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Reclaiming The Right To The City Through The Urban Commons:

Examining various commoning practices in the context of Beirut, Lebanon

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Summary

Capitalist expansion has altered the relation between societies and urban spaces. The public is no longer involved in the production of cities but rather private investments take the lead creating separate isolated spheres of interactions and preventing people from coming together (Purcell, 2014).Therefore, as neoliberalism turned "the right to the city" exclusive to private interests, people sought to reclaim this right by taking matter into their own hands to satisfy collective and individual needs as the state and the market were behind the alienations and injustices. The right to the city conceptualized by Lefebvre involves a society beyond capitalism and the state that is based on the collective production, appropriation, and management of the city while reintegrating it into the "web of social connections" (Lefebvre, 1996). Having similar characteristics to this concept, "urban commons" can be seen as a practical approach for achieving this right. Therefore, the research aimed to expand the concept of urban commons in the literature in terms of its wide variety of practices and relation to the right to the city as well as explore the circumstances behind their emergence, management and social relations of users. Most importantly, the research analyzed urban commons as alternative planning tools to the state and the market for collectively managing the city and gaining access to its resources. Through a qualitative approach primarily based on interviews and observations supplemented by secondary sources, the research sought to have an in-depth understanding of urban commons in the context of Beirut, Lebanon. Interviews were conducted among diverse respondents including activists, citizens, experts and scholars and a multiple case study research strategy was chosen to investigate empirically three types of urban commons with different scales and duration: **October 17th revolution**, **Nation Station** (a community kitchen/center) and **the informal bus system**. The urban commons studied reflected the aspirations of communities and represented their socio-economic and political needs as people self-organized and collectively shaped the city. The continuous appropriation of space provoked a realization that brought awareness to the importance of common spaces for the democratization and functioning of a more just and inclusive city. Through everyday inhabitance, people were able to gain a sense of ownership and belonging to the city and form close relations with strangers. Therefore, instead being spectators to their surroundings, the urban commons provided an organizational model that challenges the state and the market and goes beyond private property regimes while providing opportunities for people to reclaim their right to the city through their participation in the production of the city's spaces and resources affecting their everyday lives.

Keywords

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Abbreviations

C1	Case study 1
C2	Case Study 2
C3	Case Study 3
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CPRs	Common Pool Resources/Common Property Regimes
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IHS	Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies
LUPD	Lebanese Union for Persons with Physical Disabilities
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background Information and Problem Statement

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose off the common
But leaves the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from the goose.

-17th century folk poem

Cities are spaces for opportunities and progress but are also characterized by their complexity. They involve the interactions between people and their environment and create lots of challenges and inequalities due to the density of people and scarcity of resources. This results in competition and challenges underlined by capitalism which will only be exacerbated over the years as cities are subject to continuous and rapid external and internal changes. Indeed, global capitalism and neoliberal development have inherently shaped contemporary cities (Sassen 1991; N. Smith 2002; Castells 1989). Waves of privatization, redevelopment and commodification of urban space, natural resources and public services (Milan, 2022) have created segregations among citizens, and transformed cities into spaces of inequalities and injustices. It has led to the destruction of common resources upon which communities depended on for their livelihoods (Eynaud, Juan, & Mourey, 2018). Capitalism has effectively separated urban space from its inhabitants. The public is no longer involved in the production of space but rather private investments take the lead and segregates users creating separate isolated spheres of interactions and preventing them from coming together (Purcell, 2014).That being said, the private realm became the main space for encounters with the proliferation in spaces of consumption such as shopping malls, business centers, restaurants… (Minton, 2009) to the detriment of public space.

