims in the United States (Gökarıksel & Smith, 2017). Moreover, as Ghaffar-Kucher, El-Haj, Ali, Fine, and Shirazi (2022) argue, the flag hijab missed an important tendency among the new generation of Muslim women in the United States, which had rejected the need to drape itself in a US flag to represent the stereotypical ideas of “good Muslims”, which was implied in this image. Arguably, the images, symbols, and language of social movements will always be subject to critique (see e.g. Berbrier, 2002, pp. 582-584). However, the flag hijab reveals how issues with intersectional solidarity and representation can arise when movements are inattentive to the underlying meanings and implications of their messages and communication.

Promoting intersectional solidarity

In order to understand how movement members can address problems with intersectional solidarity, I drew on inspiration from a series of case studies of the different discursive practices, mobilization strategies, and organizational structures movements can employ to promote intersectional solidarity (e.g. Doetsch-Kidder, 2012; Juris et al., 2012; Maharawal, 2013). Drawing on a theoretically grounded examination of the Occupy Movement, the Gezi Park protests, and the Women’s March against Donald Trump, Einwohner et al. (2021) propose that organization and leadership are among the most important elements in strategies for intersectional solidarity. Although the authors understand promotion of solidarity as a collective commitment, they highlight that movement organizers can be proactive in ensuring that disadvantaged individuals are given voice and influence within the movement. Several other

studies emphasize the role of leaders and organizers in promoting intersectional solidarity (see e.g. Ellison & Langhout, 2020; Heaney, 2019; Terriquez & Milkman, 2021). In their analysis of Occupy Boston, Juris et al. (2012) show how organizers and activists enhanced solidarity in practice by forming working groups and organizing trainings and forums to raise awareness and address privilege and oppression within the movement. In a study on coalition work developed around reproductive justice and domestic workers' rights, Ciccio and Roggeband (2021) propose that intersectional solidarity is promoted through the construction of collective action frames that incorporate knowledge produced by marginalized groups and individuals and highlight their unique challenges. Summing up, the studies mentioned here put large emphasis on the role of social movement organizers. This theoretical emphasis inspired me to explore which strategies, if any, organizers in the October Uprising employed to address problems of intersectional solidarity related to segments of young lower-class men from Beirut's Shiite majority areas in Paper 1.

4.3 Political opportunity structures

While movement members and particularly organizers have several strategies at hand, this does not mean that intersectional solidarity is easily achieved (Einwohner et al., 2021). Notably, external constraints can render certain strategies for solidarity risky or unavailable. To understand how external barriers made it difficult for organizers to promote intersectional solidarity in the October Uprising, I drew on theoretical insights from the political opportunity structures perspective. Political opportunity structures refer more widely to the configuration of factors in a society—including political institutions, salient discourses, and the presence or absence of elite allies—that facilitate and restrict social movements (Kitschelt, 1986; McAdam, 1996; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). Studies of political opportunity structures seek to explain the emergence, development, and influence of social movements (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). This dissertation focuses merely on the way political opportunity structures influence movement organizers' strategic choices. When examining the political opportunities for anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, I initially drew on insights from two strands in the wider literature, which I present below.

Cleavages and political opportunities

The first strand concerns the role of deep cleavages based on religion, ethnicity, or class in shaping political opportunities of social movements, which promote new identities (see e.g. Berclaz & Giugni, 2005, p. 18; Kitschelt, 1986, p.

66; Kousis & Tilly, 2015, p. 19; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996, p. 1639). Many of the studies within this strand look at new social movements that seek to mobilize around social and cultural identities and post-material values in Western societies. However, I argue that they can provide a backdrop for analyzing how anti-sectarian movements seek to challenge the role of sect as the most salient source of political identities in divided societies. Overall, the studies suggest that traditional cleavages can pose two main obstacles to social movements that seek to challenge the fabric of identities in a society. First, they continue to influence the way people interpret the world around them, meaning that it can be difficult for individuals to think outside the logic of traditional identities (Diani, 1996; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, & Giugni, 2015, p. 4). Second, political opponents can invoke old cleavages to delegitimize and attack social movement challengers (Kriesi et al., 2015, p. 4), e.g., by portraying the movements as a threat to the existing societal order and the values of old identity groups (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996, p. 1639). These insights provided an entry point to understanding how the sectarian divides in Lebanon foster strategic obstacles from the political opponents of anti-sectarian movements and from within the constituency of the movements.

Discursive opportunities

The second strand of theory concerns the role of discursive political opportunities, which have been defined by Koopmans and Statham (1999, p. 228) as ideas in the broader political culture believed to be “sensible,” “realistic,” and “legitimate,” and whose presence would thus facilitate reception of social movements’ framing and communication. Discursive opportunity structures reveal how cultural elements in the broader environment facilitate and constrain successful social movement framing (McCammon, 2013) and reflect some of the more recent approaches to political opportunities, which focus on cultural and dynamic elements in a movement’s context (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996; Williams, 2004). As discursive opportunities are seen to have high influence on social movements’ communication, they provide a relevant backdrop for examining factors in the context that might pose challenges to discourses of intersectional solidarity. The central argument behind the notion of discursive opportunities is that movements have better chances of winning support if they draw on certain language, symbols, and rationales that are salient and legitimate to their target audience (H. J. McCammon, Muse, Newman, & Terrell, 2007). Hence, the way movement discourses are received depends on their wider discursive environment. With these insights, theory on discursive opportunities helped me to conceptualize

the link between discourses of sectarianism and the strategic agency of anti-sectarian organizers in the October Uprising.

Perceived opportunities

When applying theories on cleavages and discursive opportunities to examine my data, however, I encountered a problem. While these theories could help me understand the objective dangers and risks posed by the sectarian system, they provided insufficient guidance to analyze how organizers in the uprising took these dangers and risks into account when seeking to promote intersectional solidarity. This led me to include the perspective of perceived opportunities in my analysis in Paper 1. Theory on perceived opportunity structures acknowledges that the political, social, and discursive context of a movement constrains the strategic options available to activists (Moghadam & Gheytanchi, 2010) and makes certain strategies costly or risky to use (McAdam, 1996). However, it adds the insight that objective opportunities and threats may not determine a movement's actions directly (Giugni, 2009; Kriesi, 2004; Kurzman, 1996; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). While objective and perceived opportunities often align, social movements may miss or miscalculate their opportunities (Kurzman, 1996). Generally, movement members are found to analyze their opportunities in ways that are biased and shaped by cultural filters (Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Goodwin & Jasper, 1999). Studies point to different biases and logics that may influence movement members' perceptions of opportunities and hence their strategic decisions. While Gamson and Meyer (1996) argue that social movements tend to have an optimistic bias, Larson (2013) contends that movement members are typically reluctant to use strategies they believe may threaten the legitimacy of and support for the movement. These insights about underlying logics provided a basis for examining organizers' interpretation of external threats to the October Uprising that related to the deep sectarian cleavages and discursive structures of sectarianism in Lebanon (see Paper 1).

4.4 Spatiality and social movements

While the previous section explained the significance of the wider political and cultural context for strategic agency, this section focuses on theories about the role of spaces for social movements. It presents key insights from the literature on spatiality of contentious politics, which has been driven by case studies on some of the major global popular movements, including the Arab Uprisings, the Occupy Movement, and the European Austerity Protests in Spain and Greece (Della Porta, Fabbri, & Piazza, 2013; Leitner, Sheppard, & Sziarto,

2008; Sewell, 2001; Soudias & Sydiq, 2020). Overall, the literature on spatiality of contention provides a point of departure for examining how protesters in Tripoli assigned meaning to different zones in the city's protest landscape, and how these processes of meaning making shaped relations between protesters (see Paper 3). However, before discussing processes of spatial meaning making, I elaborate on the conceptualization of space and the relation between spaces and social movements more generally below.

Defining spaces of contention

Most studies on the spatiality of contentious politics draw on classic works from political geography (Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith, 1991; D. Massey, 2013), and this has implications for their understanding and conceptualization of "space". While the definition of space has been subject to ongoing discussion among social movement scholars (Leitner et al., 2008; Miller, 2013; Nicholls, Miller, & Beaumont, 2013), it is widely established that the term refers to more than just the material container of social movements. Spaces consist of social, symbolic, and material dimensions, and several studies have also examined virtual spaces of contentious politics (see e.g. Lim, 2015; Salah Fahmi, 2009). The relationship between spaces and movements is a dialectic one. For instance, while the material environment and historical symbolism of a public square shapes possibilities for mobilization (Schwedler, 2020; Soudias & Sydiq, 2020), movements can also assign new meaning to the square, turning it into a terrain of resistance (Routledge, 1996) or a liberated site (Della Porta et al., 2013). The Tahrir Square in Egypt exemplifies how a square can even be turned into a model of political imaginaries that linger on after the protest movement has died out (Gunning & Baron, 2014, pp. 241-274).

Protest spaces and relational dynamics

It is widely argued that various configurations of protest spaces influence relations and ties between members of social movements (Frenzel, Feigenbaum, & McCurdy, 2014; Jansen, 2001; Nicholls, 2009; Nicholls et al., 2013; Sbicca & Perdue, 2014; Yuen, 2018). A range of studies have shown how shared physical environments and infrastructures, such as protest camps, shape relation dynamics within social movements, often in a positive way, by forging collective identities and ties of space-based solidarity (see e.g. Brown & Feigenbaum, 2017; Feigenbaum, Frenzel, & McCurdy, 2013).

In Paper 3, however, I was interested in analyzing a protest space in Tripoli that had been divided into several separate zones and reflected divisions within the uprising. This led me to search theoretical insights from studies of

movements that took place across a set of physically separated locations. Many of these studies look at transnational movements, such as the global justice movement, which mobilized against corporate globalization across several cities across the world (Della Porta et al., 2015). While a range of well-known social movements that appear to take place in coherent spaces in reality have been divided into different separate zones,⁶⁰ the literature offered fewer theoretical insights on this phenomenon. The few studies I identified pointed out that relations between protesters in fragmented protests spaces are shaped through processes of spatial meaning making (Daphi, 2014; Juris, 2008). Following Daphi's (2014) proposal, I used Martina Löw's (2008, 2016) distinction between *spacing* and *synthesis* to explore different processes of spatial meaning making in Tripoli during the October Uprising in Paper 3. The process of spacing is the exercise where individuals divide spaces into thematic zones, which then become associated with certain people or goods (Löw, 2008, p. 35; 2016, p. 134). Daphi (2014) uses the example of the Global Justice protests in Genova to illustrate how the concept can apply to social movements. She argues that a process of spacing took place, when protesters divided the city into protest zones in the city were clearly demarked with colors and codes of conduct (Juris, 2008). Synthesis describes the processes whereby people connect sites and goods into a shared space (Löw, 2016, p. 106). According to Daphi (2014), synthesis offers a way to conceptualize processes whereby protesters connect different sites and assign them functions within the social movement at large. As Daphi does not elaborate on how processes of spacing and synthesis unfold in such settings, I used the framework more exploratively to generate insights on how processes of spacing and synthesis were reflected in protesters' testimonies about different zones in Tripoli's protests. I therefore contend that my study of the October Uprising also contributes to expanding the theoretical understanding of spatial meaning making and intra-movement dynamics.

4.5 Media and social movements

In this section, I present theoretical insights from the literature on media and social movements, which I employed as a backdrop for analyzing the Lebanese

⁶⁰ This becomes evident in case studies of the American and British Occupy movements (Halvorsen, 2015; J. Massey & Snyder, 2012), Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement (Yuen, 2018), and European anti-austerity demonstrations (Kaika & Karaliotas, 2016; Sevilla-Buitrago, 2015; Simiti, 2015). However, offer only sporadic and anecdotal insights on the sub-division of protest spaces and.

“independent” media’s portrayal of Lebanon’s second largest city, Tripoli as Bride of the revolution and its consequences in Paper 2.

Framing biases and representations of movements

The notion of framing refers to the process whereby media actors connect selected aspects in a narrative that promotes a particular interpretation of reality (Entman, 1993)⁶¹. Framing theory was primarily developed to explain pluralist media in liberal democracies. Its central argument is that media platforms, despite being politically independent and professional, are influenced by a set of inherent biases (Bennett, 2016; Boykoff, 2006, 2007; Entman, 2007). At first glance, the insights may seem less relevant to a hybrid democratic context like the Lebanese, where even the “independent” media is said to be influenced by a political ownership (see Chapter 3), and where freedom of expression is arguably more limited than in full-fledged democracies (Dajani, 2013). However, a reading of case studies on media and social movements in hybrid societies with some degree of media pluralism suggests that media in these settings can to some degree mirror the framing behavior that is observed in liberal democracies. However, given the complex media-politics nexus that characterizes these contexts, there are also deviations from the forms of coverage we typically find in liberal settings, which should be taken into account (Somfalvy & Pleines, 2021; Tshuma & Ndlovu, 2019; Voltmer, 2008; Voltmer, Selvik, & Høigilt, 2021). This inspired me to use general insights on framing biases as a point of departure for discussing the extent to which the media coverage of Tripoli, as perceived by protesters, mirrored more general types of biases.⁶²

Studies have shown that misrepresentations of movements can occur in both negative and positive coverage (see e.g. Bray, 2012; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019; Vliegthart & Walgrave, 2012). In Paper 3, I study how a seemingly positive media coverage can foster misrepresentation of social movements. Misrepresentations can silence and exclude voices in the public discourses. Moreover, as pointed out by several scholars (see e.g. Ferree, 2004, p. 96; McCarthy, McPhail, & Smith, 1996, p. 1401), feelings of being misrepresented

⁶¹ Note that this is different from the theory on collective action frames, mentioned previously in this chapter. Collective action frames, which is sometimes also called framing theory, mainly refers to the way social movements diagnose issues in society, propose solutions and call for action. See Benford and Snow (2000).

⁶² Typically, scholars rely on content analysis to detect objective media biases (see e.g. Entman, 1991; Koopmans & Olzak, 2004). However, as I discuss in the paper, biases can also provide a frame for understanding how media frames are perceived by protesters.

can lead individuals to lose their sense of efficacy and importance and thus become less motivated to continue their social struggle. Three common forms of biases, which can lead to such misrepresentations, are selection, description, and representation biases. Selection biases refer to disproportionate exposure to single events (McCarthy et al., 1996). Description biases can be understood as distortions in the way media portray movements at large, i.e., as overly radical or trivial (McCarthy et al., 1996; Sampedro, 1997; Solomon, 2000). Finally, representation biases refer to instances where media give disproportional attention to certain groups, for instance by repeatedly letting privileged activists speak on behalf of marginalized individuals (Ferree, 2003; Husu, 2013; McDonnell, Bail, & Tavory, 2017).

Media as arena for the struggle of meaning

To fully understand the implications of media for social movements, we need to see media platforms not only as a filter that distorts the representation of movements, but also as a playing field for the ongoing struggle of meaning between movements and their adversaries (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992). Within this struggle, movement members seek to correct framing biases and get media actors to represent them as they would like. Meanwhile, adversaries seek to alter existing media frames to their own advantage and use them to delegitimize movements. In my study of the October Uprising, I was primarily interested in analyzing the opponent-side of this battle. Drawing on Gamson's (1992) claim that frames can be understood as cultural and political resources rather than as fixed discourses, scholars have shown how political elites absorb or co-opt the frames advanced by challengers (see e.g. Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Ryan, Carragee, & Meinhofer, 2001). As illustrated by case studies of media and social movements, movement adversaries can use a range of strategies to co-opt and change the meaning of existing concepts and ideas related to social movements (M. C. Burke & Bernstein, 2014; Loke, Bachmann, & Harp, 2017). As I elaborate in Chapter 6, I used these as a basis for analyzing how sectarian elites manipulated frames to their advantage.

Social media and grassroots media as alternative arenas for solidarity

The dissertation does not investigate in-depth how protesters used social media and alternative media to promote solidarity. However, I drew on theories and research on social media and protest movements as a backdrop to discuss the role of such platforms in the October Uprising. A significant part of this

literature has been developed on the basis of case studies from the Arab Uprising, where social and alternative media were a main focal point of scholarly debate (see e.g. Comunello & Anzera, 2012; Howard et al., 2011). Several scholars pointed to the positive role of social media in the uprisings (see e.g. Breuer, Landman, & Farquhar, 2015; Howard et al., 2011). However, as Mellor (2014) argues in a study of the Egyptian uprising, social media amplified the voices of the well-educated and liberal youth and thus highlighted this segment as representatives of the uprisers. Hence, she argues, social media at the same time contributed to sidelining the more conservative, rural, and working-class segments, which were highly present in the streets despite their absence in the digital arenas. This insight suggests that discussions of the role of social media and alternative media platforms should also pay attention to how and whether they represent diverse voices and perspectives, other than the “liberal, urban youth”.

Chapter 5. Methodology

Qualitative interpretivist research is often non-linear, driven by surprising observations and influenced by the researcher's personal characteristics and preexisting knowledge (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, pp. 55-57). Under these conditions, the researcher's task is to generate, analyze and present data in ways that are as well reflected and transparent as possible. This chapter concerns the dissertation's methodology. It presents the different steps in the research process and reflections on how I sought to meet the criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative interpretivist research (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Shenton, 2004). The chapter begins by introducing the interpretivist and abductive methodological approach, which underpins the dissertation, and elaborating on its advantages and implications. This is followed by a section in which I describe my fieldwork in Lebanon. The section contains reflections on my positionality, relations to interlocutors, field observations and on being cut off from the field due to travel restrictions related to Covid-19. The following section is devoted to interviews, which form the main data source in the dissertation. Here, I explain the criteria behind recruitment of interviewees, reflect on how I planned and conducted the interviews, and unfold the abductive processes of generating and analyzing interview data for each of the three papers. The final sections of the chapter concern my use of other data sources such as texts and video material as well as my presentation of data.

5.1 Methodological approach

My study of challenges to solidarity in the October Uprising rests on an interpretivist and abductive approach. In short, interpretivist research aims at generating thick and contextualized descriptions to obtain an understanding of why and how people render certain acts and ideas possible, impossible, meaningful, or meaningless (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 52). Abduction is a logic of inquiry, which is based on an iterative process of moving back and forth between theory and empirical observations (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014).

Interpretivism

Taking an interpretivist approach, the dissertation examines struggles for solidarity through the perspective of individuals who participated in the October Uprising. This approach, I argue, has three main strengths. First, it deepens

the understanding of how anti-sectarian protesters navigate the narrow opportunities for social mobilization that exist within the context of Lebanon. More specifically, it helps us explain why protesters address challenges to solidarity as they do, and why they fail to address certain challenges. Second, it allows for a representation of voices that traditionally have been silenced or underrepresented in research on anti-sectarian movements. Finally, an interpretivist methodology, which is based on thick empirical descriptions, can reveal some of the underlying and hidden challenges to solidarity that have been overlooked in popular descriptions of the October Uprising. Interpretivism assumes that meaning making draws on the lived experiences of individuals and can only be understood through more holistic inquiries (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 42). It rests on the premise that researchers cannot be detached from the social world they are studying, meaning that data is not merely collected but rather co-generated by researcher and research participants (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, pp. 78-79). Given these presuppositions, it is less meaningful to judge interpretivist research based on the criteria that apply in rationalist, objectivist, and positivist traditions (Golafshani, 2003; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Instead, Guba and Lincoln (1982) suggest interpretivists rely on four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which can be seen as translations of the traditional positivist criteria for trustworthy research.

Credibility means that researchers appropriately represent the realities of people they study. It can be enhanced through engagement with people in the field, triangulation, and debriefings with interviewees (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). The background interviews, secondary data, and informal conversations I reflect on in the following sections all served to strengthen the credibility of my interpretations and findings by helping me better understand the realities of people I interviewed. Transferability is the interpretivist “translation” of generalizability and concerns the ability of insights to travel from one context or case to another. As Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012, p. 47) argue, the best way to ensure transferability is to establish a clear contextualization that enables other researchers to understand how findings are connected to specific people in historically and culturally understood settings. This tells researchers what to be aware of when using insights from one context as entry points for studying similar phenomena in another setting. Dependability roughly corresponds to the notion of “reliability” in positivist research and refers to the consistency and transparency of the research process. Dependability can be enhanced when researchers identify factors that influence inconsistency in data collection and track changes in the design of the study (Janis,

2022).⁶³ To pay regard to the criteria of dependability, this chapter includes reflections on how I made changes to my case study designs and interview guides throughout the research process. Finally, enhancing confirmability is taking steps to ensure that findings are the result of the informants' experiences and ideas, rather than of the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). These steps include reflecting on implicit assumptions, biases, or prejudices about the context or informants (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 248). In practice, I took steps to enhance confirmability by reflecting on my positionality in the field and challenging my interpretations through informal conversations, background interviews, and member checks.