As David Harvey argues, neoliberalism has turned "the right to the city" exclusive to private interests where a small urban elite produces and manages surpluses for their own ends. First conceptualized by Henri Lefebvre in 1968 in his book "Le Droit à la Ville", the idea of right to the city has gained interest in the academic world among a great deal of scholars as it highlights the democratization of the spaces of the city, both in terms of how the city is used and how the city is constructed and designed (Attoh, 2011). Marc Purcell also highlights its importance in its capacity to 'extend the limits of politics and expand the decision-making control of citizens' (Purcell, 2003). Therefore, Lefebvre's critique of neoliberalism calls for a new society that goes beyond capitalism and the state and is based on the collective self-governing and self-management of society or as he calls "autogestion" (Lefebvre, 2003). Autogestion is based on grassroots decision making and decentralization of power to autonomous local units. Such action requires awakening from the people which can be best seen through the waves of mobilization and social movements trying to reclaim the city from the commodification of public services and public spaces. For Lefebvre, the struggle for the right to the city also involves appropriating and reclaiming urban space in the city while reintegrating them into the "web of social connections" (Lefebvre, 1996). This entails a radical alternative from the property rights conception of ownership and a focus on the city belonging to those who inhabit it (Purcell, 2014). It also highlights the city as a space of encounter where inhabitants engage, connect and learn from each other by overcoming the divides established through enclosure and privatizations (Purcell, 2014).That being said, as cities turn into spaces of alienation, inequalities and injustices, protests and contestation

against spatial enclosure and destructive forms of urbanization have taken shape and the struggle for the commons became at the center of political mobilization in cities (Milan, 2022). People and grassroots initiatives have emerged deploying different methods such as "occupation, reappropriation, commoning" to assert their right to the city and oppose the use of space as a source of profit (Harvey, 2003).

Building off of Lefebvre's ideas of a society beyond capitalism and one of "production, appropriation, and management of space" through engagement and self-organization among inhabitants, the concept of **urban commons** can be seen as an approach to achieving the right to the city. In fact, the term "commons" has similarities with the precapitalist city as it develops out of collective appropriation of space. Several scholars argue that the urban commons could constitute an efficient organizational model for managing cities and providing citizens with access to essential resources (Huron, 2015; Kornberger & Borch, 2015). The urban commons also propose "rethinking the city not only as urban resources that are collectively shared but also as an inherently relational phenomenon that contributes to building sociality between urban dwellers" (Purcell, 2014). Therefore, these various attempts represent alternative planning methods to the traditional planning tools that cities and public officials have been using. Emerging community initiatives aim to fill the gap left behind by the state and shape urban space through creating opportunities for community use, cooperation, responsibility and care for urban resources to satisfy collective and individual needs. Different streams of thought have emerged in the literature regarding urban commons. Some theorists focused on the political acts of reclamation against capitalism, while others examined their long-term maintenance and underlying social process. Other scholars highlighted the "urban" aspect of the commons and the various property types. Examples such as transforming parking lots, revitalizing abandoned buildings, repair projects, community gardens, cooperatives, occupying squares, have all been reinterpreted as the creation of the urban commons challenging the privatization and commodification of cities through everyday practices (Zapata Campos et al., 2020). That being said, the urban commons provide an organizational model that challenges the state and the market and goes beyond private property regimes while providing opportunities for people to reclaim their right to the city through their participation in the production of the city's spaces and resources.

1.1.2 Context of Case Studies

For the purpose of this research Beirut, Lebanon was chosen as the context for the case studies. It is a relevant context due to the limited literature on urban commons in that country as well as the waves of privatizations that have severely limited the availability and accessibility of public spaces and services especially in relation to the post-war reconstruction. Indeed, Beirut's city center, prior to the 1975 civil war, was bustling with life and allowed people from various backgrounds to come together for all types of activities. After the end of the war in 1990, a controversial reconstruction led by Solidere, a politically affiliated company, focused on the privatization of the city center and turned it into an exclusive enclave for the wealthy and foreign population. This led to the transformation of the social dynamics of the city and no national policy sought to reestablish the link between environment and urban population (Lakrouf; Waine, 2020). Therefore, there wasn't just a ruined city, but a ruined idea of the commons along with a loss of sense of belonging to the city, loss of social fabric, and segregation of the population along sectarian lines. Public spaces were diminished severely after the war, due to the lack of planning, uncontrolled and