Abduction

While the ultimate goal of abductive research is to produce new theories and hypotheses, abduction is also a research cycle, in which scholars over time develop and refine frameworks (Tavory & Timmermans, 2019, pp. 179-180). As I alluded to in the previous sections, my dissertation does not aspire to come up with a complete theoretical framework for explaining challenges to intersectional solidarity in anti-sectarian movements. Rather, it proposes thematic prisms and insights, which inform the literatures on anti-sectarian movements and de-sectarianization. Hence, my dissertation can be seen as an initial step within a process of abductive theory generation in which I relied on an abductive logic of inquiry.

An abductive logic of inquiry means that the researcher enters the field as a theoretically sensitized observer who recognizes the potential relevance of surprising observations (Tavory & Timmermans, 2019, p. 173). As I explained in Chapter 4, I developed theoretical sensitivity by familiarizing myself with the wider social movement literature. Using these theories as a kaleidoscope, as I described the chapter, was a way to be a theoretically sensitized observer. Moreover, I drew on my reading of the literature on anti-sectarian movements and de-sectarianization as an additional layer of theoretical and explanatory insights, which I used to evaluate observations in the field. Abduction also involves moving back and forth repeatedly between theory and empirical observations (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). These shifts between data generation and theoretically informed analysis took place throughout the entire research process. Conducting multiple rounds of fieldwork (see the fol-

⁶³ While many researchers, including myself, adhere to these four research criteria, there is a wider discussion about the relevance of general criteria for interpretivist research. For discussion and different perspectives in this debate, see (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2015).

lowing section) was one way of moving physically between theory and observation. As I explain in the coming sections as well as in Chapter 6, my field work began with informal conversations and initial observations, through which I gradually narrowed down the focus of the study and identified overall research questions for the individual papers. The abductive logic was also driving my formulation of interview questions and the development of analytical arguments in the individual papers. At the end of section 5.3, I reflect further on the abductive processes of data generation and analysis behind each of the three papers.

5.2 Fieldwork

I conducted five rounds of cumulative fieldwork in Lebanon during and after the October Uprising, amounting to 57 days in the field. The table below presents an overview of the fieldwork, showing the role of each visit in the field within the overall research process and the development of my three papers. The table also notes the break in fieldwork due to Covid-19, which I will reflect more on by the end of this section.

Table 1: Timeline for fieldwork and interviewing

Fieldwork*	Days	Description
October 2019	12	Observations of protests in Beirut, background interviews Exploring ideas for Papers 1, 2 and 3
January 2020	7	Observations in Beirut and Tripoli, background interviews Developing research design for paper 1
March 2020	9	Background interviews for Paper 1 (the planned collection of primary interviews was interrupted by the outbreak of Covid-19)
Break in fieldwork due to Covid-19 and phone/online interviewing Primary interviews for Paper 1, background interviews for Paper 2		
July/August 2021	17	Primary interviews for Paper 2 and exploratory interviewing for Paper 3 in Tripoli and Beirut Observations of large protests commemorating the Beirut Blast
October 2021	12	Primary interviews for Paper 3 in Tripoli, additional primary interviews and background interviewing for Paper 1, 2 in Tripoli and Beirut

* When describing fieldwork, I include visits to Lebanon during the PhD period and after the outbreak of the October Uprising. However, I did eight days of preparatory fieldwork in September 2019 prior to the October Uprising during which I conducted four of my background interviews. The dissertation also draws on insights from previous fieldwork conducted for my master's thesis in 2017 and 2018.

As the table shows, the first rounds of fieldwork were mainly exploratory and served to develop my understanding of the October Uprising and set the direction for my research design and within-case studies. The latter rounds of fieldwork sought to develop the within-case studies and generate data for Papers 2 and 3 as well as additional interview data for Paper 1. Below, I present overall methodological considerations in relation to my presence in the field.

Presence in the field: Positionality and power

Lebanon has generally been characterized as a politically sensitive context to do fieldwork in (see e.g. Carpi, 2020). In relation to my dissertation, it is particularly important to note that Lebanon is a postcolonial and post-civil war context, in which history is disputed and highly politicized (Aboultaif & Tabar, 2019; Salloukh, 2019b).⁶⁴ This required me to be aware of how I spoke about political figures and reflect on the underlying meaning of different names for landmarks and historical events.⁶⁵ Moreover, I reflected critically on my positionality in the field, i.e. how factors such as my beliefs, social and cultural background may affect the research process and my relations to people I interacted with (Bourke, 2014). In particular, I considered the implications of being young, woman, well-educated and white. However, I also thought about how less tangible aspects of my positionality, such as my personality, provided limitations and opportunities for interacting with interviewees and interlocutors (Moser, 2008). Throughout the fieldwork, I recorded key reflections on positionality in my field journal. Before I reflect further on positionality during the conduction of interviews in section 5.3, the subsections below reflect on two overall aspects to which I paid particular regard during my presence in the field.

⁶⁴ There is no common curriculum covering the post-independence history in Lebanon, and civil war memory is often invoked by sectarian politicians in political battles. For more about history education in Lebanon, see Abouchedid, Nasser, and Van Blommestein (2002).

⁶⁵ For example, the main square in Tripoli, which I often spoke with interlocutors about, has two names. It was originally known as Abdel-Hamid Karami square, but the name was changed to Nour Square (or Allah Square) when the Islamist Tawheed Movement took control in Tripoli (Lefèvre, 2021, p. 295). In some cases, interlocutors referred to the square by its original name as a way to problematize the Islamist influence on Tripoli's identity.

Being an experienced outsider

Being an outsider to the field is seen to come with both limitations and benefits (see e.g. Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). While I could relate to aspects of my interlocutors' stories on a personal level, I always bore in mind that I, as a Dane, could never fully understand or speak from the experience of being Lebanese. At the same time, I was aware that I was not a complete outsider to Lebanon. I have visited the country frequently and followed the opposition against the sectarian system since 2015. I lived in Beirut in spring 2016 and later in 2017/18, when I was an exchange student at the Lebanese American University and generated data for my MA dissertation.⁶⁶ Throughout the years, I also studied Arabic and acquired a fluent level in Lebanese dialect. Generally, I sought to get the most out of my positionality as experienced outsider. I played on my background as non-Lebanese to present myself as open-minded and politically neutral. In several instances, I stressed that I, as a foreigner, had no intention to develop an opinion on the uprising but rather sought to understand as many different perspectives as possible. I played on my knowledge and interest in Lebanon to show commitment and establish more trustful relations to interlocutors. In some situations, my prolonged engagement and awareness of context sensitivity served as a source of approval, especially for protesters who had negative experiences with being interviewed by foreigners. One protester, for example, wanted to make sure that I was not an "orientalist" before agreeing to be interviewed.⁶⁷

Sometimes, I explicitly addressed my positionality when interacting with people in the field to gain a better understanding of how it was perceived from the outside. For instance, when discussing delicate topics, I sometimes stressed that it was important for me, as an outsider, to be sensitive to details in the Lebanese context. When I talked with interlocutors about my outsider positionality, I was most often told that they perceived me as someone who could promote a more nuanced narrative of both Lebanon and the uprising to foreign audiences. Some expressed a hope that my research could be a channel for voices that were silenced in international narratives about the uprising. As one protester told me, when I asked if he wanted to add anything at the end of our interview: "You are the voice of the oppressed abroad".⁶⁸

⁶⁶ The dissertation looked into collective action frames in two anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon: The 2015 Garbage Protests and the 2016 Beirut Madinati electoral campaign (see Chapter 3).

⁶⁷ I was later told this by my interlocutor who facilitated contact to the interviewee.

⁶⁸ Interview, Firas Bou Hatoum, Journalist and NGO worker, August 7, 2021, Deir el Qubel, Lebanon

Positionality and power relations

While undertaking fieldwork, I met a large and diverse range of people of different status in Lebanese society. The power relationship between myself and people I interacted with in the field thus varied greatly, and I experienced that factors such as my gender, age, and educational level had different implications and importance depending on who I talked to. Throughout the research process, I sought to play on different aspects of my positionality to balance uneven power relations. Although I never experienced discriminating remarks or was rejected because of my gender and age, I was aware that being a young woman could potentially affect my power position vis-à-vis my interlocutors, and I sought to accommodate this by stressing my role as a professional researcher, when relevant. In contrast, when interviewing people who were socially and economically marginalized, I was careful to appear more modest in my clothing and behavior and show respect.

Field notes and observations

In contrast to classic ethnographies⁶⁹, field notes did not constitute the primary data source in this dissertation. Rather, observations I gathered in the field served to identify research questions, enhance the quality of my research design and the trustworthiness of my interpretations of interview data. My field notes thus varied throughout the research journey. During the initial exploratory field visits, I sought to collect as many details about the uprising as possible. When observing the first two weeks of protests in October 2019, I spent the morning reading news and reflecting on observations from the previous days, while I spent the afternoon and evening in the streets, observing and hanging out with protesters⁷⁰. I mostly recorded observations on my phone while moving between different protest sites. In total, I recorded 50 voice notes, lasting from 20 seconds to 12 minutes, during my fieldwork in the uprising's initial weeks. After I returned home from the field, I listened through the recordings and transcribed the most essential parts. When I returned to the field in 2021 to collect data for Papers 2 and 3, I took field notes

⁶⁹ Classic ethnographies are often considered to be based on extensive observations generated during prolonged fieldwork. However, as Jeffrey and Troman (2004) argue, there are many other ways of doing ethnographic research, and they contend that selection of the appropriate form is dependent on the contingent circumstances and main purpose of the research.

⁷⁰ Many of the conversations I had when 'hanging out' had the character of informal and anonymous ethnographic interviews, see e.g. Whitehead (2005).

in a more focused way, e.g. to develop interview questions or record the meaning of slang. I also used conversations and interactions with interlocutors and taxi drivers as informal member checking (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016), which allowed me to explore the wider resonance of my preliminary findings and interpretations.⁷¹

Absence from the field: the implications of covid-19 for the research process

It is widely recognized that presence in the field enhances the trustworthiness of qualitative interpretivist research (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) and allows the researcher to challenge her preconceptions and explore the diversity and complexion of her topic (Loaeza, Stevenson, & Moehler, 2005). Still, it can be difficult to account for the value of time spent in the field in a study where the main data consists of formal interviews. When the Covid-19 pandemic prevented travelling to Lebanon, I gained important insights on the implications of being away from the field. Overall, the pandemic had three main consequences for my research process. First, it meant that I had to conduct part of my interviews (primarily for Paper 1) over the phone.⁷² Second, my time in the field was cut down significantly.⁷³ Third, I was prevented from having informal interactions and conducting member checks in the field.

A main challenge of phone interviewing was recruitment. Generally, there was a much lower response rate when I requested people to do online interviews compared to face-to-face meetings in the field.⁷⁴ As for the conduction of interviews, I used a range of measures to address and anticipate the common challenges of establishing trust and intimacy associated with phone interviewing (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). I sent questions in advance, made sure to brief the interviewee properly, and stressed the purpose and importance of the interview (L. A. Burke & Miller, 2001). Still, it was often difficult to secure a conversational flow due to practical issues with unstable internet connection in Lebanon. In several cases, interviews were interrupted, and a few interviews had to be continued as voice messages on WhatsApp. Finally,

⁷¹ To comply with the ethical standards of ethnographic research, I informed informal conversation partners that I was doing research on the October Uprising. See e.g. Driessen and Jansen (2013, p. 259).

⁷² More precisely, 18 of 22 interviews for Paper 1 were conducted over the phone, most of them over WhatsApp. An additional four interviews were conducted later to address gaps in the online interviews.

⁷³ Initially, my plan was to spend close to seven months in Lebanon during 2020.

⁷⁴ In the field, my interlocutors often called people, while I was sitting next to them or introduced me to people in person.

as it was difficult to establish contacts to organizers from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds via online channels,⁷⁵ there was an elite bias in my sample of organizers for Paper 1. However, the severity of this bias can be discussed, since organizers in Beirut, who were the focus of the paper, generally tended to represent more well-educated backgrounds compared to the protesters in general.

The second challenge, having limited time in the field, meant that some of the tradeoffs and tensions that are generally associated with fieldwork became intensified and more difficult. As Pachirat (2015) notes, ethnographic fieldwork is always marked by a tension between demands for rigor and structure and the need for improvisation to craft genuinely new and exciting ideas. Pachirat maintains that important trademarks of an interpretive orientation include openness to messiness, a high tolerance of ambiguity, as well a commitment to keep the research question in flux and avoid premature evidentiary closure (*ibid.*, p. 431). In line with Pachirat, I was (sometimes painfully) aware that my ideas and questions gradually became better and more credible as I gained a deeper understanding of my cases, and that some of my theoretically informed interview questions turned out to be less relevant when confronted with the empirical reality. I was also aware that because of this, some of the most important insights appeared late in the data generation process. At the same time, I maintained the need to be able to compare interview statements and explore the resonance of interviewees' personal observations, experiences and opinions.

With limited time in the field, I had to be extra careful when deciding which ideas and opportunities to follow and which ones to discard. On the one hand, I was aware that by failing to adapt my interview questions and research strategy, I risked ending up with highly systematic, yet irrelevant, premature and shallow data. On the other hand, by following every potentially relevant trace, I risked returning from the field with highly detailed and interesting interview data that provided few or no opportunities to draw general conclusions about how protesters perceived challenges to solidarity. When facing dilemmas between structure and improvisation, I found it important to rule out misunderstandings and challenge preconceptions. As a rule, I remained open to exploring new sub-topics and discarding bad ideas late in the data generation process, knowing that I would have to rely on statements from a smaller part of my interviewees when analyzing certain aspects of my cases. It also

⁷⁵ Even if I had obtained access to these groups, phone interviews might not have been possible due to issues of trust and lack of access to affordable internet. The latter is generally seen as main obstacle to online interview research with participants from vulnerable groups (Roy & Uekusa, 2020).

meant that I exploited opportunities to conduct spontaneous and unprepared interviews in order to include as many perspectives on a central topic as possible. In the final part of section 5.3, I reflect more on how these wider considerations influenced the generation and analysis of interview data.

Finally, being cut off from Lebanon for an extended period made it far more challenging to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of my findings through informal conversations and interactions with people in the field. In particular, I missed opportunities to test my ideas and questions through conversations with people from different backgrounds and to challenge the resonance of my interpretations and analytical arguments. To compensate for this, I conducted a series of background interviews with experts, journalists, and protest organizers, recruited through my existing network. These background interviews (see Appendix A2) informed the development of interview questions and analysis of interview data. I also sent follow-up questions to interviewees over WhatsApp in situations where I was uncertain about how to interpret their statements or needed more information.⁷⁶ Yet, I was still feeling “out of touch” with realities on the ground throughout the lockdown, which gave rise to a sense of insecurity and concerns that I would misinterpret the reality of interviewees. Hence, the experience of being absent from the field not only stressed the advantages of in-person interviewing; it also highlighted the crucial role of informal and in-person interactions in establishing my ethical confidence as a researcher studying a foreign and politically sensitive context.

5.3 Interviews

In total, I interviewed 108⁷⁷ individuals for this dissertation. 77 semi-structured interviews formed the empirical backbone in Papers 1, 2 and 3, and 31 background interviews assisted the research design and analysis (for an overview of the interviews, see Appendix A). These 77 primary interviews varied greatly in length and structure, but most of them were recorded (with the informed consent of the interviewee), transcribed, and coded. The typical duration was between 40 minutes and 1.5 hours. However, for Paper 3, I also conducted a range of shorter interviews next to the main square in Tripoli, which

⁷⁶ This was not a unique benefit of phone interviews, as I also posed follow up questions to other interviewees.

⁷⁷ This number does not include the informal ethnographic interviews, follow-up conversations, and member checking I did in the field (I consider these part of my fieldwork observations). In three instances, I interviewed two individuals at a time. In these double interviews, I made sure to let each interviewee reply to the prepared questions, and hence I count them as two simultaneous interviews.

I count as sub-category primary interviews. The 31 background interviews were a combination of formal audio-recorded interviews and more informal conversations and meetings with experts, journalists, and activists, which served a direct purpose of developing and clarifying research questions or obtaining information relevant to the papers. In the following section, I review the different steps in the process of preparing, conducting and analyzing data from interviews. I begin with overall reflections on my role as interviewer, interview language, and recruitment. I then reflect on the abductive process of generating and analyzing interview data and explain how this process unfolded in each of the three papers.

Interviewer role and emotions

Qualitative research can be an emotionally challenging endeavor for both interviewee and interviewer (Hoffmann, 2007; Watts, 2008). Most individuals I interviewed expressed that being part of the October Uprising was associated with strong emotions, and many described the uprising as a turning point in their life. When reflecting on their engagement in the uprising, interviewees often shared personal stories about their families, memories, as well as dreams and losses. Some also shared stories of violent assaults committed against them. I strived to provide a safe outlet for interviewees to share these personal stories and emotions by taking on the role as “confidant” or “sympathetic ear” (see e.g. Hoffmann, 2007). However, I always strived to remain politically neutral, especially when interviewees criticized other protesters or expressed their personal opinions about tactical choices or ideological positions. I deliberately used expressions such as “that must have been difficult for you”, or “I understand you must have felt frustrated in that situation”, acknowledging interviewees’ emotions without endorsing their statements.⁷⁸ I intentionally made the interview structure more flexible to allow interviewees to share anecdotes, memories, political visions, and concerns for the future without feeling cut off or interrupted. As a result, many interviews were lengthy and went far beyond the questions included in the prepared interview guides. However, these additional insights and stories, which did not relate directly to my research questions, still had an analytical value, as they helped me understand interviewees’ background and line of reasoning as well as how

⁷⁸ In some instances, when interviewees talked about corruption or serious abuse of power, I allowed myself to deviate from the politically neutral position. I did so for ethical reasons (treating the interviewee with respect) and for pragmatic reasons (acknowledging that it might cause a break of trust if I did not express agreement with the interviewee on these basic issues).

they understood the interview topics in relation to Lebanon's history, sectarian politics, and their everyday lives.

Reflections on language

While most interviews were conducted in English⁷⁹, a substantial part of the in-person primary interviews were also conducted in Arabic. Speaking and understanding Lebanese Arabic dialect at a fluent level was particularly helpful in Tripoli, where fewer people speak English. It allowed me to organize spontaneous interviews⁸⁰ and generally enabled me to recruit a more diverse segment of interviewees in terms of class and educational background. Although my interlocutors sometimes (jokingly) told me that I spoke Arabic “mithl el bilbol” (Lebanese slang for speaking fluently, which translates directly into “like a songbird”), I was aware of the barriers and limitations that come with interviewing in a third language. To reduce these barriers, I asked my interviewees to paraphrase or explain words that were unfamiliar to me. When my interviewees spoke with a heavy dialect, I brought one of my close interlocutors with me, and in one case where I was particularly concerned about strong cultural barriers, I hired a professional interpreter. When in doubt about translations of important words during the transcription process, I used a dictionary or consulted my closest interlocutors via WhatsApp. Furthermore, I double-checked all direct quotes when translating from Arabic to English.

Recruiting interviewees

I relied on a snowballing strategy for recruitment of interviewees, as this was the most effective way to gain access to protesters and establish trust. Being aware that snowballing entails a risk of enmeshing the researcher in the network of the initial participants interviewed (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 87), I deliberately used multiple individuals as access points for recruitment to avoid interviewing protesters from the same networks. Furthermore, to enhance diversity, I explicitly asked interviewees to refer me to people who had different views than their own and who represented different backgrounds in

⁷⁹ Most individuals who were interviewed in English had attended English language schools or university and had a professional level, which minimized the language barriers.

⁸⁰ Often, interviews would be organized on the spot, meaning that it was not possible to find a translator, which would be necessary in cases where my key interlocutors did not have time to join me for the interview, or where their presence would limit the interviewees' ability to speak freely.

terms of age, ideology, social class and gender.⁸¹ My selection of interviewees relied on a combination of two sampling logics: Purposive sampling, following which interviewees were chosen deliberately due to the qualities and knowledge they possessed (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016), and stratified sampling, where interviewees were chosen to represent a variety of identity categories⁸² (Robinson, 2014). Purposive sampling mainly sought to fill knowledge gaps or gather information on specific events. As for stratified sampling, I did not strive for a fully representative sample of protest organizers or participants. Rather, I sought to make sure that certain groups or segments were not absent or highly underrepresented among my interviewees.

Overall reflections on interview guides

In developing interview guides for my primary interviews, I sought to balance considerations for comparability, flexibility, and progression. Generally, my interview guides contained three categories of questions. The first category were the main questions I used across interviews to maintain some level of structure, focus and comparability. The second category consisted of potential follow-up questions related to different aspects of the main topics in the interviews. Typically, my prepared follow-up questions helped me to guide the conversation, follow up on important statements, double check information from other interviewees, get more details on specific events, and explore the resonance of particular statements or arguments I had encountered in previous interviews. The follow-up questions were continuously refined and changed as I gained more information. The third category of questions were tailored to the individual interviewee and related to their social background or role in the protests. Generally, I began the data generation with a relatively open interview guide, which then became more structured towards the end of the interview process.

⁸¹ While it would appear obvious to also ask for people with different sect-based backgrounds, I was reluctant to do so for several reasons. First, as many protesters rejected to be reduced to their sect, choosing interviewees based on sectarian belonging could be seen as offensive and misunderstood. Second, as Tripoli is predominantly Sunni, I argue that obtaining a balanced representation of interviewees was more a matter of ensuring diversity in class, gender, and age.

⁸² While these sampling logics fall within a more positivist or rationalist research paradigm, they provided useful considerations for my recruitment process. However, I was aware not to categorize individuals based on single characteristics such as gender, age, or class.

Overall reflections on transcription and coding

My data analysis was primarily based on a qualitative coding of transcribed interview material.⁸³ I transcribed all interviews myself and used this as a way to get more familiar with my data. Some interview recordings were transcribed in full length. However, for part of my interviews, and due to considerations of time, I restricted verbatim transcription to passages that related directly to my research questions and transcribed the rest of the interview in note form. For instance, I shifted to note form, when the interviewee shared anecdotes from their personal lives, and when they expressed dissatisfaction with the sectarian system, politicians and the economic situation in Lebanon. When coding and analyzing interview data, I took into account the criteria for qualitative validity proposed by Maxwell (2008). In particular, I paid attention to the context of interview statements and critically reflected on how I might have influenced what the interviewee said. For instance, I differentiated between situations where the interviewee had brought a topic up unmotivated or reflected on it in response to a question I had posed. As explained in section 5.2, some analytically important questions were only addressed in part of my interviews. In cases where I felt I had too thin interview data on an important question, which was introduced later in the interview process, I contacted earlier interviewees over WhatsApp and requested them to reflect on this question.

Because of the differences in the interview structure, I was careful when comparing interviews and generally refrained from quantifying interview statements in numbers. Instead, I noted when something was said often or when an opinion was held by a majority of the interviewees. When assessing frequency and representativeness of statements, I distinguished between four types of statements: 1) statements that were common across interviewees, e.g., opinions or types of answers to main questions in the interview guide; 2) statements that were based on an interviewee's individual experiences or role in the protests and therefore could not be expected to occur across interviews; 3) recurring opposing statements that revealed major disagreements between protesters; and 4) uncommon statements, e.g., when an interviewee had a particular interest in an aspect of the interview topic.

⁸³ In the few cases where interviewees preferred not to be recorded, I made a voice recording immediately after the interview, which summarized the most relevant points. I transcribed this recording, upon returning from the field.

Reflections on the abductive processes for the individual papers

The reflections above apply to all three papers. However, the research process and nature of interview data, coding, and analysis vary significantly among Paper 1, 2 and 3. To enhance transparency, I therefore provide details about the individual processes of generating and analyzing interview data in three papers below.

For Paper 1, I conducted the first 18 interviews by phone between March and August 2020 and transcribed the full recordings afterwards. I used an interview guide that started with broad, open-ended and theoretically informed questions relating to protest inclusivity, intersectional awareness, class, and marginalization in Lebanon and then continued to discussing the challenges to inclusivity regarding the particular segment of young men from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh (see Appendix B1-2). I coded the 212 pages of transcript in Nvivo through several rounds of cumulative coding. I began with an open-ended coding, which helped me establish analytical categories and gradually added more focused codes to look for recurring patterns and themes and to identify quotes and excerpts that could be used to illustrate main findings in the papers (see Appendix C1-2). I later added data from five in-person interviews, which I collected in October 2021, to address gaps in the paper and ensure a better representation of voices with relation to the Shiite majority communities of Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh, which the paper concerns (see Appendix B3 for interview guide).

For Paper 2, I began the focused generation of data in Winter/Spring 2021. I started by examining newspaper articles, TV clips, and podcasts about Tripoli's role in the uprising. I then conducted nine background interviews with protesters and observers, who either came from Tripoli or had observed the city's protests closely. These background interviews sought to test the resonance of my initial observation that there was significant skepticism concerning the portrayal of Tripoli as Bride of the Revolution (see Chapter 6). Since these background interviews indicated that there was a more widespread criticism of the media coverage among Tripolitans, I decided to develop a theoretically informed interview guide to explore this criticism in my primary interviews with protesters from Tripoli. I conducted three interviews online prior to the fieldwork, but the main part of my interview data for Paper 2 was generated in Lebanon in July/August (see Appendix B4 for interview guide). Returning from the field, I decided to code the interview transcripts manually

with highlighter pens in Word⁸⁴ as opposed to using NVivo, echoing arguments by Blair (2015)⁸⁵ (see Appendix C3 for thematic codelist). As it appears from the interview guide and code list, I initially set out to explore what Tripolitans thought of their city being labelled “Bride of the Revolution.” However, as it gradually appeared to me that the main critique was not directed against the term in itself but rather the media’s particular interpretation of it, I started adding more and more detailed follow-up questions regarding the media. When returning to the field in October, I discussed the preliminary findings from my analysis with interviewees and interlocutor.⁸⁶

Paper 3 was more exploratory, and data was collected in two rounds. During my fieldwork in July/August, I initially set out to explore dynamics of cross-class solidarity and spatiality in Tripoli by adding a set of exploratory questions to the interview guide for Paper 2 (see Appendix B5). Discussing these wider questions with protesters, I discovered a tendency among protesters to talk about the larger protest space in Tripoli as a patchwork of zones in which different dynamics unfolded. I decided to explore this further and developed a set of questions, which I added to the interview guide. After I returned home, I started analyzing this more exploratory interview material (for inductive codes, see Appendix C4). I then turned to my theoretical toolbox of social movement theories to seek inspiration for potential analytical and conceptual approaches to studying the meaning of protest spaces for relations between protesters and returned to the field in October with a new and more focused interview guide (see Appendix B6). As the paper concerns relations between protesters from different social classes, I was aware to get a higher representation of protesters from lower class background in my interview data. Assisted by a close interlocutor, who came from a working-class back-

⁸⁴ More specifically, I gathered longer excerpts from interviews in a word document corresponding to the general codes and used highlighter pens to mark passages that corresponded to the sub-codes presented in the code list.

⁸⁵As Blair (2015) notes, software programs are well suited to researchers who wish to quantify their interview data. However, they also take interview excerpts out of their context. This is a major disadvantage for analyzing more semi-structured and ethnographic interview data, where the meaning of statements can get lost, when these are taken out of context.

⁸⁶ Mostly, I discussed the topic informally in extension of the interviews. However, one case, the interviewee initiated a longer discussion of the media’s coverage of Tripoli. This interview is considered as a primary interview for Paper 2.

ground himself, I went to the central Nour Square in Tripoli to interview people who hung out at a local café or around the square.⁸⁷ My interlocutor introduced me to people and helped ensure formal oral consent to record the interviews. Over three days, I conducted 15 short interviews in Arabic based on a simple interview guide (see Appendix B6). While I transcribed and conducted a thematic coding of the longer interviews for Paper 3 (see Appendix C5), I merely used insights from the shorter interviews as supplementary data to test whether the views held by this segment resonated with the more detailed descriptions I had generated in my in-depth interviews, where there was a bias towards middle-class protesters.

5.4 Texts and visuals

As explained in the previous sections, field observations, informal conversations, and background interviews played a main role in ensuring the trustworthiness of my findings.

My triangulation of data, however, also relied on a third type of sources, which were texts and visual material retrieved from a cross-section of newspapers and social media platforms. During the first half year of the uprising, I downloaded a repository of 872 articles from major Lebanese and regional English-language newspapers. Moreover, I continuously examined articles, video material, and podcasts to accommodate memory flaws among my interviewees and gain a deeper understanding of key places and events. For Papers 1 and 3, text, audio, and video sources mainly helped me to generate thicker empirical descriptions and ask more focused follow-up questions. For Paper 2, I also drew on texts and visuals as primary data sources, as described in the paper's methodology section.

5.5 Presentation of data and analyses

The purpose of this chapter has been to guide the reader through the main methodological choices in the dissertation, from the selection of topics to the coding of interview data. Given the word limits of journal articles, I could not unfold all steps in my abductive research process in the methodology sections of the three individual papers. Consequently, I chose to present details about my data generation and analysis, which were most fundamental for assessing the trustworthiness of my interpretations. I elaborated on the rationales behind my selection of interviewees to make clear to the reader which voices were represented in my data and why. Moreover, I critically reflected on my

⁸⁷ All interviewees had taken part in the uprising and were familiar faces to my interlocutor.

interpretations when presenting findings and data excerpts, for instance by mentioning the background of the interviewee and the context of the interview question. When presenting my central findings in the next chapter, I provide more transparency on the research abductive processes by explaining how I arrived at the papers' research questions and conclusions.

Chapter 6. Central Findings

In the preceding chapters, I situated the dissertation within the literatures on de-sectarianization and anti-sectarian movements, introduced the reader to the October Uprising and its context, and presented the dissertation's theoretical tools and methodology. In this chapter, I unfold and discuss my central findings and explain how they contribute to answering the overall research question: *Which challenges did protesters in the October Uprising encounter when seeking to forge solidarity between citizens across sect and other salient boundaries in Lebanon?* The purpose of the chapter is not merely to summarize Papers 1, 2, and 3. I also supplement findings from the papers with reflections on the background and context, using additional insights from interviews and fieldwork. Throughout the chapter, I seek to be transparent about the abductive nature of my study by describing in more detail how I identified challenges to solidarity, and how I utilized theoretical tools from the social movement literature to inform my analyses.

As I mentioned in the introduction to the summary, the dissertation sheds light on three main challenges facing protesters in the uprising, which are presented in three self-contained papers. The first challenge, which is addressed in Paper 1, was identified through the prism of class. More specifically, it regards the persistence of negative discourses towards a particular segment of the lower classes in Lebanon, namely young men from the Shiite majority areas of Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq. The goal of the paper is to explain the difficulties of promoting intersectional discourses of solidarity towards these groups. The second challenge, which is the focus of Paper 2, arises in the prisms of media and spatiality. It concerns the way media distorted the representation of Lebanon's second largest city, Tripoli. I identified the third challenge, the focus of Paper 3, by looking at the uprising through the prism of spatiality. This challenge concerned how to handle internal divisions and conflicting tactical orientations between people mobilizing in a shared protest space in Tripoli.

The chapter presents these challenges one by one. The concluding section takes stock of the central findings and shows how they offer more general lessons for understanding and analyzing challenges to intersectional solidarity.

6.1 Challenge one: Class and solidarity

The October Uprising was seen to activate an unparalleled level of solidarity across class lines in Lebanese society (Hodges, 2019; K. Makdisi, 2021). However, by examining the uprising more closely through the prism of class, I discovered that solidarity with some segments of the lower class was limited. In this section, I present and contextualize the first of the three challenges regarding the persistence of classist and stereotyping discourses in relation to a particular lower-class segment: young men from the communities of Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh. The section is centered around key findings from Paper 1, which are supplemented with insights from my fieldwork. It begins with a background of the case before unfolding the paper's central claim, namely that organizers in the October Uprising, despite recognizing problems with stereotypes and classist discourses, perceived themselves to be in a dilemma that prevented them from promoting discourses of solidarity and inclusivity.

Background and context

Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq are two areas located in and around Beirut, known to be strongholds of Lebanon's major and allied Shiite political actors, Hezbollah and Amal Movement. Dahiyeh is a larger area with a total population of around five hundred thousand, stretching south of the city. It consists of different poor and more affluent neighborhoods, which are largely under the control of Hezbollah (Gunning & Smaira, 2020; Harb, 2010). Khandak el Ghamiq is a smaller working-class area next to "Ring Bridge", a main traffic intersection in downtown Beirut that was blocked by protesters. Political territoriality in Khandak el Ghamiq is mainly exercised by the Amal Movement, and the party's flags are visible on buildings and in the streets of the neighborhood (Wehbe, 2017). As I mentioned in Chapter 3, stereotypes against young lower-class men from the communities of Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh were found to be a main problem in the so-called garbage protests in 2015. When the October Uprising broke out, these segments took to the streets in much larger numbers than in 2015 (K. Makdisi, 2021), and several observers argued that the uprising displayed a general change in attitude among protesters (see e.g. Malmvig & Fakhoury, 2020; Red Flag, 2020). Nevertheless, my initial field work suggested that stereotyping discourses continued to exist. The following two excerpts from my field notes illustrate this observation:

[Field note, October 21, 2019, Beirut]

I talked to a couple of protesters at the tent of Li Haqqi [a political group], who told me they had seen a group of infiltrators in a white truck with a sound system

in Marthyr's Square. They were from the government, one girl said to me, and they disrupted the protests by playing music. This was not the purpose of the protests, she said. She had also overheard some of them talking, and she had no doubt that they were from Hezbollah. She thought it was extremely disturbing that there were people, who sought to infiltrate the protests by making them look less serious. This was their intention, she believed.

[Field note, October 23, 2019, Beirut]

I went to the Ring Bridge, where I fell into conversation with a protester. He told me, he was nervous and pointed to the corner of the road [the entrance to the neighborhood of Khandak el Ghamiq]. He said that Amal [Movement] was there, and their people were standing right over there at the corner, and they were also among "us" [the protesters] here on the road, which the protesters were blocking. He was afraid it would escalate.

These two field notes display a sense of anxiety and skepticism I encountered frequently during my observations of the uprising, and which seemed to be directed more widely against individuals who bore the characteristic features of black clothing, cheap motorcycles, and tattoos, which are typically associated with the wider segment of young lower-class men from Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq.⁸⁸ Such attitudes arguably became more salient in the wake of two developments. The first development was a speech by Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah after the initial week, in which he took a stance against the uprising. Following the speech, participation by residents from Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq declined, signaling skepticism against the uprising and a desire to follow Nasrallah's instructions (Chahine, 2019). However, the picture was more blurred than this, and it was difficult to determine the relative degree of support for and aversion to the uprising within these communities⁸⁹. Arguably, a sizable group also left the streets due to a fear of social or even physical sanctions but continued to sympathize silently with the uprising's demands.⁹⁰ Moreover, some remained in the streets despite increased pressure and threats. The second development was a series of violent

⁸⁸ For more descriptions, see AbiYaghi et al. (2017).

⁸⁹ Interviewees with family background in the neighborhoods confirmed that skepticism regarding the uprising and sentiments of loyalty to Hezbollah were indeed widespread. Importantly, however, some of these segments still sympathized partly with the uprising's economic demands.

⁹⁰ For instance, protesters who were caught on TV denouncing Hassan Nasrallah were forced to appear on television later to apologize (Yee & Saad, 2020). Background interviews as well as primary interviews confirm the widespread use of social and violent sanctions used to deter dissent within areas controlled by Hezbollah and the Amal Movement.

attacks, committed by alleged supporters of the Amal Movement and Hezbollah, who hit protesters with sticks and set fire to the tents put up in the main squares of Beirut (CrimethInk., 2020; Red Flag, 2020).⁹¹ My observations suggest that the anxiety, exemplified in the two field notes presented above, reflected some of the same general negative and classist discourses about Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh, which the anti-sectarian garbage protests had been criticized for in 2015. The goal of Paper 1 is to understand why it was so difficult for organizers in Beirut to abolish these discourses and promote new ones, which problematized suspicion, sought to enhance the level solidarity, and acknowledged the complex situation of young men and other residents in Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq.

Organizers' willingness to address the problem

The first central finding in Paper 1 concerns the organizers' intersectional awareness. As I explained in Chapter 4, the large focus on the role of organizers within studies of intersectionality and social movements (see e.g. Ellison & Langhout, 2020; Heaney, 2019; Terriquez & Milkman, 2021) inspired me to explore the role of organizers in promoting solidarity with young men from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh during the October Uprising.⁹² However, knowing that these organizers could only promote intersectional solidarity if they employed intersectional thinking, I first set out to explore whether they saw the prevailing discourses about these segments as a problem of intersectional solidarity that needed to be addressed. All organizers I interviewed, except one, believed there was a problem relating to the uprising's level of inclusivity of young men from Khandak and Dahiyeh.⁹³ I used theoretical insights on intersectional thinking as a lens for analyzing organizers' problematization of the uprising's discourses and found that it reflected the two wider problems introduced in Chapter 4: generalizations and insensitive symbolism and language.

⁹¹ There were similar attacks in other places, most notably in the city of Nabatieh in South Lebanon (Fahs, 2020).

⁹² In the paper, I use the term "inclusivity". However, as I reflected on in Chapter 4, the terms intersectional solidarity and inclusivity are sometimes used to describe the same phenomenon. Essentially, discourses of inclusivity can be seen as part of the struggle for solidarity, as they stress that a protest seeks to accommodate the concerns of marginalized groups and signal an intention to promote dialogue with rather than alienate groups away.

⁹³ I started out by asking a series of broader questions about inclusion and class in order not to prompt interviewees to point at problems as result of a social desirability bias.

Starting with generalizations, organizers pointed out that Shiites, particularly from lower classes, were often seen in black and white: either they were followers of Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, or they were vocal critics of the parties. As one organizer argued, “there is no third way of being Shiite”⁹⁴. Because of this black and white view, organizers asserted, protesters often suspected individuals of being party members if they had ties to Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh and supported the resistance against Israel, which is a focal point of Hezbollah’s identity and political narrative.⁹⁵ This, they believed, displayed an insensitivity to the fact that many lower-class individuals from these communities were internally displaced due to the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon.⁹⁶ Furthermore, it showed ignorance of their vulnerability to sanctions from within the communities. The latter is illustrated in the following quote:

So that’s the position that Shia people from Hezbollah-controlled communities feel they are in now; that they’re risking their lives and safety and liberty to come down and protest, but they don’t feel welcome, because the other protesters are saying, they don’t trust them enough, unfortunately.⁹⁷

Interestingly, some interviewees of middle-class, Shiite backgrounds also felt targeted by these black and white discourses and noted that they too were suspected of serving Hezbollah’s agenda in the uprising, even though they were members of anti-sectarian opposition groups.⁹⁸

As for second problem, insensitive symbolism and language, interviewees found it problematic that protesters automatically labeled young men as “Khandak people” if they displayed negative sentiments against the uprising

⁹⁴ Interview with member of anti-sectarian opposition party, Citizens Within a State, Beirut, October 2021.

⁹⁵ In the post-war period, Hezbollah has been the only armed group to maintain a resistance force against Israel’s occupation of the South (Gunning & Smaira, 2020). For further analysis of the Lebanese resistance against Israel and Hezbollah’s role in this, see El Husseini (2010).

⁹⁶ During the 1975-1990 civil war, thousands settled in Dahiyeh, particularly following displacements resulting from Israel’s invasions of South Lebanon in 1978 and 1982. Hezbollah uses the resistance as a source of legitimacy and capital in Dahiyeh and has invested systematically in creating a “resistance culture” in Dahiyeh through schools and welfare agencies. This helps explain why Hezbollah’s resistance narrative is less contested, even among those who voted against the party during elections (Gunning & Smaira, 2020).

⁹⁷ Interview with organizer and blogger, June 16, 2020, WhatsApp.

⁹⁸ As I only interviewed few individuals from Shiite backgrounds with family ties to the areas, these experiences might not be generalizable. However, interviewees from other backgrounds had observed how their fellow protesters felt targeted.

and bore certain characteristic features. This meant that the stereotype related to young lower-class men also spilled over to the representation of an entire neighborhood, which became known as the home of infiltrators. The quote below illustrates how the term “Khandak people” was used indiscriminately:

You couldn't know if this person was a Khandak person. You just kept assuming that they were Khandak. People that were attacking were just Khandak, because they all came from the same side of the bridge. I only knew them when they would attack. Then I would be, arh these are Khandak people. [...] Walking around in the drum circles and the ukulele serenades you couldn't tell that these are Khandak or Tripoli or whatever. Like the only way I could tell people apart was if they looked rough or if they didn't look rough.⁹⁹

While this interviewee describes a general tendency among his peers to use the label “Khandak people”, he also infers that he sometimes contributed to reproducing this stereotype, even if he found it problematic and wrong. Generally, organizers emphasized that they sought not to contribute to the reproduction of negative discourses about young men from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh. Many said that they tried to promote understanding and dialogue through individual encounters with other protesters. The statement, shown above, however, can be interpreted as a sign of the powerlessness many organizers described themselves to feel, when it came to abolishing black and white and stereotyping discourses related to the groups.