unregulated development, and lack of awareness of their importance to society (Sinno,2020). Many were abandoned, semi-privatized or politicized and sealed off under security pretense, creating further segregation and limitations on accessibility (Lakrouf;Waine, 2020). Today, Beirut only has 0.5% of public spaces (Kiesouw, 2018) and green spaces decreased to less than 13%. Public spaces are limited to roads and gathering spaces reserved to the private realm such as malls, restaurants, resorts…While there have been many attempts at reclaiming the commons, the 2019 October Revolution played a pivotal role not only in the awakening and renewed hope for people but also in the importance of the role of public spaces in achieving the right to the city. This makes the case of Lebanon also relevant in relation to the concept of right to the city with recent waves of demonstrations taking place and people struggling to claim back what is rightfully theirs. Furthermore, ruling political elites in Lebanon are not concerned with protecting commons or public resources but in many instances they are behind their destruction and privatization in favor of profit, reflecting the corruption that plagues the government (Fawaz;Serhan, 2020). Indeed, Lebanese people are lacking basic public service provisions and suffer from having their basic needs met such as water, electricity, public transportation… Not to mention, a series of destabilizing events continue to rock the country (pandemic threats, economic crisis, Beirut post explosion). These crises deepened existing socio-economic inequalities and had devastating impacts on people's livelihoods (Naamani, 2019). The August 4th port explosion also brought into question the city's problematic planning that have shaped the city and its socio-spatial construct. With the lack of competent authorities to protect and provide for its citizens and a deepening economic crisis, people found themselves depending on their own capabilities and each other to find ways to be resilient and resort to alternative solutions to respond to these injustices. This has led to many bottom-up initiatives to provide spaces and access to basic services for people, which were under the government's responsibility.

All these elements, a weak and corrupt state, constant political instability, multiple crises and ongoing challenges, high privatization coupled with lack of care and respect to public spaces, weak social ties and belonging due to long history of segregation and sectarianism, make Lebanon an interesting case to study and investigate the topic of the urban commons and its relation to the right to the city. The research will therefore investigate how urban commons in the context of Lebanon offer a way, beyond the state and market, to apply the concept of "the right to the city" in practice through collective self-management and organization; all while creating and reinforcing social ties through everyday encounters.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research aims to expand and deepen the concept of urban commons in the existing body of literature in terms of its wide variety of practices as well as its relation and connection to the right to the city. More specifically it sets out, through a deductive approach, to explore and describe these concepts through different case studies in the city of Beirut. It aims to analyze a variety of urban commons and accompanying commoning practices to underlie the circumstances behind their emergence and explore their organization, management, and social relations of users involved in the creation and production of the resources.Through analyzing the widening concept of Hess' new commons, the research also aims to analyze urban commons as potential planning alternatives to the state and the market in terms of providing an organizational model for collectively managing the city and gaining access to its resources.

1.3 Main Research Question and Research Sub-Questions

For the research questions, the study will examine the users, management and commoning practices of the urban commons as well as their relation to the right to the city. Specifically, the main question this research would like to answer is:

How are People Reclaiming their Right to the City through the Urban Commons?

To answer this question, the research seeks to answer the following sub-questions:

- Under which circumstances and for what purposes do urban commons emerge?
- How are urban commons organized and managed in the city, and how are they sustained over time?
- What are some of the initiatives/commoning practices that have taken place to claim back the right to the city?
- Who are the users behind the urban commons and how have commoning practices affected their relations among each other?

To answer these questions three case studies in Beirut will be analyzed through a qualitative analysis approach.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The commons is a concept that has been studied mainly from the rural and natural/environmental perspective and highlighted more recently through Elinor Ostrom's work. With renewed interest in the topic, the concept of the urban commons emerged and tackles the commons through the lens of the city. Being a relatively new concept, it hasn't been extensively explored in the current literature and has been gaining interest among scholars in recent years. While there have been studies on the contested nature of ownership and property rights and commoning practices, there is still much to explore in terms of the types and characteristics of commons that exist in cities as the concept has taken many shapes, forms and definitions. In addition, while the connection between right to the city and commoning has been established through several literature, it has been less empirically studied. Therefore, this research aims to theoretically extend the concept of urban commons in the literature in terms of its wide variety of practices and its connection to the right of the city. The study contributes to scientific research through grounding the theory in real-life empirical examples by providing a new understanding of its meaning and practices in the Lebanese context. One particular case study chosen also offers a new perspective on the commons as it tackles the concept from the standpoint of informal public transportation which hasn't been given much attention in the literature. In addition, while urban commons have been studied in different geographical contexts, the research also contributes to the need to further investigate the concept in the Middle East, since it hasn't been much explored in that region. Therefore, research on urban commons in the city of Beirut contributes to the local knowledge and understanding of the direct environment and how the market, civil society, and people can shape the development of the city. The study can also be used as a supporting argument for the adoption of potential future policies for awareness on the importance of urban commons in cities and the empowerment of civil society in the decision-making processes in the production of urban space and areas affecting their lives. Finally, urban commons are a significant concept in the growing privatization of cities as they provide in-between spaces and potential alternatives to city-making and accessibility to resources that