The dilemma between inclusivity and anti-sectarian integrity

A second key finding in Paper 1 was that organizers perceived themselves to have minimal opportunities to promote wider discourses of solidarity towards young men from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh. When I asked organizers to explain what, if anything, they could do to abolish and replace the classist discourses against these groups, the typical answer I got was that they felt paralyzed. It was too risky, they believed, to confront these discourses on an overall level, e.g., by changing slogans or issuing statements of solidarity.¹⁰⁰ As explained in Chapter 4, members of social movements make strategic decisions based on their perceptions of opportunities and risks, which often reflect their most dominant concerns (see e.g. Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Goodwin & Jasper, 1999; Larson, 2013). Based on this insight, I set out to explore how and whether organizers' reluctance to take action to abolish the classist discourses

⁹⁹ Interview with organizer of the Ring Bridge roadblock, March 25, 2020, WhatsApp.

¹⁰⁰ See Paper 1 for a discussion of particular strategies.

against the men from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh reflected a set of more general underlying concerns.

I discovered that organizers' statements reflected an underlying fear of putting the anti-sectarian integrity of the October Uprising at risk. Paying too much regard to the particular situation of young men from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh, interviewees argued, could easily lead to accusations of sect-based favoritism, which was seen as extremely dangerous for the uprising. Many organizers thus believed it was necessary to avoid the risk of losing the anti-sectarian integrity, even if this prevented them from displaying solidarity with lower-class individuals from these communities. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

Well, I agree that many of us have like, excluding views towards those people, more like elitist. But at the same time, you cannot refuse the fact that many of them actually serve Hezbollah or Amal movement. After background checks, you know. It's sad. [...] We are classist, but we're being attacked all the time. That's the issue.¹⁰¹

No matter how the other protesters tried to adapt to the ideas of Khandak and Dahiyeh, people being sensitive to the topic of Nasrallah, it's like a dead end. He's part of the system. He should take responsibility. Excluding him from the leaders, will lead to other sects demanding that their leaders are also being excluded. So, you will end up with a zero-sum result.¹⁰²

These quotes furthermore show that the concern for anti-sectarian integrity manifested in two ways. First it manifested as a fear that the movement could not take sufficient distance from attacks on the protests. Second it manifested as a concern that strategies aiming to accommodate the concerns of specific sect-based groups – in this case by refraining from mentioning the name of Hassan Nasrallah – would trigger sectarian sentiments and antagonism within the movement. This latter insight resonates with a central point from studies about cleavages and political opportunity structures, namely that traditional cleavages continue to influence the way citizens think and interpret the world (see e.g. Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Goodwin & Jasper, 1999; Kurzman, 1996). In other words, organizers believed the October Uprising ran a constant risk of reactivating sect-based modes of thinking among Lebanese.

Altogether, the central findings from Paper 1, summarized and contextualized in this section, reveal the multilayered nature of the challenge related to promoting discourses of intersectional solidarity towards specific segments

¹⁰¹ Interview with member of anti-sectarian leftist grassroots, Li Haqqi, April 3, 2021, WhatsApp.

¹⁰² Interview with member of anti-sectarian opposition party, Citizens Within a State, October 18, 2021, Beirut.

within the lower classes. They reveal how the classist discourses against young men from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh are connected to wider stereotypes and ideas about particular sect-based identities and neighborhoods. Moreover, they illustrate how vulnerable the October Uprising was to sectarian discourses, pointing to the limitations in its discursive opportunity structures, which result from the omnipresence of sectarianism. Paper 1 also provides an example of a challenge to intersectional solidarity, which was extremely difficult for protesters to address, at least within the context of the uprising. However, as I briefly discuss in the paper, organizers were not despondent regarding the long-term opportunities to promote solidarity with the communities of Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh. Several interviewees insinuated that the uprising had given them opportunities to discuss the challenge going forward and shared ideas with me about how to address it in the future.

6.2 Challenge two: Media and cross-regional solidarity

Given the unprecedented level of cross-regional mobilization, the October Uprising was seen as an opportunity to challenge geographically based stigma and fault lines in Lebanon (Fahs, 2020; Said, 2019). In this section, I present the second challenge, which is the focus of Paper 2, and concerns how Lebanese “independent” media platforms distorted narratives about Lebanon’s second largest city, Tripoli. It begins by unfolding the background of the challenge, elaborating on the stigmatization of Tripoli prior to the uprising, and explaining how I discovered the challenge. It then presents the paper’s two main findings, showing first how Tripolitan protesters found the media to romanticize, depoliticize, and de-contextualize their city and its uprising, and second, how members of Lebanon’s sectarian elite co-opted the media’s narrative in order to re-install the city’s old stigma.

Background and context

Few days into the uprising, Tripoli became a main locus of attention because of its large protests, which featured DJ performances in the central Nour Square. During my first round of fieldwork, I noticed clear excitement about Tripoli among Beirut protesters, and I quickly became familiar with the label “Bride of the revolution”, which was used as a nickname for the city. Lebanese “independent” media also covered Tripoli intensely and celebrated how the

festive protest had turned the city from Kandahar into Bride of the Revolution.¹⁰³

The labelling of Tripoli as Kandahar was part of a discourse Lebanese politicians and security officials had repeatedly used when commenting on violence and fights in the city (Lefèvre, 2014). It encapsulated the city's long-standing reputation as a hotbed of radical sectarianism and terrorism and drew links to the city's history with Sunni Islamism throughout the past decades, most notably the presence of the militant Tawheed Movement, which controlled Tripoli from 1982 to 1986 (Lefèvre, 2021). Moreover, it had been reemphasized in recent years due to ongoing battles between Sunni and Alawite militias from the neighborhoods of Bab el Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen, which culminated with bomb attacks on two mosques in 2013 (Ibid.) As explained by an interviewee, the labelling of Tripoli as Kandahar had contributed to the idea that the city "was not part of the country" and had caused Lebanese to fear going there.¹⁰⁴ Repeatedly, interviewees from across Lebanon spoke of this boundary between Tripoli and the rest of the country that existed prior to the uprising. Against this background, it seemed logical that the crowning of Tripoli as Bride of the Revolution was presented as a success story of stigma transformation and cross-geographical solidarity.

However, when I returned from the field and started exploring the representation of Tripoli, I discovered that the image of the city as bride of the revolution had also been criticized by some protesters from Tripoli. One of the critiques I first stumbled across was raised by a Tripolitan tour guide in a podcast interview:

I think Tripoli is much more than what the media is showing right now. [The media] are saying, "Oh Tripoli is the Bride of the Revolution," (..) but I have been working on this for years and years, to change the image of Tripoli and show that Tripoli is not only about the party and the DJ and whatever. Tripoli is lots of history, heritage, gastronomy, beautiful islands, beautiful people, beautiful architecture. (...) I think Tripoli deserves more than this image of, yeah, it's so trendy now, we wanna go to Tripoli. No, it's not about being trendy, it's about seeing what the true Tripoli is behind the images and the media.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ See Paper 2 for a detailed description of the media narrative.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, Mohammed Mohammed, art student and communist, July 28, 2021, Tripoli.

¹⁰⁵ Chatah, R. (host) (2019, November, 18) Celebrating Tripoli with Mira Minkara [Audio podcast episode] in *The Beirut Banyan*. Retrieved from <https://soundcloud.com/thebeirutbanyan/episode-63-celebrating-tripoli-with-mira-minkara>

Overall, the critical statements I identified online indicated that Tripolitans might not have felt represented by the otherwise positive image, which was painted of the city. These observations were the onset of my analysis of media as a challenge to changing the representation of Tripoli.

Romanticization, de-politicization, and de-contextualization

A central finding in Paper 2 regards the particular ways in which Tripolitan protesters felt misrepresented by the media's portrayal of their city. Generally, interviewees expressed happiness with the fact that Lebanese from across the country came to join the city's protests, stressing that these physical visits were very important in terms of breaking the barrier of fear, described above. However, when reflecting on the media coverage, they displayed mixed feelings:

Of course, as a citizen of Tripoli and as a person who loves his city, if the image of my city changes from being Kandahar to being bride of the revolution, I'm so proud. It gives some positive impact all over Lebanon. People started to look at Tripoli from a different perspective and at least started to feel that it's part of Lebanon. It's not this city that if I want to visit it, I should make a lot of preparations and phonecalls to be safe so I can go inside. So of course from this part, I think what happened was very important to Tripoli and something nice. But as a person, who's living in Tripoli and stand up in the square and maybe do a little bit work in the revolution as an action of change, I think that this name was not something very good. (...) The main square where all the cameras were focusing, this place was not a good image of the revolution. It was not reflecting the revolution.¹⁰⁶

This quote, I argue, is illustrative of a general sentiment expressed by the majority of interviewees and interlocutors from Tripoli when talking about the media coverage. On the one hand, the positive image challenged the city's stigma as Kandahar. On the other hand, the alternative picture of Tripoli presented in the media was not seen as representative of its uprising or the city in general. Overall, interviewees pointed to three main biases in the media coverage: romanticization, de-politicization, and de-contextualization.

The protesters I interviewed believed that the media romanticized Tripoli by overstating the role of the DJ concerts. More specifically, they believed it generalized from the musical demonstrations in the square to the entire protest movement and thereby made it seem much more peaceful and festive than it really was. The statements below exemplify some of the concerns interviewees raised when criticizing the romanticization:

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Mohammed Mohammed, art student and communist, July 28, 2021, Tripoli.

They were putting Tripoli on a pedestal, and I'm afraid that the city cannot carry this expectation¹⁰⁷

It [the main narrative] rejected the popular voice that represented the lower classes that had no problem with violent acts, and I tend to read this violence [as] done by the people from lower classes, who were actually the ones who stayed and confronted [the regime]. They were the first liners.¹⁰⁸

As the first quote illustrates, protesters I interviewed believed the media's romanticization was unsustainable in the long run and failed to recognize Tripoli as a "normal city"¹⁰⁹ with many social and political issues. The second quote suggests that the romanticization failed to acknowledge the role of lower-class individuals in Tripoli's protests who used violence to express their desperation over the current situation. Another point of concern that was raised in interviews was that the romantic image of Nour Square, a center of protests, overlooked the many attempts by political elites to take control over the place.

Interviewees found that the media de-politicized the protests by refraining from interviewing political activists and from covering the ongoing discussions of political topics that took place in an area next to the Nour Square, where groups had set up tents with chairs, benches, and microphones. The following quotes exemplify this criticism:

This [the political work] is what is really dangerous to the politicians. That is why it is not covered. The DJ is not a threat to them in the same way, because it is not building a political mindset.¹¹⁰

I was only interviewed once during the whole protests, and it was also a brief one, only by a mistake. I was writing something on the wall, and one of the journalists came and asked: What are you writing? And then she discovered that actually this person is from a political group and talks politics ... They [the media] wanted only to promote a superficial discourse. ... They wanted to make them [protesters] just people who are revolting for food. ... They would choose people who talk in general terms or who are not necessarily political.¹¹¹

These quotes provide two relevant insights. First, they illustrate a belief among protesters that the media intentionally refrained from covering the political discussions in order to make the uprising appear less threatening to the elites. Second, they suggest that the media, by interviewing "ordinary people" about their lack of access to food and basic necessities, invoked a stereotype

¹⁰⁷ Interview Lawyer, Fahmi Karame, July 30, 2021, Tripoli.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with student, Marie Rose Rahme, August 8, 2021, Ainata, Lebanon.

¹⁰⁹ Author Interview with student, Fátima Fouad, October 13, 2021, Tripoli.

¹¹⁰ Interview with bar owner, Nabil Souk, August 3, 2021, Tripoli.

¹¹¹ Interview with political organizer, Obeida Takriti, June 8, 2021, Zoom.

about Tripolitans as poor and politically under-educated. Another protester I interviewed said that her acquaintances in Beirut had started to associate Tripoli with the heavy accent of Bilal, a vendor from the souks who was interviewed repeatedly by several media stations¹¹².

The critique that the media was decontextualizing Tripoli manifested in two ways. First, interviewees were annoyed that the media disregarded the past years of activism and cultural life in city, making it look as if things had changed overnight:

It's not like, *now* you became this thing. We've always been this thing. It was not the *thawra* that brought this, and it's not the people who party ... they were there before. The people who are the militant people, they were also there, everybody that was in the *thawra*, was previously in Tripoli. It's just that now the media went there to talk about it.¹¹³

In fact, several interviewees made a point of explaining how they had sought to improve conditions in the city and challenge its negative image for years when introducing themselves in the beginning of the interviews. This observation suggests a desire for recognition of their past struggles. Second, interviewees criticized the media for not acknowledging that the armed clashes in Tripoli's past had been wrongfully interpreted as a sign of inherent religious extremism rather than a product of political neglect and manipulation:

So, basically the fear of this city is also a planned one. Because some of the politicians were involved in the war and wanted to be in control. They wanted the city to get poorer, so people wouldn't look for their rights. So, you see all the fights that used to happen between Jabal [Mohsen] and [Bab el] Tabbaneh, it is something that was created by political parties, who were funding it on purpose.¹¹⁴

As I explained in Chapter 4, even the most politically independent and professional media platforms can still misrepresent social movements due to commercial biases such as personalization and sensationalization (see e.g. Bennett, 2016; Boykoff, 2006, 2007; Entman, 2007). While theories about media and social movements in Western societies cannot be applied directly to the Lebanese context, they provided a conceptual framework and basis for exploring the similarity between the misrepresentation of Tripoli and the types of biases that are common for pluralist media. The romanticization, depoliticization, and de-contextualization, I argue, partly mirror the typical selection, description, and representation biases I identified in studies about

¹¹² Interview, academic, Dima Danawi, August 3, 2021, Tripoli.

¹¹³ Author interview with NGO officer, Jalal El-Jamal, August 3, 2021, Tripoli.

¹¹⁴ Author interview artist, Nassim, August 3, 2021, Tripoli.

media framing of protests in liberal democratic societies. The romanticization can be interpreted as a description bias resulting from the tendency to sensationalize protests. De-politicization can be seen to reflect a selection bias resulting from a tendency to prioritize covering remarkable and loud events such as the DJ concerts rather than quieter events such as political discussions with much fewer participants. The fact that journalists focused on the vendors and “ordinary people”, however, differed from the typical representation biases towards more resourceful and well-articulated protesters.

Seen through the lens of general framing theory, the Lebanese “independent” media’s coverage of Tripoli’s protests was not radically different from the coverage we can expect in liberal democracies resulting from commercial biases¹¹⁵. While some interviewees pointed this out, most interpreted the romanticization, de-politicization, and de-contextualization as a clear sign that the media in Lebanon was working against the uprising to serve the sectarian status quo. Interestingly, this seemed to make protesters less demotivated by the misrepresentation. In fact, they used it to highlight their oppositional narrative which proclaimed that citizens must unite against the entire establishment in Lebanon. The quote below illustrates this interpretation:

I studied mass communication, and I hate media, because they show who have the control over the whole channel. Because you have LBCI, al Manar ... and each of them shows a different [side]. There is no citizens side (...) there is no channel to group all the citizens and perspectives together.¹¹⁶

This interviewee lists the “independent” channel LBCI along with Al Manar, which is known to be the mouthpiece of Hezbollah. Other protesters referred to media in general as a “mafia”¹¹⁷ and “the dirt of Lebanon”¹¹⁸, stressing that the sectarian system penetrates all institutions and that this necessitates a full removal of the elite.

Co-opting the bride

The second key argument in Paper 2 is that members of Lebanon’s sectarian elites endorsed the labelling of Tripoli as bride of the revolution to reinstall the city’s old stigma. Through a keyword search on news platforms and social

¹¹⁵ This is not to say that there is no underlying political bias behind the Lebanese Media’s coverage.

¹¹⁶ Interview with student, Najah Jrad, July 28, 2021, Tripoli.

¹¹⁷ Interview, Mohammed Mohammed, art student and communist, July 28, 2021, Tripoli.

¹¹⁸ Interview with carpenter, Ibrahim Haidar, July 30, 2021, Tripoli.

media sites, I identified a series of statements in which politicians and religious elites celebrated Tripoli as a peaceful bride and presented themselves as siding with the people in the city. However, the statements were not issued simultaneously with the large festive demonstrations but were instead published later in the uprising in reaction to the eruption of violent protests in the city. Moreover, the endorsement of Tripoli as peaceful and a bride was followed by condemnations of the protesters who committed the violence. The following statement by former minister Ashraf Rifi¹¹⁹ illustrates this rhetoric:

The sabotage of private and public property is alien to Tripoli, and it leads to distortion of the revolution, and this is what we will confront by all means. Tripoli, the bride of the revolution, will not turn into a playground for destructive projects (...) I call on everyone to protect the city (LBCI, 2020).

This kind of statement reflects the relevance of seeing media frames as cultural resources that can be appropriated in battles over meaning (see e.g. Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Gamson, 1992; Ryan et al., 2001). In other statements, politicians took the discourse even further and used the term “terrorists” explicitly (Al Jadeed, 2020; Amnesty International, 2021) in relation to violent protests in Tripoli. This, I argue, emphasized the link to the old stigmatizing discourse about the city.

As explained in Chapter 3, observers and scholars remain divided as to whether the “independent” mass media platforms in Lebanon played in favor of the sectarian elites or the anti-sectarian uprising. The central findings from Paper 2 suggest that we should not be too optimistic about the potential of “independent” media to help protesters promoting intersectional solidarity. However, my findings also raise a question regarding whether alternative media can challenge the biased narratives, dispersed by the traditional media. Several interviewees noted that they had tried to counter the misrepresentation of Tripoli as well as the politicians’ co-option of the label, bride of the revolution through social media and grassroots media as illustrated below:

I believe in the alternative media, like Megaphone or even these small initiatives like the one I did with Mohammad (another protester) – the movie about the children and what they dream about. This video went viral because it was at the moment, where everybody was starting to say again that Tripoli is terrorist (...). Honestly, I don’t have high hopes for the traditional Lebanese media at all. Seeing Megaphone on the ground in Tripoli, covering, seeing Daraj¹²⁰, the

¹¹⁹ Ashraf Rifi is a local politician and businessman from Tripoli who previously served as General Director of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces and Minister of Justice.

¹²⁰ Megaphone and Daraj are two of the main alternative media platforms in Lebanon

initiatives of other people, it was very powerful for me. This is the media I want to see in the streets. More of this and less of the MTV, al Jadeed and LBCI.¹²¹

Overall, Paper 2 provides another example of a challenge to intersectional solidarity, which was difficult for protesters to address. However, protesters in Tripoli did not perceive themselves as paralyzed in the same way as organizers in Beirut did in relation to the persisting stigmatizing discourses against young men from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh. They tended to believe that alternative media could serve as a weapon to counter misrepresentations to some degree. The only problem was that this weapon was not yet strong enough.

6.3 Challenge three: Spatiality and solidarity

While the uprising led vendors to stand shoulder to shoulder with lawyers and doctors in the same physical space, the protest spaces also reflected deep internal divisions and conflicts. In this section, I present the third challenge, which concerns disagreements among protesters in Tripoli about what tactics to use in the urban protest spaces. The section begins with the background of the paper, explaining the observations that led me to discover and examine this challenge. This is followed by a presentation of the central findings from Paper 3, in which I show how Tripolitan protesters, through processes of spatial meaning making, managed to coexist and make sense of their differences.

Background and context

The onset of Paper 3 was a set of puzzling observations I made when I started interviewing protesters in Tripoli about solidarity across different social backgrounds in the protest space. The first observation was that people did not speak about the protest space as a coherent area but rather as a patchwork of zones that reflected fundamental divisions in tactical orientation as well as class differences between protesters. I discovered that there had been three main zones in Tripoli's protest space. The first was the central Nour Square, which I have already addressed in the previous section. Nour Square is a roundabout at the entrance of Tripoli, with a statue of the word Allah in the middle.¹²² During the uprising, the statue, however, became a famous symbol of the city's resistance against the sectarian system along with the abandoned

¹²¹ Author interview with social entrepreneur and NGO worker, Youmna Hammoud, Lebanon, August 7, 2021, Tripoli.

¹²² The statue was erected by the Islamist Tawheed Movement, which controlled Tripoli from 1982 to 1986, and has since symbolized the city's history with conservative Sunni Islam and sectarian extremism (Ghanem, 2021).

Ghandoor building, next to the square, which was decorated with a large painting of the Lebanese flag. During the first weeks, Nour Square was flooded with people, some of whom walked several kilometers by foot to get there.¹²³ The second zone, referred to as “the tents”, was a green isle in the middle of a road leading to Nour Square, where groups had put up pavilions and installed speakers and microphones. The third zone, which I describe as the confrontational zone was in reality a set of shifting locations around the city where protesters blocked the roads with burning tires and used other disruptive tactics.

The second puzzling observation was that interviewees’ descriptions of the spatial fragmentation in Tripoli’s protests appeared confusing and contradicting. Most interviewees insinuated that they had a favorite zone where they preferred to go to during demonstrations, and where they believed solidarity between people was thicker and more genuine. Many explained why they disagreed with the protest activities in other zones or even expressed irritation with the way other protesters used the uprising’s space for activities that were not the most efficient for a revolution:

I’m against the DJ, but people came there, and maybe they just felt they wanted to breath (...) But there is no such thing as a peaceful revolution.¹²⁴

They [people in the tent] did not connect ... not that these guys knew what they were talking about. They were saying a lot of theory in the middle of a practical exercise. Some of them even gave yoga classes. There is no time for yoga now. We’re in the middle of a huge movement.¹²⁵

At the same time, the vast majority of protesters I interviewed believed there was solidarity across different segments in the uprising and declared that they accepted that people had different ways of expressing themselves in the protests space.

All people have their own way of expressing themselves. But personally, I think it should have been about the things that develop the political consciousness of the people more than then music.¹²⁶

There’s an anger inside of me. So this anger goes towards different ways of protesting. I don’t mind people singing about something and at the same time... I don’t mind. There are people who are expressing in a different way. We all

¹²³ Interview with political organizer, Obeida Takriti, June 8, 2021, Zoom.

¹²⁴ Interview with anonymous male protester, October 13, 2021, Tripoli.

¹²⁵ Interview, academic, Dima Danawi, August 3, 2021, Tripoli.

¹²⁶ Interview with carpenter, Ibrahim Haidar, July 30, 2021, Tripoli.

express in a different way. I kind of was confused, because I'm not expressing this way, but it's okay.¹²⁷

Hence, interviewees tended to use two parallel narratives when describing the protest space in Tripoli: one that focused on division and internal disagreements and one that highlighted mutual tolerance and solidarity, despite differences in tactical orientations. These observations, based on an initial thematic coding of interview data generated in July/August 2021 (see Appendix C4), prompted me to investigate further how protesters in Tripoli made sense of the protest space, when I returned to the field in October the same year. I was especially interested in finding out whether the spatial meaning making and the subdivision of Tripoli's protest space helped protesters tackle their tactical differences and disagreements. In Chapter 4, I explained what led me to choose Martina Löw's (2008, 2016) concepts of "spacing" and "synthesis" as analytical framework. In the following, I elaborate on how these concepts helped me explore and categorize spatial meaning making in Tripoli.

Spacing, order, and coexistence

As explained in Chapter 4, spacing refers to the exercise whereby people divide spaces into thematic zones, which become associated with certain people or goods (Löw, 2008, p. 35; 2016, p. 134). Interviewees' descriptions of the three zones in Tripoli's uprising reveal clear processes of spacing. Furthermore, my interview data suggests that there was a shared understanding among protesters with regards to who and what belonged to which zone. The central Nour Square was associated with a carnivalesque atmosphere and seen as the main gathering point for protesters of all social classes, however, with an overweight of middle classes. The tents were described as the site for political discussions and were seen as the base of political grassroots organizations, political collectives, and NGOs. Moreover, the tents were often described as the place for the educated.¹²⁸ Interviewees mostly referred to the confrontational zones as "the roadblocks" or "the politicians' houses" and described these as sites where protesters, mostly, but not exclusively, from the poorer classes, expressed their frustration with the current system and the economic crisis.¹²⁹

A central finding in Paper 3 is that the processes of spacing not only reflected the way people in Tripoli's uprising thought about the urban protest

¹²⁷ Interview with student, Najah Jrad, Lebanon, July 28, 2021, Tripoli.

¹²⁸ This reputation was not always meant positively, and some organizers in the tents also sought to challenge it.

¹²⁹ While this represents the general description of the confrontational zones, there were exceptions, such as a student-led peaceful roadblock near the area of Mina in Tripoli during the start of the uprising.

space. They also fostered a kind of spatial order, where protesters with different tactical orientations were assigned different bases. As protesters could not compromise on how to use the same space, moving to different zones was seen as a way to coexist without disrupting each other, as illustrated in the quote below:

I felt as if they [others in Nour Square] don't want people to talk politics. They don't want people to empower each other. They don't want people to have dialogues about why Tripoli is suffering. They don't want to hear any critique to the political class (...). Every time there is a dialogue session, wrooom, [mimics sound of loudspeakers]. (...) So, we decided that it's not working for the dialogue. We need another place.¹³⁰

The separation of the tents and Nour Square described by the interviewee thus allowed discussions and dancing to take place simultaneously. Another example of spacing as a way of establishing order and coexistence is evident from the way protesters spoke about disruption. Disruptive acts were largely seen as unacceptable in Nour Square but were tolerated to a much larger extent in the confrontational zones. As explained by a protester from the group *Harras el Medina* (Guards of the City), Nour Square could not have attracted the same number of people if disruptive tactics had been used there. At the same time, the majority of interviewees acknowledged it would be problematic to dismiss people who used violence, since violence was considered an expression of the high level of desperation experienced by the city's most deprived residents.

These are people who don't have anything to eat. These are people who don't have 500 Lira to get a cup of coffee. (...) Of course, they want to break, of course they want to curse.¹³¹

Protest has a lot of faces. You can protest in many, many ways, and closing the streets and burning tires is one of them, and the militant is one of them. If you choose to do so, you are entitled. I don't support you, but I don't attack you.¹³²

Hence, my interview data suggests that most protesters who were personally against violence tolerated violent tactics, as long as they were used away from *their* zone. Moreover, as I elaborate in the paper, my data showed that spacing, by assigning groups their own base, allowed for smaller grassroots and networks to consolidate and deepen ties of solidarity among their members (see Paper 3).

¹³⁰ Interview with NGO worker and consultant, Jimmy Karam, July 30, 2021, Tripoli.

¹³¹ Interview with carpenter, Ibrahim Haidar, July 30, 2021, Tripoli.

¹³² Interview with NGO officer, Jalal El-Jamal, August 3, 2021, Tripoli.

Synthesis in Tripoli

As previously explained, interviewees consistently stressed their disagreements with other protesters who used different tactical repertoires. However, underneath these “narratives” of conflict and antagonism, protesters’ statements about the three zones also reflected processes of synthesis. As explained in Chapter 4, synthesis refers to the processes whereby people connect sites and goods into a coherent space (Löw, 2016, p. 106). A central argument in Paper 3 is that two processes of synthesis took place in Tripoli: a zone-movement synthesis, where protest zones were assigned a function for the uprising as a whole, and an intra-zone synthesis, which recognized that zones reinforced each other.

Zone-movement synthesis

The zone-movement synthesis was evident from protesters’ descriptions of Nour Square. Even those who complained that the musical performances did not pose a direct threat to the elites compared to the political discussions or violent tactics still acknowledged that the square served two important functions for Tripoli’s uprising and the October Uprising more generally. First, it acted as a melting pot for people in the city and allowed for cross-class interactions. Interviewees highlighted especially the symbolic importance of the meetings between well-educated citizens and street vendors, who typically had little interaction in their daily lives.

You had so many vendors coming, and they would say “Thank you so much, the municipality wouldn’t allow us to ...” so they would go there and sell their oranges, sell their kaake (traditional Tripolitan bread), feeling like they were protected by the uprising.¹³³

Furthermore, Nour Square helped sustain the momentum of the uprising in the first phase by gathering large crowds and attracting attention to Tripoli. Even later on, when it was said to have been taken over by political infiltrators and intelligence,¹³⁴ protesters still posted images of the square and the Ghandoor Building when announcing other activities such as marches and discussions.¹³⁵ I also identified zone-movement synthesis regarding the confrontational zones, which were seen to have a symbolic function for the uprising in

¹³³ Interview, academic, Samer Annous, August 7, 2021, Tripoli.

¹³⁴ I have not been able to verify this information. However, it was seen as a well-established truth among protesters across backgrounds and orientations.

¹³⁵ Sāḥa w Masāḥa. (2019, December 28). 73 yawm [English: Day 73]. [image upload]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/يومساحة-مساحة/106598494153452/photos/123244572488844>

three ways. First, they helped stressing that the uprising was not merely a party but a display of anger and suffering. Second, they illustrated the persistence of Tripolitans to fight the system, even when protests in other parts of Lebanon had dwindled. Third, they showcased the elites' willingness to use disproportionate violence against protesters. A limitation in my data concerns the function of the tents for the movement. The vast majority of protesters I interviewed liked the political discussions and naturally felt that they had an important function for the uprising. However, I did not have sufficient data to determine whether protesters who disagreed with the tactics of political discussions, which characterized the tents, still acknowledged the tents' function for the movement.

Inter-zone synthesis

My interview data also suggested that another form of synthesis, an inter-zone synthesis, took place in Tripoli. While this was not as prevalent as the former, I identified two interesting examples of this form of spatial meaning making. The first example was that organizers from the tents considered Nour Square important in terms of attracting new and diverse people to take part in political discussions. One of these individuals was Duniya, a shop owner from the working-class area of Bab el Tabbaneh, whom I interviewed during my fieldwork in Tripoli in July/August 2021. In the following quote, Duniya describes how she was invited to take part in a discussion one day when she went to the main square to look around:

When I went to Nour Square, I went because I was happy to see people holding for the first time the Lebanese flag and not the flags of politicians. I passed by the different tents and stopped to listen (...) Then a girl came and asked me "Would you like to sit?" [in one of the discussion tents], and after that, I never left.¹³⁶

Furthermore, organizers in the tents went to Nour Square to get inspiration for the content of their sessions and explore what issues were the most salient to people across different social backgrounds. A few interviewees even conducted small surveys to find out which themes resonated most with members of the lower social classes.

The second example of inter-zone synthesis was when protesters from other zones gathered at the confrontational zones to express solidarity with people there. In one case, a large crowd of protesters flooded from Nour Square to the house of local political figure, Faisal Karami, to show solidarity with a smaller group of protesters who were clashing with the politician's

¹³⁶ Interview, Duniya Derbas, shop owner, Bab el Tabbaneh, August 3, 2021, Tripoli,

guards. These expressions of solidarity also took place on a smaller scale, when people from the discussion tents went to stand next to the roadblocks to acknowledge the calls for disruptive actions but did not participate directly in these actions:

They [people mobilizing around confrontational zones] used to say to us, stop those awareness sessions, and come do some sports with us. So, sports is the violence, like burning the dumpsters. [...] We used to go with them, where there used to be roadblocks [...] just to sit there and don't do anything. Only to show them that we're here to support you, despite the fact that we're not violent and that we don't promote violence. That was a baby step to break that wall between people from different political and socio-economic classes.¹³⁷

Some interviewees who took active part in the clashes saw the act of standing next to clashes as a weaker show of solidarity than the interviewee insinuates in the statement above. They noted that those who were watching in support tended to leave the confrontational zones when the clashes intensified. This indicates that the processes of synthesis, in contrast to the spacing, were more subjective and contested.

Overall, Paper 3 provides an example of a challenge to solidarity that protesters managed to address more successfully than the two previous ones. While internal differences and conflicts continued, the spatial meaning making allowed protesters to manage them, make sense of them, and even acknowledge them to have a positive function. This suggests that processes of spacing can promote coexistence, and that synthesis, at least on some occasions, can generate a sense of cohesion among protesters with conflicting outlooks. However, this does not imply that subdivision of the protest space into separate zones offers a universal solution to conflicts over the use of space. In fact, one could also imagine that protesters had assigned different meanings to the zones, for instance associating other zones with “enemies” of the uprising or mainly highlighting the relationship between zones as one of strife and competition.

6.4 Three wider lessons about the struggle for solidarity

So far, I have presented and contextualized the central findings in Paper 1, 2, and 3. The findings answer the dissertation's overall research question by unfolding three main challenges that protesters in the October Uprising encountered when seeking to forge solidarity between citizens across sects and other

¹³⁷ Interview with NGO worker and consultant, Jimmy Karam, July 30, 2021, Tripoli.

salient boundaries in Lebanon. In addition, the findings also offer wider insights about challenges to solidarity and the potential of protesters to address these. Most notably, I argue, they provide three important lessons.

The first lesson concerns opportunity structures. Even though we can identify political and discursive opportunity structures at a general level in Lebanon, it seems that the (perceived) opportunities to promote discourses of solidarity varied for different groups of citizens. In other words, there were some groups in Lebanese society whose grievances, identities, and concerns were harder for protesters to recognize and address than others'. Moreover, I contend, these group-specific challenges can only be understood by applying an intersectional lens. This becomes clear in Paper 1. As I show in the paper, organizers did not find it difficult to come up with a discourse that promoted solidarity with individuals from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh solely due to their social class background. Nor did their Shiite background alone cause the headache. In fact, the uprising expressed strong statements of solidarity with Shiite protesters from other parts of Lebanon, including the city of Nabatieh (see Chapter 3). It was the combined identity as lower class, Shiite, and males from the particular Hezbollah and Amal Movement strongholds in and around Beirut that made it difficult for organizers to address the complexity of these individuals' situation without raising doubt about the uprising's integrity. My fieldwork and interviews suggest that the case of residents of Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh was not the only example of group-specific inclusivity challenges. When I discussed problems of xenophobic and exclusive discourses towards refugees and non-Lebanese nationals with interviewees, they expressed similar concerns about putting the uprising's integrity at risk. The topic of refugees in Lebanon is generally highly sensitive and loaded with sectarian discourses (Lambert, 2019), and the organizers I discussed this topic with generally feared that strong calls for refugees' rights in Lebanon would be too dangerous at the peak of the uprising. As one interviewee put it: "It is not very easy to raise the voice of refugees, because the national sentiments is starting to be directed towards Lebanese should come before other nationalities"¹³⁸ This does not necessarily imply that it is impossible to promote solidarity with young men from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh and refugees. Rather, it suggests that other types of anti-sectarian movements

¹³⁸ Interview with organizer of NGO worker, organizer social liberal opposition party, National Bloc, June 10, 2020, WhatsApp.

might provide better opportunities to do so. The difficult questions are what such initiatives should look like, and how they can be organized.¹³⁹

The second lesson regards the distortion of representations. As Paper 2 shows, positive attention does not necessarily ensure representation in the uprising. Rather, “independent” media in Lebanon can be seen as a filter that contributed to silencing voices and perspectives. This speaks to the general insight from studies of intersectionality and social movements that we should critically examine how other individuals speak on behalf of the marginalized (Collins, 2017). Second, it echoes the argument that narratives of empowerment can at the same time be seen as insensitive or misrepresentative by the groups that are meant to be empowered (Ghaffar-Kucher et al., 2022; Gökarkısel & Smith, 2017). This calls for an analytical distinction between discourses of solidarity *about* marginalized groups and discourses *by* members of the groups. Furthermore, my findings show that pro-solidarity representations and discourses are malleable and may not necessarily linger. Notably, they can be coopted or utilized by sectarian actors. While I do not have sufficient data to determine whether Lebanese changed their view of Tripoli later in the uprising, the shift in coverage and the political co-optation of the bride of the revolution discourses reveal a risk that stigma can be reinstalled, and that ties of solidarity can be weakened at later stages in the uprising. This shows the relevance of looking at the development of discourses of solidarity in a longer time perspective.

The third key lesson regards the role of meaning making in relation to solidarity. As the central findings in Paper 3 suggest, the level of solidarity and cohesion among protesters could not be judged from the mere strategies they used nor from the physical features of the protest spaces. Rather, it depended on the meanings that protesters assigned to the physical sites and the actions that took place in and between them. The importance of meaning making becomes clear when comparing Tripoli to Beirut. Interestingly, the protest space in Beirut was divided into different zones, which at a first glance looked similar to those in Tripoli. However, anecdotal evidence from my fieldwork and interviews indicates that the meanings assigned to these zones differed. Interviewees and interlocutors I spoke to about the division of space in Beirut, tended to see this spatial fragmentation, not only as a display of tactical differences but also as a reflection of deep ideological divides that overlapped with positions *vis-à-vis* the sectarian elites. The field note excerpt, which I

¹³⁹ This question has been debated extensively among members of the anti-sectarian movement in Lebanon. However, they tend to agree that the movement needs more organizing (LCPS, 2021; Red Flag, 2020).

used in the introduction, illustrates this. Whereas the protester, X, felt uncomfortable in Riad el Solh, he was more at ease in the main Martyrs' Square, few meters away, because the people there were different. I also spoke to protesters, who had the opposite experience and felt unwelcomed and excluded in Martyrs' Square.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Field observations, October 20-31, 2019, Beirut, Interview with member of anti-sectarian opposition party, Citizens Within a State, October 17, 2021, Beirut.

Chapter 7.

Discussion and Conclusion

This PhD dissertation on the Lebanese 2019 October Uprising began with an observation. While the uprising was presented as a display of unity, one should only scratch in the surface to discover that it also reflected deep differences and divisions across overlapping social boundaries in the country. Based on this observation, I set out to examine the challenges that made it difficult for protesters to unify the fragmented people of Lebanon. I studied these intersectional solidarity challenges through the prisms of class, spatiality, and media, drawing on 57 days of fieldwork, 77 interviews with Lebanese protesters, 31 background interviews as well as extensive text and visual material. Overall, this in-depth case study provides three main contributions. First, it offers thick empirical descriptions of three main challenges to solidarity in the uprising. Second, it illustrates the utility and relevance of the three thematic prisms – class, spatiality, and media – in analyzing challenges to solidarity in anti-sectarian movements. Third, it provides a set of wider lessons about the nature of solidarity challenges and the opportunities for addressing them, which can inform discussions about how anti-sectarian movements can drive processes of de-sectarianization.

The first main contribution – the thick empirical accounts of solidarity challenges – is mainly directed at debates about sectarianism and anti-sectarianism in Lebanon. More specifically, the ambition with these detailed descriptions is to help deepen and nuance the knowledge about an important event in Lebanese history and bring attention to voices and aspects of the uprising that have been overlooked or received insufficient attention. This, I argue, can serve to qualify the discussions of the uprising's legacy within academia as well as among practitioners and observers (e.g. LCPS, 2021a; LCPS, 2021b). The two other main contributions are directed at the wider literatures on anti-sectarian movements and de-sectarianization and will be the focus of this chapter. More specifically, the chapter discusses two central questions in relation to these contributions. The first question is how class, spatiality, and media are relevant as analytical prisms to study anti-sectarian movements across different divided societies. So far, I have shown the utility of the three prisms within the context of Lebanon. However, as I will argue in the following section, there are indications that class, spatiality, and media have also been important thematics in anti-sectarian movements in Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina, suggesting a wider relevance and utility of these prisms. The second

question is how lessons about the nature of solidarity challenges and the opportunities for addressing them can inform debates about de-sectarianization. As I will argue, these lessons first remind scholars to be attentive to the more hidden shortcomings of anti-sectarian movements. Second, they provide suggestions about how to sophisticate the debate about the role of anti-sectarian movements for de-sectarianization.

As explained, it has not been the main ambition of the dissertation to contribute to the scholarship on social movements. However, given the calls to bring the study of anti-sectarian movements into closer dialogue with social movement theory (see e.g. Geha, 2019a, 2019b; Milan, 2019), it remains relevant to discuss whether this literature can gain insights from my study. Hence, the discussions of the above-mentioned main contributions will be followed up by a shorter section in which I suggest how the dissertation reveals potentials for theoretical developments and refinements within the social movement literature.