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do not rely on the state nor the private sector. They focus on bottom-up governance systems rather than top-down approaches and play a role in creating more inclusive and just societies. The urban commons, hence, offer an organizational model for managing cities and provide a practical approach for citizens to achieve the right to the city through the production and development of the city, its resources and the relations among the urban dwellers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 State of the art of the theories

2.1.1 Traditional Commons

The commons date back to the feudal mode of social organization that flourished in Europe between the 9th and 15th centuries and are best portrayed by the English commons (Volont & Smets, 2022). Traditional commons are mainly involved in rural and natural resources such as land, waterways, forests, fisheries etc. that were collectively cultivated and relied upon by peasant families (Williams, 2018). In broad terms, the commons are defined as resources "that are shared by a community of users who can produce and/or have access to them through specific institutional arrangements" (Hess & Ostrom, 2011; Ostrom, 1990; Peredo, Haugh, Hudon, & Meyer, 2020). Their governance is based on mechanisms of self-organization, "where producers and users collectively allocate responsibilities in terms of the production, distribution and consumption of the shared resources" (Dobusch, Dobusch, & Müller-Seitz, 2019; Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2016; Meyer, 2020).

2.1.2 Tragedy of the Commons

Over the years, the commons have come under increasing pressure and suffered from neoliberalism and the marketization of nearly all resources (Purcell, 2014) which have led to their enclosure. They are seen as a "vestige of the past" which are unable to make it in the modern world (Fournier, 2013). Supporting such a view was Ecologist Garrett Hardin who was influential in his study of natural and environmental resources. In his 1968 journal Science publication, Hardin argues that the commons are a resource that is open to exploitation and that rather than limiting their use of the resources, people would act as "free riders" and selfishly exhaust them for their own needs and interests (Huron, 2015; Purcell, 2014). This is what he called the ***"Tragedy of the Commons"*** (Hardin, 1968). A tragedy which can only be prevented and avoided through the introduction of regulations whether from the state or through private ownership, as they can provide a more effective and sustainable way to manage the resources and prevent their overexploitation (Fournier, 2013).

2.1.3 Elinor Ostrom

Elinor Ostrom, a scholar who devoted her career to the study of the resilience of commons and was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics in 2009 for her landmark study "Governing the Commons" refutes this idea. Ostrom criticized Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons" emphasizing how several commons survived and endured over the years even with the pressure of capitalism (Purcell, 2014). She argues that communities have demonstrated capacities to sustainably manage their commons for centuries through self-organization (Fournier, 2013). Ostrom's work focused mainly on natural and environmental commons such as groundwater basin, grasslands, fisheries and how they were maintained and managed collectively by its users (Volont & Smets, 2022). These common property regimes or Common Pool Resources (CPRs) were marked by their substractibility meaning that they can be depleted by their overuse and therefore need some type of management (Huron, 2015). She defined a series of organizational "design principles" for sustainable and collective resource management arguing on the economic validity of the commons and the ability for people to self-organize and manage the land and resources (Volont & Smets, 2022). Ostrom's ideals are in line with the CPR theorists who are mainly concerned with how the commons are maintained over time and focus on their social process, rather than how they are formed

or reclaimed. This form of self-organized governance also constitutes, according to Ostrom, an alternative to the state and the market.

2.1.4 Third Approach to State and Market

Scholars have sought over the years to find post-capitalist alternatives that are more equal and sustainable, and the notion of the commons was put forward as a way beyond commodification of natural resources and services (Venugopal, 2020).Traditionally, the commons constitute a paradigm that challenges both the market and the state as the unique social, economic and political system that efficiently allocates resources (Bollier, 2011). Ostrom conceived them as a third approach to the state-market dichotomy in terms of governance, and to the public-private dichotomy in terms of property. By contrast other scholars envisaged the commons not as complementary to that of the state and the market but rather as a "third way" beside private and public property. Ugo Mattei argues that commons are resources that should be excluded from privatization and made public because of their collective importance such as water, and sees conflict as an important dimension of commons which he envisioned as a political act of claiming resources in common against commodification and commercialization. His thought is in line with the alter-globalization movement which believe that commons resources which are collectively produced should be freely available. They, therefore, provide an explicit critique of capitalism and explore the political acts of reclamation of the commons rather than their maintenance and social process.