7.1 Expanding the scope

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, scholars have started to highlight the need to analyze anti-sectarian movements through an intersectional approach and have pointed to ways in which sect-based divides overlap with gender and sexuality (Nagle, 2021b; Nagle & Fakhoury, 2021). My dissertation recognizes that gender and sexuality are important analytical lenses that can enable scholars to uncover intersectional dynamics of anti-sectarian movements. However, I also argue that scholars, by applying the prisms of class, spatiality, and media, become able to examine new and important nuances of the struggle for intersectional solidarity. As explained in Chapter 2, we know from the general literature on sectarianism that class and geographical boundaries are important drivers of political developments in divided societies (see e.g. F. Haddad, 2011; Nucho, 2016; Salamandra, 2013). My study of the October Uprising has illustrated how these boundaries mattered for anti-sectarian movements. It is also well established that protest spaces and the media are important arenas of anti-sectarian contestation more generally (see e.g. Al-Rawi, 2014; Harb, 2016a). The dissertation has demonstrated how urban protest spaces and the media matter in the struggle for intersectional solidarity, and how these arenas offer both opportunities and limitations for addressing intersecting social fault lines. The question, however, remains how exactly these insights can inform the development of a wider knowledge about anti-sectarian movements.

Several scholars have stressed the need to develop a comparative framework for understanding anti-sectarian movements across divided societies

(see e.g. Krastrissianakis et al., 2019; Martini et al., 2019; Wimmen, 2013). In principle, such a framework could include contexts as different as Northern Ireland, Saudi Arabia, Bosnia, and Kuwait.¹⁴¹ The scope of this chapter does not allow for a meaningful discussion about the utility of class, spatiality, and media across all these settings. Hence, I restrict the discussion to Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Both countries have consociational power sharing systems, which are somewhat similar to Lebanon's.¹⁴² Furthermore, they have seen a range of anti-sectarian movements over the past decade, which have included large popular protests. Hence, these two countries are a good place to start exploring how the thematic analytical prisms applied in this dissertation can be put in use beyond Lebanon. Below, I show how class, spatiality, and media have featured in anti-sectarian movements in Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina and reflect on how these prisms may enable to scholars uncover struggles for intersectional solidarity in these movements.

Class, spatiality, and media in Iraqi anti-sectarian movements

Iraq has had several large protest movements that can be considered anti-sectarian.¹⁴³ The so-called Tishreen Movement, which broke out just weeks before the Lebanese October Uprising, is the largest anti-sectarian protest in Iraq so far and a culmination of a decade of mobilization (Costantini, 2021). The Tishreen Movement, which will be the main backdrop of this discussion, was triggered by a student-led protest against job insecurity and the demotion a popular general who had helped defeat the Islamic State (Berman, Clarke, & Majed, 2020, p. 21). However, the broader demands in the protests also included the overhaul of sectarian politics and sect-based division of power (Halawa, 2021, p. 7). With the slogan, “we want a homeland,” protesters

¹⁴¹ See Chapter 2 for a list of countries that have seen anti-sectarian movements.

¹⁴² Iraq's 2005 constitution is seen to possess significant liberal consociational elements, while Bosnia-Herzegovina's corporate power-sharing provisions are considered more similar to those of Lebanon. For an elaboration, see McCulloch (2014).

¹⁴³ Major protest movements took place in 2010-11, 2012-13, 2015-16, and 2019. While the drivers of previous protests were harsh living conditions, insufficient basic services, and widespread corruption, the 2015-16 movement added a more explicitly anti-sectarian agenda by demanding the end to the sectarian political system. This was evident from protest banners reading: “I am Sunni but against sectarianism; I am Shi'a but against sectarianism; I am Yezidi but against sectarianism” and “No to sectarianism, no to sectarian quota sharing, yes to citizenship” (Jabar, 2018, p. 18). However, the anti-sectarian nature of these movements has also been challenged in light of the endorsement and involvement by political and religious figures, most notably Muqtada el Sadr. For more details about previous Iraqi movements, see e.g. Halawa (2021) and Costantini (2021) and Jabar (2018).

sought to put forth a new collective Iraqi identity, moving past sectarian divides (Rennick & Bakawan, 2022). As in Lebanon, Iraqi protesters also denounced the entire political elite (Berman et al., 2020, p. 23).

Analyses of the Tishreen Movement have already drawn attention to the role of other identities than sect, and class has featured in several analyses, albeit often sporadically (see e.g. EPIC, 2021; Halawa, 2021; Mustafa, 2022). For instance, Halawa (2021) notes that the movement brought together most of Iraq's social classes. Moreover, Ali (2019a) argues that it was led by poor, disempowered, and marginalized Iraqis. Interestingly, as Halawa (2021) points out, this was different from the previous round of Iraqi anti-sectarian protests in 2015, which were seen to be driven mainly by the middle classes. This suggests that class is far from irrelevant as a thematic in Iraqi anti-sectarian protests. More so, anecdotal insights stress the diverging outlook and grievances between individuals from different class backgrounds involved in the protests. For example, Fantappie (2019) points to the difference between lower middle-class youths with no access to quality education or state employment and the well-educated, English-speaking, upper middle-class individuals involved in private-sector initiatives and civic organizations. This difference is also noted by Aljabiri (2019), who points out that it was the most precarious protesters, who put themselves in the gravest danger during the movement, facing riot police and militias. While the afore mentioned studies of Iraqi anti-sectarian movements have primarily emphasized cross-class solidarity, the above insights suggest that a closer examination of the movements through the prism of class may reveal how class-based differences in outlooks, grievances, and modes of protesting also posed challenges to solidarity.

A series of studies have also indicated the relevance of geographical boundaries for anti-sectarian movements in Iraq. Like the Lebanese October Uprising, the Tishreen Movement took place across different regions (EPIC, 2021). However, as Costantini (2021, p. 843) points to in her discussion of the past decade of Iraqi movements, cross-regional protest dynamics in Iraq are influenced by divisive politics of space and have revealed tensions between local and national demands. Several other scholars have pointed out that there are important regional differences in Iraq, which have come to show in anti-sectarian protests in both 2015 and 2019 (Jabar, 2018; Robin-D'Cruz, 2021). As Robin-D'Cruz (2021) explains, some cities saw more violence than others in the 2019 movement. In his analysis of the 2015 protests, Jabar (2018, p. 19) shows how the intersection between regional and religious identity appears to have caused tensions between protesters. He points out that young seminary students from Najaf, which is seen as a conservative city, tried to join demonstrations in Baghdad in 2015 but were stopped by protesters in the capital. This, he argues, deepened the sense of mutual mistrust between the two

groups, which shared the same overall demands for reform and combating corruption. Such tensions within protests based on geographical and other boundaries may be explored in more depth, when examining anti-sectarian protests in Iraq through the prism of spatiality.

With regard to protest spaces, several studies of Iraqi anti-sectarian movements have mentioned the important role of the Tahrir Square in Baghdad as well as other public squares across the country (International Crisis Group, 2021; Lovotti & Proserpio, 2021). These urban squares have mainly been seen as inclusive spaces, ruled and managed by the population and as symbols of resistance against the sectarian elites (see e.g. Ali, 2019a). However, existing reports also reveal a potential for more nuanced analyses of the fault lines in and around these squares. For instance, Tahrir Square in Baghdad hosted a range of different types of protest activities, including discussions spaces, stages, and pop-up libraries during the Tishreen Movement (EPIC, 2021, p. 6). There is also evidence that the Tahrir Square was not the only place in Baghdad that laid ground to protests. A report by EPIC (2021, p. 43) mentions two other key sites in the Iraqi capital, the Jumhuriyah Bridge and the al-Khilani Square north of Tahrir. Both of these places were referred to as sites of clashes. Furthermore, the report notes that the Tahrir Square was also subject to internal division during parts of the protests, where followers of the Shiite cleric, Muqtada al Sadr, attacked and took control of a Turkish restaurant overlooking the square, which used to be the protesters' bastion (ibid., 53). Finally, a report by International Crisis Group (2021, p. 9) notes that pre-existing social tensions also made it difficult to sustain the non-sectarian inclusivity of the Tishreen Movement over time. Interestingly, it seemed the divisions based on religiosity may also have manifested as disputes over the use of protest space, as Shiite religious processions took place alongside exhibitions of arts and music at the sit-ins in squares. Although these insights are anecdotal, they illustrate that an analytical focus on protest spaces may uncover fault lines of both class and religiosity within the protests.

Regarding the role of media in anti-sectarian protests in Iraq, several scholars have noted the presence of national and local media outlets, which provided sympathetic coverage of the protests (Berman et al., 2020; EPIC, 2021). While media in Iraq is typically state-owned or controlled by groups associated with the ruling regime, some outlets sympathized with protesters and served as arenas for protesters to seek to get their message across,¹⁴⁴ even

¹⁴⁴ For example, in their study of the 2019 protests, (Berman et al., 2020, p. 22) draw information from the Iraqi newspaper *Al-Mada*, which is known for its professionalism and national coverage, and two leftist newspapers that offer strong coverage of

despite repeated crackdowns by the elites on critical media (EPIC, 2021, p. 17; Saadoun, 2019). Besides this, analyses point to the role of social media as both an outlet for protesters to voice their messages and an arena for political elites to surveil and disperse divisive counter-narratives and smear campaigns (EPIC, 2021).

The above reflections suggest that class, spatiality, and media are relevant prisms for studying intersectional solidarity in Iraqi anti-sectarian movements. They also provide some initial indications of the potential of using these prisms to uncover challenges to intersectional solidarity. However, analyses of Iraqi anti-sectarian movements also highlight a series of unique contextual factors that should be considered when transferring analytical insights from Lebanon to Iraq. First, Iraq's complex geopolitical role is seen to influence anti-sectarian mobilizations greatly. For instance, anti-sectarian protesters have displayed strong sentiments against Iranian interference in the country¹⁴⁵, which is also a subject of deep division within the Shiite community in Iraq (Berman et al., 2020; Jabar, 2018). Other relevant factors include the role of the Kurdish autonomous region as well as the extreme level of repression that was used against protesters. Berman et al. (2020) report 700 deaths and 11,500 injuries alone during the initial ten weeks of the Tishreen Movement. In comparison, the Lebanese October Uprising led to few deaths and much fewer injuries, even when differences in population size and number of protesters are taken into account (Daher, 2021). Finally, it is relevant to mention that the Iraqi population is majority Shiite, and that the Sunni community, despite allegedly supporting the demands, was largely absent from the streets in both large Iraqi anti-sectarian protests in 2015 and 2019 (Abu Zeed, 2019; Jabar, 2018).¹⁴⁶

protests, strikes, and other forms of popular resistance. This shows that significant information about the protests was dispersed through traditional media channels.

¹⁴⁵ The demotion of a popular general Abdulwahab al-Saadi was broadly interpreted as a capitulation to corrupt politicians, possibly under pressure from Iran (Berman et al., 2020). Interference by Iran in Iraqi politics was thus central to the onset of the Tishreen uprising. However, Halawa (2021, p. 13) also criticizes the tendency to analyze the Tishreen movement through this lens of proxy involvement and broader geopolitical significance, as this removes agency from the movement's members.

¹⁴⁶ In 2015, this was seen to be caused by fear of perceived or real persecution rather than disagreement with the protest movement (Jabar, 2018, p. 20).

Class, spatiality, and media in Bosnian anti-sectarian movements

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, there have been several anti-sectarian movements as well, some of which have been popular protests. The largest protest to date was the so-called Protest and Plenum Movement in 2014 (Milan, 2019). The movements have mainly been implicitly anti-sectarian. Rather than calling directly for the abolishment of sectarian politics, they have promoted discourses that emphasized rights-based citizenship that transcends ethno-nationalist divides (Rønn, 2020b) or called for solidarity across groups, as evident in the slogan, “we are hungry in three languages” used in the 2014 protests (Milan, 2017b) or in the alliance in 2018 between a Serb and a Bosniak father who both protested the unresolved deaths of their sons, David Dragičević and Dženan Memić (Kapidžić, 2020, pp. 88-89).

Class has featured as a main topic in analyses of the different Bosnian anti-sectarian movements, suggesting the relevance of this prism. For instance, two successive waves of anti-sectarian movements in 2012 and 2013 were both dominated by the middle class (Milan, 2019, p. 25). In the so-called Babylon protests in 2013, Kurtović (2018, p. 51) even argues that the mobilization was perceived as a “protest of urban middle classes”, and “nice people” who relied on calm and nonviolent means to voice their political grievances. This suggests that modes of protesting may vary with class as also seen in Lebanon and Iraq. In the country-wide protests in 2014, which were triggered by a workers’ strike in a factory, it was the other way around. Here, Mujkić (2015, p. 634) argues that almost the entire “middle class” refrained from supporting the protests, and that this eventually caused the movement to collapse. This suggests that it may be difficult to form an anti-sectarian protest movement in Bosnia that accommodates the orientations, grievances, and modes of protest of both middle- and working classes. So far, however, this challenge has not been studied in-depth. It therefore seems relevant to analyze challenges to solidarity in Bosnian anti-sectarian protests through the prism of class.

The geographical divides are arguably deeper in Bosnia-Herzegovina than in Lebanon. The country is known for its spatialization of ethnic division (Stavrevska, 2016), which manifests most clearly in the boundary between the Republika Srpska, which is inhabited mainly by Bosnian Serbs and the Federation, which is inhabited by Bosniaks and Croats (Bieber, 2000). These thick divisions have made it difficult for anti-sectarian movements to spread from one entity to another (Milan, 2019). However, the boundary between Republika Srpska and the Federation is not the only geographical fault line in Bosnia. As highlighted above, the segments that dominated protests in 2012 and 2013 were not only middle-class but also urban. This reflects a wider tendency of

urban centers as homes of an intellectual and cosmopolitan youth segment, many of whom traditionally define themselves as “Yugoslav” and “anti-nationalists” and have been leading calls against sectarianism (Milan, 2019, pp. 12, 42-45). The role of protest spaces has been stressed in studies of Bosnian anti-sectarian movements as well (see e.g. Carabelli, 2020), however, in different ways. Generally, protests have been smaller in Bosnia than in Lebanon and Iraq, and they have not used long-term occupation of urban spaces and squares to the same extent. However, the recuperation of public space has been a main topic in previous protests (Arsenijević, 2014, p. 2). In the Bosnian context where citizens seek to recover and reclaim urban spaces from the narratives of war and division, analyses of spatial meaning making may thus help revealing challenges related to finding new and shared spatial narratives.

Finally, the role of the Bosnian media as arena for promoting solidarity has been complex in similar ways to Lebanon and Iraq. On the one hand, authorities have used media spin and other discursive strategies designed to ethnicize and dismantle protests (Mujkić, 2015, p. 631), and in the large protests in 2014, most public and private media were loyal to the regime and produced narratives that supported the dominant ethno-nationalist ideological order (Mujkić, 2015, p. 634). Some media even referred to protesters as merely a group of “hooligans” (Milan, 2017a, p. 10). This suggests that a main part of the Bosnian media acts as an obstacle to solidarity and mainly ignores protesters’ narratives. However, as Puljek-Shank and Fritsch (2019, p. 143) argue in their study of the 2014 Protest and Plenum Movement, some of the protesters’ demands did in fact enter the media and popular discourse. This suggests that parts of the traditional media display voices from the opposition and indicates that the media may also play a role as filter, which distorts protesters’ narratives. As Milan (2019, p. 122) also notes, social media platforms and alternative media outlets have constituted important resources throughout the 2014 protests by generating an “information cascade”. This shows the relevance of analyzing the wider mediascape as an arena for struggles between divisive narratives and discourses of solidarity.

Overall, the above overview, albeit brief, suggests that class, spatiality, and media have significant relevance in Bosnia, and can be used as prisms for studies, which explore understudied challenges to anti-sectarian mobilization and solidarity in the Bosnian setting. Like Iraq, Bosnia has a set of contextual features that must be taken into account in such studies. First, it is relevant to note Bosnia’s relationship to its neighbors, and particularly the European Union, which has played a major, yet also widely criticized, role in the post-war state building and transitional justice in Bosnia (see e.g. Aybet & Bieber, 2011; Puljek-Shank & Verkoren, 2017). Second, there is a major difference in the nature of divides between Lebanon and Bosnia, which must be considered

when transferring insights between these two countries. In brief, the Lebanese agree on the premise that there should be a state but disagree on the nature of this state.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, divisions in Bosnia are characterized by strong demands of secession and regional autonomy (Bieber, 2000, p. 272). Finally, Bosnia's history as a socialist state is particularly relevant to take into account when studying dynamics of anti-sectarian mobilization and intersectional solidarity through the prism of class. While Mujkić (2015, p. 628) argues that ethno-nationalist discourses have obscured identities based on social class, others argue that there is a historical class legacy that can be invoked in popular mobilizations (see e.g. Puljek-Shank & Fritsch, 2019, p. 156).

Summarizing reflections

If we want to explain why it is challenging for anti-sectarian movements in Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina to promote solidarity across sects and other divides, I argue that the prisms of class, spatiality, and media provide a good point of departure. The three prisms, I contend, hold a potential to help scholars understanding and unfolding the complexity of the struggle for solidarity in these settings and uncovering so far understudied challenges. Moreover, as I pointed to above, there are indicators that dynamics of class, spatiality, and media in Iraq and Bosnia may share similarities with those in Lebanon. For instance, social classes appear, like in Lebanon, to have different grievances and different ways of expressing discontent with the sectarian systems. We also see indicators that stereotypes based on the intersection between geography and sect or religiosity in Iraq can lead to sentiments of distrust. Finally, the media in these countries, although they often reinforce sectarian narratives, cannot be reduced to a tool of the sectarian elites. These insights are anecdotal, but they illustrate some of the possible cross-country trends concerning the ways in which class, spatiality, and media complicate and enable intersectional solidarity. However, the discussion also highlights a range of factors we should be aware of when transferring particular and case-specific insights about the role of class, spatiality, and media from the Lebanese October Uprising to Iraq and Bosnia. These factors include the influence of the geopolitical context, the level and type of repression, as well as the nature of sect-based divides.

¹⁴⁷ Main exceptions include Christian sectarian right-wing forces, which called frequently for “autonomy of Christian regions” or partitioning of Lebanon in 1975-82 (Ofeish, 1999, p. 99).

7.2 Two inputs to debates about de-sectarianization

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, anti-sectarian movements are believed to be able to foster a sense of shared solidarity and gradually build up alternative political communities to those based on sectarian belonging (Costantini, 2021; Nagle, 2016, p. 27; Rizkallah, 2019). In the previous chapter, I provided three main lessons about the nature of solidarity challenges and the potential to address them. The first lesson was that opportunities to promote discourses of solidarity vary for different groups of citizens and for different types of anti-sectarian movements. The second lesson was that positive attention and mobilization do not necessarily ensure representation of the voices of groups and communities. The third lesson was that solidarity and cohesion between protesters cannot be judged solely based on the strategies they use and the physical features of protest spaces but also depend on processes of meaning making. These key lessons, I argue, offer two important overall inputs to the discussion about the role of anti-sectarian movements in promoting de-sectarianization. First of all they call for a closer attention to the hidden shortcomings of anti-sectarian movements. Second, I argue that they reveal a need to add analytical distinctions that allow us better to differentiate between forms of anti-sectarian movements.

Mind the gaps

As previously explained, existing intersectional analyses have already highlighted the need to judge anti-sectarian mobilizations on their ability to leave room for marginalized groups such as women and members of the LGBTQ+ community. This dissertation shows the necessity of evaluating anti-sectarian movements in light of their ability to address boundaries of class and geography. Such analyses should also be attentive to the internal heterogeneity of classes or regional communities, as they might otherwise overlook problems of inclusivity and solidarity. As the first key lesson points to, anti-sectarian protest movements might display both cross-sectarian and cross-class solidarity on an overall level and still fail to include particular cross-sections of class and sect. To assess the potential of anti-sectarian movements, we must therefore also critically examine why certain segments were absent or alienated based on a combination of social identity traits. Furthermore, the second lesson suggests a need to look beyond the mere mobilization of groups and critically scrutinize representations and new identities promoted in anti-sectarian movements. Scholars of de-sectarianization have already highlighted that we should be critical of new overarching collective identities such as nationalism,

which may not be inclusive of the entire population (see .e.g. Valbjørn, 2020). This dissertation encourages scholars of de-sectarianization to be attentive to the construction of new overlapping sub-identities. For instance, do new images of urban communities, women, refugees, or workers represent these groups' self-identification and their internal diversity, or do they produce new stereotypes?