2.1.5 Charlotte Hess' New Commons

That being said, Ostrom's work helped renew interest in the concept of the commons, as well as their viability as an alternative to the market or the state. While rural commons may have attracted more attention in the literature, the commons are not merely a rural phenomenon and not exclusively reserved for environmental resources (Blomley, 2008). Charlotte Hess, Ostrom's colleague, expanded the commons to include different types of shared resources that have developed without pre-existing rules or institutional arrangements (Hess, 2008) such as cultural commons, knowledge commons, infrastructure commons and neighborhood commons among others (Volont & Smets, 2022) . These were labeled as "New Commons" in one of the most exhaustive and diverse classification of the types of both tangible and intangible commons (Feinberg, Ghorbani, & Herder, 2021). These new commons were also characterized by their human-made nature and include new scales of resources spread across various sectors and also explored through the lens of the city.

Cultural Commons
- Fashion
- Indigenous Culture
- Music
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Public Art
- Spiritual/Sacred Commons
- Sports
  - Snowmobiles
  - Surfing lanes
  - Watercraft
- Tourism
  - Landscapes
  - Eco-tourism

Medical and Health Commons
- Antimicrobial Resistance
- Medical Budgets
- Public Health Care
- Hospitals

Neighborhood Commons
- Housing
  - Homeless
  - Homeowners' Associations
  - Apartment communities
- Community Gardens
- Security
- Sidewalks
- Streets
- Silence / Noise

Infrastructure Commons
- Electromagnetic Spectrum
- Public Radio
- Wireless Communication
- Mass Communication
- Intenet Infrastructure
- Transportation
  - Roads
    - Traffic Congestion
    - Voluntary Provision
    - Speed Reduction
    - Parking
  - Airports
  - Seaports
- Budgets

Traditional Commons
- Agriculture
- Fisheries
- Forests
- Grazing Lands
- Land Tenure and Use
- Villages and Social Organization
- Water and Irrigation
- Wildlife

Knowledge Commons
- Education
  - Digital Divide
  - Universities
  - Civic Education
- Intellectual Property Rights
  - Anticommons
  - Copyright
  - Creative/Science Commons
  - Libre Commons
  - Patents
  - Semicommons
- Internet
  - Domain Names
  - Infrastructure
  - Access
- Libraries
  - Digital & Traditional
  - Information Commons
  - Free Access
- Public Domain
- Science
  - Open Science
  - Taxonomies
  - Microbiological Commons
  - Genetic Commons
- Peer Production/Mass Collaboration
  - Conservation Commons
  - Open-source Software
  - SmartMobs
  - Commons Websites and Blogs

Markets as Commons
- Capitalism
- Exchange Commons
- Gift Economies

Global Commons
- Antarctica
- Atmosphere
- Biodiversity
- Deep-sea Oceans
- Electromagnetic Spectrum
- Food Security
- Global Warming
- Outer Space
- Pollution
- Toxic Waste and Garbage
- Transboundary Rivers
- Water Shortages
- Knowledge
- Public Health
- Markets
- Infrastructure
- Social Commons
- Cultural Commons

NEW COMMONS

C. Hess 2008

Figure 1 Map of New Commons Adapted from Hess (2008)

2.1.6 Urban Commons

Furthermore, Hardt and Negri have argued that cities are also factories for producing commons (Hardt and Negri, 2009) and many scholars have shifted their focus from forests, pastures and waterbodies to include urban spaces and practices where the commons seem to be no less significant than in rural settings. Recent literature expanded the commons concept to include the urban commons (e.g. Dardot and Laval, 2014; Harvey, 2012; Kornberger and Borch, 2015; Stavrides, 2014) focusing on the commons in cities as well as on human-made resources including public infrastructures, knowledge, transportation, streets, squares, community gardens which are collectively managed by a community. Examples can be illustrated through repair projects, food rescue, occupation of squares, housing cooperatives and social centers all of which are challenging the privatization and commodification of cities through everyday practices. Applying the urban context to the traditional commons creates further complexities and challenges to practice commoning in cities. The urban commons take place in a saturated space as Huron highlights. A space that is not only densely packed by people but where there are huge capital investments and competing uses over scarce resources (Huron, 2015). Not to mention that urban commons might also be competing with each other as one type of common, for example a community garden might be taking up land or space that could have been used for another type of commons (Julia Köpper & Agnes Katharina Müller, 2020). This entails a sort of tradeoff based on the citizens' needs and