Differentiating between anti-sectarian movements

The first key lesson also gives rise to a discussion about how to study how opportunities for promoting solidarity vary between different types of anti-sectarian movements within the same overall context. As my study of the October Uprising suggests, different types of anti-sectarian mobilizations, i.e. mass protests and smaller grassroots initiatives yield unique opportunities for promoting solidarity. So far, I argue, we do not have a sophisticated analytical framework that allows us to distinguish systematically between anti-sectarian movements. An obvious place to start would be to explore differences between mass protests, electoral mobilizations, and smaller grassroots initiatives. Another distinction, however, which might be just as relevant, is between different strategies of de-sectarianization. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the literature on de-sectarianization offers multiple overlapping distinctions and typologies of strategies to challenge sectarianism (see e.g. Mabon, 2019b; Nagle, 2016; Valbjørn, 2020c). The question remains which distinctions have the greatest analytical value. I argue that the overall distinction between explicitly and implicitly anti-sectarian mobilizations, which I reflected on in Chapter 2, may provide a useful point of departure. My findings from the October Uprising, for example, indicate that explicitly anti-sectarian mobilizations may be more prone to accusations of sect-based favoritism, which may deter their members from addressing sect-specific concerns and engage in dialogue about alternatives to sectarian politics with individuals who maintain relations to their sectarian patrons. While this dissertation shares some initial reflections on the features that characterize implicitly and explicitly anti-sectarian movements, the categories still need to be elaborated and linked to existing work on the differences between anti-sectarian movements. One possible avenue would be to identify general types of collective action frames (Benford & Snow, 2000), which can be used to determine anti-sectarian explicitness and implicitness. Finally, comparisons between anti-sectarian movements could be based on different tactics such as discussion spaces, occupation of public space, and disruption. However, keeping in mind the third main lesson, these comparisons will need to consider that such tactics may be assigned different meanings and thus have different influence on solidarity across time and space.

7.3 Speaking back to social movement studies

While the dissertation primarily uses social movement theory as a tool to generate contributions to the scholarship on anti-sectarian movements and de-sectarianization, it remains relevant to discuss the degree to which my insights can inform the field of social movement studies. Generally, there has been a move towards arguing that studies of non-western settings should not only apply social movement theories but also contribute to theory development (see e.g. Beinin & Vairel, 2013). The October Uprising has been compared to large protest movements across the world and has been seen to share important similarities with protests such as Spain's Indignados, Istanbul's Gezi Park, Hong Kong's Umbrella movement, and the global Occupy movement. One such similarity is the quest to unite a broad base of the population against unequal and extractive political systems (Fawaz, 2019; Harb, 2021, p. 326). The October Uprising has also been interpreted as part of a second wave of uprisings that swept over the Arab region since the end of 2018. Starting from Algeria and Sudan, this wave reached Lebanon and Iraq in October 2019 (Bou Khater & Majed, 2020). These insights stress the relevance to discuss whether the October Uprising, as a case of a mass popular protest, can contribute with insights to general social movement theory. Below, I discuss how the dissertation can provide inputs to the four main strands of theory applied in the papers and presented in Chapter 4.

In relation to the literature on intersectionality and social movements, the dissertation highlights the importance of the narrow political opportunity structures. Studies of protests in Western settings mainly attribute failures of intersectional inclusivity to protesters and organizers. My dissertation, however, reminds that such failures can also, in part, be explained by difficult tradeoffs and dilemmas resulting from external threats to the movement. This leads to the next theoretical strand, political opportunity structures. Here I combined different factors from the wider literature on political opportunity structures to analyze how the context of Lebanon as a divided society constrained the strategic opportunities for organizers in the October Uprising. However, there may also be potential for developing theories about sectarian systems as a unique type of setting for social movements, which offers particular political opportunity structures. The successive anti-sectarian movements across divided societies suggest a growing relevance of such a category. As for theories of spatiality, I have already reflected on the smaller contribution I provide to the work on spatial meaning making by pointing to two different forms of synthesis: zone-movement and inter-zone synthesis in Paper 3. This suggests that studies of anti-sectarian protests such as the Lebanese October Uprising can not only contribute to developing theories about social

movements in divided and sectarian societies but also inform more general theories. Finally, reflecting back at the literature on media framing and social movements, the dissertation reveals a need for further attention to a type of media that has received little attention in social movement literature so far, namely “independent” outlets in hybrid societies, which are neither mouthpieces of the elites, nor completely independent and critical. The existence of these media shows that we cannot simply reduce traditional media in non-democratic settings to counter-powers against social movements. Moreover, as I showed in the study, protesters’ perceptions of these media also matter in addition to the content of the coverage.

7.4 Concluding remarks

The present summary has encapsulated the dissertation on challenges to solidarity in the Lebanese October Uprising. Through seven chapters, I have unfolded the empirical, theoretical, and methodological underpinnings of the dissertation, tied the three self-contained papers together, and discussed the overall contributions of my findings.

The dissertation has shown how difficult it is to forge solidarity between a people in fragments. It has shown how we can examine and explain the complexity of the challenges members of anti-sectarian movements face when they seek to forge solidarity across fault lines based on sect, class, and geography. The dissertation does not answer how anti-sectarian movements can overcome the multiple and overlapping boundaries inherent in divided societies and build oppositions that are strong enough to dismantle highly resilient sectarian systems. However, it takes a first step towards understanding the obstacles that need to be overcome in order for these movements to foster de-sectarianization. Following from this, a task for future studies will be to examine how these challenges can be tackled. In this dissertation, I point to spatial meaning making, diversification of tactics, and developing alternative media as factors that may contribute to overcoming divides within the movements and in the wider population. However, a full overview of solutions would require systematic studies of strategic agency and organization. Relevant questions to be addressed include: Which types of anti-sectarian movements can forge solidarity with groups and segments that may be unfeasible to include in mass protests? How can alternative forms of organization, e.g. labor unions, contribute to forging solidarity? Which identities, grievances, and discourses have the potential to address overlapping boundaries across sect, class, geography, and other relevant identities and boundaries? Furthermore, a main question remains how intersectional solidarity can be translated into alterna-

tive political projects and organizations, which can potentially dismantle sectarian systems. While solidarity can be forged across boundaries of class, sect, and geography, it may not be possible or desirable to erase these divides completely. Hence, new political projects will also have to find a way to recognize differences in grievances, desires, ideological orientations, and culture, while preserving cohesion and mutual acknowledgement between citizens, so they can challenge structures of power and dominance collectively.

Appendix A.

List of interviews

Appendix A1: Chronological overview of primary interviews

The following table overviews the primary interviews. All interviewees participated in the uprising, either as protesters or organizers. For the primary interviewees for paper 2 and 3, I have added profession to signify social background.

Date	Place	Background	Interview topic
25/03/2020	Online	Student, organizer in an activist network	Paper 1
27/03/2020	Online	Student, organizer in an activist network	Paper 1
03/04/2020	Online	Blogger, organizer, leftist grassroots party	Paper 1
24/04/2020	Online	Student, organizer, leftist grassroots party	Paper 1
10/06/2020	Online	NGO worker, organizer social liberal opposition party	Paper 1
16/06/2020	Online	Researcher, organizer, social liberal grassroots	Paper 1
16/06/2020	Online	Blogger, organizer, independent	Paper 1
16/06/2020	Online	Private sector employee, organizer in an activist network	Paper 1
17/06/2020	Online	Academic, organizer, leftist political grassroots party	Paper 1
23/06/2020	Online	Artist, organizer, activist network	Paper 1
25/06/2020	Online	Academic, NGO board member, organizer, activist network	Paper 1
06/07/2020	Online	Small business owner, organizer activist network	Paper 1
07/07/2020	Online	Student, organizer, leftist student group	Paper 1
28/07/2020	Online	Student, organizer student activist network	Paper 1
29/07/2020	Online	Academic, organizer, liberal opposition party	Paper 1
30/07/2020	Online	Academic, consultant, organizer, independent	Paper 1
04/08/2020	Online	Student, organizer, independent	Paper 1
09/08/2020	Online	University graduate, organizer,	Paper 1
08/06/2021	Online	NGO worker, organizer, leftist political grassroots	Paper 2+3
15/06/2021	Online	NGO worker	Paper 2
16/06/2021	Online	Student	Paper 2
28/07/2021	Tripoli	Art student and communist	Paper 2+3
28/07/2021	Tripoli	Student	Paper 2+3
29/07/2021	Tripoli	Student	Paper 2+3
30/07/2021	Tripoli	Carpenter	Paper 2+3
30/07/2021	Tripoli	NGO worker and consultant	Paper 2+3

30/07/2021	Tripoli	Lawyer	Paper 2+3
30/07/2021	Tripoli	Teacher	Paper 2+3
31/07/2021	Tripoli	NGO worker	Paper 2+3
31/07/2021	Tripoli	Artist	Paper 2+3
31/07/2021	Tripoli	Film maker	Paper 2+3
31/07/2021	Tripoli	artist	Paper 2+3
01/08/2021	Tripoli	student	Paper 2+3
01/08/2021	Tripoli	student	Paper 2+3
02/08/2021	Tripoli	Private sector employee	Paper 2+3
02/08/2021	Tripoli	Journalist	Paper 2+3
02/08/2021	Tripoli	Auto mechanic	Paper 2+3
03/08/2021	Tripoli	Shop owner	Paper 2+3
03/08/2021	Tripoli	NGO worker	Paper 2+3
03/08/2021	Tripoli	Academic	Paper 2+3
06/08/2021	Deir el Qubel	Journalist and NGO worker	Paper 2+3
07/08/2021	Tripoli	NGO worker	Paper 2
07/08/2021	Tripoli	Bar owner	Paper 2+3
07/08/2021	Tripoli	Academic	Paper 2+3
07/08/2021	Tripoli	Graphic designer	Paper 2
07/08/2021	Tripoli	Teacher	Paper 2+3
08/08/2021	Ainata village	Student	Paper 2+3
11/10/2021	Beirut	Academic, organizer in leftist political grassroots	Paper 1
11/10/2021	Beirut	Academic with family in Dahiyeh	Paper 1
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester, business owner (short interview)	Paper 3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester, army retiree (short interview)	Paper 3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Female protester (short interview)	Paper 3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Barista (short interview)	Paper 3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Student	Paper 2+3
13/10/2021	Tripoli	Barista, student	Paper 3
14/10/2021	Tripoli	NGO worker	Paper 3
14/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3
14/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3

15/10/2021	Tripoli	NGO worker	Paper 3
15/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3
15/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3
15/10/2021	Tripoli	Male protester (short interview)	Paper 3
15/10/2021	Tripoli	Lawyer	Paper 3
16/10/2021	Tripoli	Student, communist	Paper 3
16/10/2021	Tripoli	Journalist	Paper 3
16/10/2021	Tripoli	Artist	Paper 3
17/10/2021	Beirut	Student with family in Dahiyeh	Paper 1
18/10/2021	Tripoli	NGO worker	Paper 3
19/10/2021	Beirut	Student with family in Dahiyeh	Paper 1
19/10/2021	Beirut	Student with family in Dahiyeh	Paper 1
20/10/2021	Tripoli	Journalist	Paper 3

Appendix A2: Chronological overview of background interviews

Date	Place	Background	Main interview topic
16/09/2019	Beirut	Member of opposition party	Different groups and parties in Lebanon's anti-sectarian movement
18/09/2019	Beirut	NGO worker, former member of political grassroots	The legacy of previous anti-sectarian mobilizations and internal divisions within the anti-sectarian movement
22/09/2019	Zahle	NGO worker, communist	Geographical boundaries and previous anti-sectarian movements
22/09/2019	Beirut	organizer, leftist grassroots party	Previous anti-sectarian movements, political organization, definition of anti-sectarianism
26/10/2019	Beirut	Journalist, alternative media platform	Media in the Uprising
01/01/2020	Beirut	NGO worker, consultant	Class in the uprising
09/03/2020	Online	International journalist	Class in the uprising and conceptualizations of class in Lebanon
10/03/2020	Beirut	IT worker, organizer in activist network	Class in the uprising
21/03/2020	Online	International journalist	Class in the uprising
02/04/2020	Online	journalist, political activist	Protest dynamics in Tripoli and relations between protesters
23/06/2020	Online	academic, former journalist at Lebanese 'independent' newspaper	Background info on Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq, the relationship between the two communities and the uprising
01/12/2020	Online	International journalist	Class in the uprising
01/12/2020	Online	Journalist, academic	Tripoli's role in the uprising
03/12/2020	Online	Student, protester	Tripoli's role in the uprising
10/12/2020	Online	Consultant, protester	Tripoli's role in the uprising
16/12/2020	Online	Protester	Tripoli's role in the uprising
25/12/2020	Online	NGO worker	Tripoli's role in the uprising
22/03/2021	Online	Academic	Tripoli's role in the uprising
23/03/2021	Online	Academic	Tripoli's role in the uprising
24/03/2021	Online	International journalist	Tripoli's role in the uprising
24/03/2021	Online	Journalist, tour guide	Tripoli's role in the uprising
25/03/2021	Online	Academic	Tripoli's role in the uprising
23/04/2021	Online	Student, protester	Tripoli's role in the uprising
27/04/2021	Online	International journalist	Tripoli's role in the uprising

19/05/2021	Online	academic, organizer grassroots party	Tripoli's role in the uprising
31/05/2021	Online	Journalist, academic, protester	Tripoli's role in the uprising
09/08/2021	Beirut	NGO worker	Class in the uprising and research design
10/08/2021	Beirut	Journalist, protester	Protest spaces in Tripoli and Beirut
21/09/2021	Aarhus	Academic	Media in the Uprising
12/10/2021	Beirut	Academic	Intersectional solidarity and class in the uprising
16/02/2022	Online	Academic, Tripolitan	Discussing analysis of Tripoli

Appendix B. Interview guides

Appendix B1: Standard interview guide for Paper 1

The following is an example of the basic, most common structure of an interview guide prepared for my phone interviews with organizers in Beirut for Paper 1. For most interviews, I included a set of questions about lower class individuals from Tripoli. I did not use answers to these questions in Paper 1 but relied on them as background information for Paper 2. Text in italic is briefing.

Topic	Interview questions
Briefing	<p>Formalities and consent Oral consent, recorded</p> <p>About me: Here I stress that I was present at the protests, and have an overview of the events, but highlight that the interviewee should still explain things thoroughly, so I understand it from her/his point of perspective.</p> <p>About the study: My study is about the role of class and marginalized groups in the October 17 protests. The purpose is to find out how activists from different independent groups and networks understand these issues. It's important for me to stress that I am aware that the protests describe themselves as leaderless, and that I do not consider the organizers to be leaders of the protests.</p>
Interviewee's background and engagement in the uprising	<p><i>To begin with, I would like to hear a bit about your background as an activist (stress that I already have been briefed, but just want the interviewee to explain this with her/his own words)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you describe role in X organization/network? - Where and how did you spend the majority of your time during the protests?
Section 1: Understanding of intersecting issues affecting the lower classes	
Interviewee's understanding of marginalization and social class in Lebanon in general	<p>I would first like to hear, how you understand the issue of marginalization in Lebanon very broadly: who is marginalized in Lebanon and how?</p> <p>Follow up questions (if relevant)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Imagine you were talking to someone, who is not familiar with Lebanon. How would you describe to that person what it means to be marginalized in the Lebanese society?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How and to which extent did the uprising address issues of marginalization and social class? - How and to which extent did the uprising address issues of social class?
<p>Section 2: Descriptions of individuals from Tripoli and Khandak el Ghamiq/Dahiyeh</p> <p><i>Now, to get more in depth, I would like to talk about some examples of marginalized groups. And one example I would like to discuss with you is Tripoli.</i></p>	
Overall understanding of issues facing people from Tripoli	<p>Can you describe, how do we best understand the forms of marginalization people from Tripoli face?</p> <p>Follow up (if relevant)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do they face any particular issues because of their sectarian background? - Do they face any particular issues and the fact that they live in Tripoli?
Did the interviewee think that intersecting patterns of repression were reflected in the way people from Tripoli took part in the protests? And if so – how?	<p>If you look back at the people from Tripoli, who were in the uprising. How did they express these issues, you just mentioned?</p> <p>Follow up (if relevant)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did they express their situation in their slogans and chants? - Did people from Tripoli use different slogans than other groups in the uprising? - Did the issues of people from Tripoli come to show in other ways, for example the actions?
Overall understanding of issues facing people from Khandak+Suburbs	<p><i>Other examples of marginalized groups are the people who live in the areas of Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh. Can you describe, again, how do we best understand the forms of marginalization people from these areas face?</i></p> <p>Follow up (if relevant):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are they different from Tripoli? - What did these differences mean for the protests?
Did the interviewee think that intersecting patterns of repression were reflected in the way people from Tripoli took part in the protests? And if so – how?	<p>If you look back at the people from Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh who were in the uprising. How did they express these issues, you just mentioned?</p> <p>Follow up (if relevant)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did they express their situation in their slogans and chants? - Did they use different slogans than other groups in the uprising, for example these from Tripoli? - Did the issues of people from Tripoli come to show in other ways, for example the actions? <p>Is it difficult for the uprising to include the voices of people from Tripoli and Dahiyeh/Khandak at the same time?</p>

Section 3: General questions about inclusion and exclusion of marginalized groups

Now I would like to go back to talk about the role of marginalized groups more generally again.

<p>Exclusion and inclusion in general</p>	<p>I would like to ask you about your personal opinion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you think there were any particular groups whose voices were forgotten or silenced in the protests? - Why? - Based on your experiences with (organization) during the uprising, what have been the biggest challenges related to addressing issues about marginalization and social class within the protests? <p>Can you give some examples of situations, where the marginalized have had a big voice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chants - Organizations - Actions <p>Can you give an example of a situation, where you think marginalized groups were excluded?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chants - Organizations - Actions
<p>What the activists can do?</p>	<p>During the uprising. Did you discuss with other activists what could be done to give marginalized people a bigger voice in the uprising?</p> <p>When you look back, what have <u>you</u> been able to do as activist to make the protests more inclusive? If anything?</p> <p>Can you mention specific episodes?</p>

Appendix B2: Additional follow-up questions for Paper 1

These are examples of questions I added throughout the generation of interview data for Paper 1 to test the resonance of arguments posed by previous interviewees. In interview situations, these questions were added as a fourth section to the interview guide above. I also sent some of these questions to some of the first interviewees over WhatsApp.

In the last part here, I would like to discuss some statements or opinions that I have discussed with other activist I have interviewed until now.

I have talked to others who say that many independent activists in Beirut have a guilt trip. They feel too guilty of not being good enough to include marginalized people, and especially people coming from Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq. What do you think about this statement?

Some activists argue that the protests have been more inclusive, because they have been more accepting to violence? Do you think that is true?

I have also discussed with other activists whether it is a good strategy to curse political leaders. Some say it's important to do so. Others say it's dangerous because it will "scare people away" who follow these leaders or depend on them.

- What do you think?
- Are there some leaders you should be more cautious to criticize?

In 2015, I remember there was a big discussion about infiltrators. I remember there were two main arguments in this debate: the first argument was that you should be able to draw a line between who was a protester and who was against the protests and condemn those who wanted to destroy the protests. The second argument, the counterargument was, that by condemning infiltrators you ended up with a rhetoric that was exclusive against certain groups from lower classes. What is your opinion on these arguments?

I also talked to activists who told that hear during the protests in front of Masrif Lubaan [the central bank], you had people shouting Shia Sha Shia. What should you do about that?

I discussed with other activists is to which extent it is possible to mobilize people from marginalized backgrounds. Some activists say that certain people are simply too brainwashed to be convinced about the uprising. What do you think about this statement?

I have discussed with other activists to which extent the uprising should focus on the things protesters have in common or pay attention to specific problems that some groups have. Some say, it is best to say we're all Lebanese, we're all marginalized citizens. Other say, no, if we do that, we close our eyes to some of the big problems that particular groups face. Therefore, the uprising needs to address problems of people from different areas, sects, class backgrounds etc. What do you think?

Another group which did not participate much in the protests was refugees and other non-Lebanese. Why was it difficult to include these groups in the uprising? Did you do anything to try and include them?

Appendix B3: Follow-up interviews for Paper 1

The following represents the basic interview guide prepared for follow-up interviews to Paper 1, conducted in Beirut in October 2021. The guide was used in five interviews, four of which were with individuals from Shiite background with family ties to the Shiite areas of Beirut

Topic	Interview questions
Briefing	<p>Formalities and consent: Oral consent, recorded</p> <p>About me: Stress my positionality as sensitive and interested in questions of inclusivity. Stress that I was present in the uprising.</p> <p>About the study: Stress that I am in the final phase of research for the article and that the questions serve to explore and challenge existing findings</p> <p>Interviewee's background and engagement in the uprising</p>
Inclusivity more generally	<p>To you, what does it mean to be inclusive in a protest movement?</p> <p>To which extent was the uprising inclusive?</p> <p>What were the main inclusion challenges in the uprising?</p> <p>Follow-up: - In my previous interviews, activists told me that to be inclusive, the uprising had to be aware of other divisions that sect. Do you agree? Which other divisions should protesters be aware of?</p>
Stereotypes/stigma about Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq	<p>In the garbage protests in 2015, there was a discussion about Khandak el Ghamiq and Dahiyeh, and some activists believed the protests held prejudices against these communities. Are you familiar with this?</p> <p>In your opinion, was there similar prejudices about the communities in 2019?</p> <p>Follow-up: Can you describe these prejudices - Who held them? - Where would you hear them? - Where do you think people have these prejudices from?</p>
Inclusivity dilemmas	<p>Were there attempts from the organizers to challenge these stereotypes? Which?/how?/why?</p>

Appendix B4: Standard interview guide for Paper 2

The following is an example of the basic, most common structure of an interview guide prepared for my interviews with protesters from Tripoli for Paper 2.

Topic	Interview questions
Briefing	<p>Formalities and consent Oral consent, recorded</p> <p>About me: Brief background mentioning the dissertation, and that I was present in Lebanon during the first part of the uprising</p> <p>About the study: The interview will be about the Tripoli protests. I can't cover the whole broad picture of the uprising in my dissertation, so I will focus on some aspects. I am interested in hearing your opinion and thoughts about the protests rather than "the truth". In cases where I added the extra exploratory interview guide for Paper 3 (see Appendix B5), I explained that the interview was about two topics: the image of Tripoli in the uprising and the relationship between people from different social and class background in the protest space.</p>
Interviewee's background and engagement	<p>Can you explain about yourself and your background? How you participated in the Uprising (which group/sites did they go to?)</p>
What did the interviewee generally think about Tripoli being called Bride of the Revolution?	<p><i>I would like to start talking about the first month of the uprising, and I want to start with the term, Bride of the Revolution, which almost became a nickname for Tripoli in this period.</i></p> <p>Main questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did you feel about Tripoli being called Bride of the revolution? - What did the term, Bride of the revolution, mean in your understanding? <p>Follow-up questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was it good for Tripoli to be called Bride of the Revolution?
What did the interviewee think about the media coverage	<p>Main questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you think about the way the media covered Tripoli? - Was the way the media's presented Tripoli similar to how you would like others to see the city? (why?/why not?) - How much influence do you feel local activists from Tripoli had on the media coverage of Tripoli during the first period of the uprising? <p>Follow-up questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The DJ played a major role in the media's coverage. What did you think about the fact that the DJ was so much in the foreground? - Did you try and tell people that Tripoli was different than the picture they saw in the media?

<p>How would the interviewee like Tripoli to be seen?</p>	<p>Main questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you were to decide what to show to people from outside of Tripoli, which aspects of Tripoli would you think are most important to understand?
<p>Politicians' use of bride of the revolution</p>	<p>Moving forward to around December, the protests changed and became more disruptive/violent. When I read media coverage of the uprising in this period, I discovered that the politicians also used bride of the revolution about Tripoli. Did you notice this?</p> <p>Follow-up questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - [Read example of statement by political leader. Ahmad Al Hariri/Rifi] - What do you think when you hear this kind of statement? - Do you think of the fact it was dangerous for the uprising that the politicians used Bride of the revolution? - Did it change the meaning of Bride of the Revolution?

Appendix B5: Exploratory interview guide for paper 3

These are questions I added as a second section to the interview guide for Paper 2 to explore the relations between protesters from different social and class backgrounds in Tripoli and the role of protest spaces for these relations

Topic	Interview questions
Meetings between people from different class backgrounds in the square	<p>Main questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did the uprising create solidarity between people from different social and class backgrounds in your view? - Can you describe the interaction between people from different social and class backgrounds in the square? - What created unity between people from different social and class backgrounds in the uprising in Tripoli? <p>Follow-up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you give examples of meetings you had with people from other backgrounds? - Did you have prejudices about people from other social backgrounds? - How was the interaction/relations between people from different social and class backgrounds in Tripoli prior to the uprising? - Can you tell me about the groups who used violence to protest?
The role of protest spaces as meeting points for different social classes	<p>Main questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was there anything special about Nour Square/the protest space in Tripoli, which helped bringing people together? <p>Follow-up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The square was organized with the different tents and initiatives made a difference. Did this help to facilitate the meetings between people from different backgrounds?
Discourses/mindsets/beliefs about people from marginalized background	<p>Main questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did you discuss with others how to talk about the marginalized protesters? - Which new discourses can promote solidarity between people with different social and class backgrounds in the square?

Appendix B6: Standard Interview Guide for Paper 3 (long interviews)

The following is an example of the basic, most common structure of an interview guide prepared for my interviews with protesters from Tripoli for Paper 3 in October 2021. The questions are based on an analysis of interviews conducted in July/august 2021, using the aforelisted guide.

Topic	Interview questions
Briefing	<p>Formalities and consent Oral consent, recorded</p> <p>About me: Brief background mentioning the dissertation, and that I was present in Lebanon during the first part of the uprising</p> <p>About the study: The interview will be about the Tripoli protests. I can't cover the whole broad picture of the uprising in my dissertation, so I will focus on some aspects. I am interested in hearing your opinion and thoughts about the protests rather than "the truth". Explain that the interview will focus on the first phase of the uprising, which ended with the lockdown.</p>
Interviewee's background and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you explain about yourself and your background? - How you participated in the Uprising (which group/sites did they go to?)
Section 1: Solidarity and relations between people from different class backgrounds in the protest space	
How did the interviewee experience and observe the relationship between people from different backgrounds	<p>Main questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did the uprising create solidarity between people from different social and class backgrounds in your view? - What was the source of solidarity between protesters? <p>Follow-up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What makes it difficult to create solidarity? - Can you describe the class differences in Tripoli? - How were the interactions/relations between people from different social and class backgrounds in Tripoli prior to the uprising?

Section 2: The different zones

Nour Square	<p>Can you describe the interactions between people in Nour Square?</p> <p>Follow up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was there a difference between Nour Square and the tents?
The tents	<p>Can you describe the tents?</p> <p>Follow-up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were there people from all social classes in the tents? - Can you explain me about the kitchen you had in the tents? - Was there shared identity between people in the tents? - What was the strengths and weaknesses about the tents? - Some say the tents were mainly for the educated. Do you agree with this statement
Confrontational zones	<p>Main questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you describe the roadblocks and the protests in front of the politicians' houses to me? - Can you describe the clashes that took place in the protests? - Can you describe the background of people who took part in the clashes in Tripoli? <p>Follow-up questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was there solidarity between people in the places where there were roadblocks and clashes? - When people got injured during clashes in Tripoli, did you see others showing solidarity? - How did other people in the protests react to the disruption and violence?

Appendix B7: Standard interview guide, Paper 3 (short interviews)

This interview guide was used for 15 short anonymous interviews conducted around Nour Square, October 13-15, 2021.

Topic	Interview questions
Briefing	Formalities and consent Oral consent, recorded About me: Brief background mentioning the dissertation, and that I was present in Lebanon during the first part of the uprising About the study: I am interested in knowing more about the protests in Tripoli and what happened there
Interviewee's background and engagement in the uprising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you explain about yourself and your background? - How did you participated in the Uprising (which group/sites did they go to?)
The relationship between people from different backgrounds	Main questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did the uprising create solidarity between people from different social and class backgrounds in your view? - Why was there solidarity? - Can you give examples of solidarity?
The different zones	Where in the protest did you go to the most? Did you go to Nour Square? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you describe the square? - How were relations between people in the square Did you do to the tents? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you describe the tents? - Was there a difference between Nour Square and the tents? Did you go to the roadblocks and the politicians' houses? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was there solidarity between people in the places where there were roadblocks and clashes?

Appendix C.

Code lists for interviews

These code lists include overall and sub-level codes, which I used for thematic coding of my interview data. I have not included lower-level codes. The thematic coding helped me make sense of my data and identify analytical categories.

Appendix C1: Thematic, inductive coding of interviews, Paper 1

Codes	Sub-codes	
Descriptions of marginalization in Lebanon	“All Lebanese are marginalized”	These codes served to organize statements relating to the question about interviewee’s understanding of marginalization and social class in Lebanon in general
	Center-periphery-relations in Lebanon	
	Clientelism, sectarianism and marginalization	The goal was to see which forms of marginalization were mentioned most and how they were described. Furthermore, I sought to test, whether interviewees were aware of intersecting patterns in marginalization
	Marginalization of non-Lebanese	
	Shiite areas	
	Sunni Areas/Tripoli	
Inclusion of Marginalized groups	Challenges to inclusion, general statements	These codes served to get an initial overview of the main statements/perception of inclusivity challenges
	Challenges to inclusion of Shiites	
	Inclusion strategies	
	Other reflections on inclusion of Shiites	
	Assessment of the degree of inclusion	
	The “everyone means everyone” slogans and inclusivity	

Appendix C2: Final thematic codelist, Paper 1

Codes	Sub-codes	
Intersectionality	General statements about intersectionality Intersectionality and Shiite communities	The codes served to identify general statements that illustrated intersectional thinking
Barriers to Shiites from Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq	Understanding the ambivalence towards the uprising Clientelism deterring participation Discrimination/stigma Hassan Nasrallah's status and the relationship to the resistance movement against Israel Repression within the communities "some people from the communities still participated despite resistance/pressure"	These codes organized statements about why shiites were reluctant to participate in protests. The goal was to see, how interviewees understood the complex situation of young men from Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq
Statements about discursive dilemmas of inclusion	Tough/no clear answer for how to promote inclusion Dangerous for the uprising to change approach Should somewhat adjust slogans to accommodate communities Welcoming everyone/attitude in protests against the banks	The codes were used to identify the strategic paralysis organizers felt as well as their description of challenges to promoting solidarity The two latter sub-codes group statements about two main strategies, which were discussed in interviews, as ways to display solidarity.

Appendix C3: Final thematic, inductive codelist, Paper 2

Codes	Sub-codes	Description
Overall statements about Bride of the Revolution	Expressions of mixed feelings Positive implications Negative implications How the interviewee understands bride of the revolution	Descriptions where interviewees evaluate and describe Tripoli's nickname as bride of the revolution in overall terms.
Descriptions of Tripoli's former stigma	Descriptions and explanations of the stigma Implications: Tripoli not being part of Libanon/ fear of Tripoli	Interviewees' descriptions of how and why Tripoli was being labelled as Kandahar and a terrorist city and the negative implications this had
Critiques of Bride of the revolution in the media	Too much focus on DJ Overlooking political activists/tents Disregarding the role of the poor Does not blame politicians enough for the violence Tripoli did not change over night	Statements where the interviewees elaborate what they did not like about Tripoli being portrayed as Bride of the Revolution and the media coverage Note: I later used these codes to identify the three main critiques: romanticization, de-politicization and de-contextualization
How the interviewee would have liked Tripoli to be seen	Tripoli as a normal city Statements about how the conflicts and violence should really be understood Tripoli as a city of the educated Previous activism/culture/heritage Tripolitans have always been good people	Statements where interviewees describe what the media coverage was missing, how they saw the city and how they would like other Lebanese to see it
Statements about the media coverage	Statements about media as politically driven Statements about professionalism and commercial incentives	Interviewee's descriptions of the media landscape in Lebanon, the individual platforms, journalists working for these platforms, and the underlying biases/agendas behind the coverage
All statements on the role/potential of social media	n/a	Reflections about the role of social media or examples of interviewees' own use of social media to spread narratives about Tripoli
Comments on the politician's use of Bride of the Revolution	Did not care Negative implications	Statements where interviewees reflected on the politicians' use of "bride of the Revolution"

Appendix C4: Codelist, Paper 3 (first round of interviews)

Code	Sub-codes	Description
Solidarity in Tripoli's protests between classes and other divides	Understanding of solidarity Examples of solidarity	Here I sought to get an initial overview of how protesters described solidarity and assessed the level of solidarity
Disagreements between protesters	Most solidarity in the tents Most solidarity in Nour Square Violent protests	These codes organized statements, where protesters expressed preferences for a particular space or criticized other spaces.
Divisions of the protest space	Descriptions of internal divides between protesters	This code refers to overall descriptions of the protest spaces as being divided, e.g. when protesters point out to me that the Nour Square was split into the main square and the tents

Appendix C5: Final thematic code-list, Paper 3

Code	Sub-codes	Description
Solidarity in Tripoli's protests between classes and other divides	Statements about solidarity in the protests Statements about disagreement/conflict between protesters	These codes were used assess the perceived degree of conflict and cohesion between protesters
General statements about the division of the protest space	n/a	These codes were used to identify processes of spacing
Descriptions of Nour Square	Relationship between vendors and 'educated' Critique: did not like the DJ Critique: the square was infiltrated later	These codes were mainly used to identify processes of spacing but also served to display the symbolic function of Nour Square
Descriptions of the tents	Descriptions of discussion sessions Attachment to the community around the tents Relations between different groups with base in the tents/internal divides Critique: Tents as elitist /only for the 'educated'	These codes were mainly used to identify processes of spacing and make the argument that protesters in the tents consolidated their relations
Descriptions of confrontational zones	People at the confrontational zones Acknowledgement of violence as expression of poverty	These codes were mainly used to identify processes of spacing and make the argument that protesters in the tents consolidated their relations
Relations between the three zones	Expressions of solidarity with confrontational zones Moving between places	These codes were mainly used to identify processes of synthesis

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English Summary

This dissertation is an in-depth case study of the Lebanese October Uprising, which broke out in 2019. The uprising was both a historical event in Lebanon and an important case of an *anti-sectarian movement*, a phenomenon that has been seen across a range of divided societies. Anti-sectarian movements are characterized by mobilizing citizens around social and political issues that cut across sect (i.e. ethnicity and/or religion) with a genuine aim to challenge the politicization of sect-based identities. In recent years, these movements have attracted increasing scholarly attention, as they are seen to hold a potential to mitigate sectarian conflict and divisions and to reduce the political salience of sect-based identities. Their potential to drive such processes of *de-sectarianization* lies in their ability to promote solidarity between citizens and thus pave the way for new forms of political community that can replace sectarian politics. While the October Uprising was seen as a display of solidarity between citizens from different sects, it also reflected persistent divides and conflicts across overlapping social identities in Lebanese society. This dissertation explores which challenges protesters in the uprising encountered when seeking to forge solidarity between citizens across sect and other salient boundaries in Lebanon.

By using class, spatiality and media as thematic prisms and by engaging theoretical tools from the social movement literature, the dissertation identifies three main challenges facing protesters in the October Uprising. The first challenge arises in the prism of class and regards the promotion of solidarity towards a certain segment of the lower classes in Lebanon, namely young men from the Shiite majority areas of Dahiyeh and Khandak el Ghamiq. The second challenge takes points of departure in the prisms of media and spatiality and concerns the way media distorted the representation of Lebanon's second largest city, Tripoli. The third challenge is identified through the prism of spatiality and concerns internal divisions and conflicting tactical orientations between protesters in Tripoli, which made it difficult for them to coexist within a shared urban protest space. The dissertation draws on 57 days of fieldwork in Lebanon, 77 interviews with Lebanese protesters, 31 background interviews, as well as extensive text and visual material.

By focusing on the interplay between sect and other identities, the dissertation situates itself within a recent strand of studies that examines anti-sectarian movements through an intersectional approach, which acknowledges that social identities are interlinked, and that sect-based divides therefore interact with other fault lines.

The dissertation offers three main contributions to the debates about the October Uprising as well as to the literatures on anti-sectarian movements and de-sectarianization. First, it provides thick empirical descriptions of the uprising's main challenges and brings attention to voices and aspects that have so far been overlooked. Second, it illustrates the utility and relevance of three thematic prisms – class, spatiality, and media – which can be employed to study challenges to intersectional solidarity in anti-sectarian movements more generally. So far, intersectional studies of anti-sectarian movements have focused mainly on gender and sexuality. By bringing in the three prisms, the dissertation thus expands the intersectional approach. Third, it provides a set of key lessons about solidarity challenges in anti-sectarian movements, which can inform discussions about their potential to drive processes of de-sectarianization. Hence, the dissertation takes a first step towards understanding the obstacles that need to be overcome in order for anti-sectarian movements to reduce sectarian conflicts and tension in divided societies.

Dansk resumé

Denne ph.d.-afhandling er et dybdegående casestudie af den libanesiske Oktoberopstand; en folkelig protestbevægelse, som brød ud i 2019. Oktoberopstanden var både en historisk begivenhed i Libanon og et vigtigt eksempel på en såkaldt, *antisekterisk bevægelse*; en type af folkelige bevægelser, som er forekommet i en række religiøst og etnisk splittede samfund verden over. Anti-sekteriske bevægelser er kendetegnet ved at mobilisere borgere omkring sociale og politiske spørgsmål, der går på tværs af sekt (dvs. etnicitet og/eller religion) med et mål om at afpolitiserer sekteriske skel. I de senere år har disse bevægelser tiltrukket sig stigende opmærksomhed blandt forskere, fordi de anses for at rumme et potentiale til at mindske graden af sekterisk konflikt i splittede lande. Deres potentiale til at fostre *afsekterisering* ligger i deres evne til at fremme solidaritet mellem borgerne og dermed bane vejen for nye politiske fællesskaber, der kan erstatte de sekteriske. Oktoberopstanden blev set som et tegn på solidaritet mellem borgere fra forskellige sekter i Libanon. Protestbevægelsen afslørede dog også betydelige skel og konflikter på tværs af en række overlappende sociale identiteter i det libanesiske samfund. Formålet med afhandlingen er at afdække hvilke udfordringer, som demonstranter i Oktoberopstanden mødte, når de forsøgte at fremme solidaritet mellem borgere på tværs af sekteriske og andre markante skillelinjer i Libanon.

Problemstilling belyses gennem tre tematiske prismer – klasse, rumlighed og medier – og ved brug af teoretiske værktøjer fra litteraturen om sociale bevægelser. Med dette udgangspunkt identificerer afhandlingen tre hovedudfordringer, som demonstranterne stod over for. Den første udfordring tager udgangspunkt i klasse og omhandler brugen af negative stigmatiserende diskurser omkring unge underprivilegerede mænd fra to af Beiruts overvejende Shiamuslimske områder, Dahiyeh og Khandak el Ghamiq. Den anden udfordring belyser både geografiske skel og mediernes rolle, da den vedrører måden, hvorpå nogle af Libanons populære medieplatforme skabte et positivt, men forskruet billede af landets næststørste by, Tripoli. Den tredje udfordring tager udgangspunkt i protestrum, og handler om de taktiske uenigheder mellem demonstranter i Tripoli, som gjorde det vanskeligt for dem at demonstrere i fællesskab på samme sted i byen. Afhandlingen trækker på 57 dages feltarbejde i Libanon, 77 interviews med libanesiske demonstranter, 31 baggrundsinterviews samt omfattende tekst og visuelt materiale.

Ved at fokusere på samspillet mellem sekt og andre identiteter, skriver afhandlingen sig ind i en nyere gren inden for forskningen i anti-sekteriske bevægelser, som tager udgangspunkt i en intersektionel tilgang, der lægger vægt på vekselvirkningen mellem forskellige identiteter i splittede samfund.

Afhandlingen yder tre hovedbidrag til debatterne om Oktoberopstanden samt til litteraturen om anti-sekteriske bevægelser og afsektarisering. For det første giver den detaljerede empiriske beskrivelser af Oktoberopstandens hovedudfordringer og sætter fokus på stemmer og aspekter, som hidtil er blevet underbelyst inden for disse debatter. For det andet illustrerer afhandlingen nytten og relevansen af tre tematiske prismer – klasse, rumlighed og medier – som kan bruges til at studere udfordringer med intersektionel solidaritet i antisekteriske bevægelser mere generelt. Hidtil har intersektionelle studier af anti-sekteriske bevægelser hovedsageligt fokuseret på køn og seksualitet. Ved at bringe de tre prismer ind, udvider afhandlingen således den intersektionelle tilgang. For det tredje giver den en række generelle indsigter om solidaritetsudfordringer i anti-sekteriske bevægelser, som kan informere diskussioner om, hvordan disse bevægelser kan drive afsektariseringsprocesser. Dermed udgør afhandlingen et første skridt i retning mod at forstå de forhindringer, der skal overvindes, for at anti-sekteriske bevægelser kan mindske konflikt og spændinger i splittede samfund.