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preferences. Another challenge is that unlike commons in rural areas where people know each other, the urban area constitutes the coming together of strangers and this might also create potential conflicts but it can also bring people from different geographical, cultural and political backgrounds together. This makes studying the urban commons interesting and some might even say necessary especially in terms of exploring how it might impact the relations among people (Huron, 2015).

2.1.7 Commoning

Defining the urban commons on the other hand has proven challenging as the concept has taken various shapes and forms and has expanded through literature over the years. Being an open concept, and for the purpose of this research, the urban commons are analyzed and looked at through some of the essential elements that constitute the commons. Many scholars agree with De Angelis' (2007) elements that are required for the creation of commons which are *shared resources* (both tangible and intangible), *a community* (a defined group of people using and producing the commons), and *institutional arrangements* for sharing and managing those resources. In that sense urban commons are resources that are shared by a community of users who produce or have access to them through institutional arrangement. Not to mention, emerging literature on the urban commons focuses on grassroot organization that reclaim and take ownership of resources in urban settings (Daskalaki et al., 2019) emphasizing the process of *commoning*, the collective management of the commons, rather than simply focusing on urban commons as shared resources (Linebaugh, 2007). As Federeci (2009) puts it "there are no commons without community", highlighting the social nature of the commons and the activities and relationships that take place within them. Scholars Linebaugh, Gidwani and Baviskar, Huron, DeAngelis, Ostrom among others all agree and push for the idea that the commons are not just a mere resource but also a social process. They are a form of social organization and collective way to manage and produce resources (Linebaugh, 2008). Linebaugh (2007) even highlighted the use of the commons as a "verb" rather than a noun, stating:

> *"To speak of the commons as if it were a natural resource is misleading at best and dangerous at worst- the commons is an activity and, if anything, it expresses relationships in society that are inseparable from relations to nature, it might be better to keep the word as a verb, an activity, rather than a noun, a substantive practice creating and reproducing commons." (Linebaugh, 2007: p.279)*

While Ostrom and her colleagues through their decade studies were among the first to argument that commons are able to be managed and sustained for centuries due to some form of social organization and community (Ostrom 1990,2002,2010), many have argued that her work only captures an aspect of the commons as she focuses on the notion of CPR and natural elements. Ostrom explores how communities organize in commons to share resources between them but ignores that commons may not only be distributed in common but also maybe used in commons and maybe reproductive of communities (Fournier, 2013). That said, "commoning goes beyond resource allocation and preservation and can involve collective use and production" (Caffentiziz, 2004; De Angelis and Harvie, 2013). It reflects everyday practices of sharing resources based on inclusivity and cooperation that goes beyond the state and the market. Hardt and Negri also emphasize, through their coined term "the common", the social production and sociality as a shared outcome of commoning

(Volont & Smets, 2022). Valerie Fournier (2013) builds more on this idea and describes three pillars of commoning:

1- *Organizing in common:* which refers to the collective and shared management of resources and involves the co-creation of the rules to preserve the commons.

2- *Organizing for commons*: includes the collective use and consumption of the common resources that are produced.

3- *Organizing of commons*: involves the collective production of common resources and the social process of creating communities through sharing and reciprocity.

(Fournier, 2013)

Therefore, while commoning movements go against the enclosure and commodification of resources, their focus is not only on the physical environment but also on the social process underlying the production of these resources.

2.1.8 Ownership/Accessibility

The commons also challenge the traditional notions of ownership and accessibility. It has come to represent an alternative to public and private ownership (Harvey 2012) where "public" refers to space created and controlled by the government and "private" implies that an individual or a group of people make the rules. The boundaries of the urban commons are somewhat porous and fluid and not as clearly defined as those of traditional commons. In a way "it doesn't belong to anyone and it belongs to everyone" (Rodota, 2012). Mainly when discussing ownership of the commons, it is seen in terms of rights of use rather than rights of appropriation. A right not to be excluded from the benefits of resources (Fournier, 2013). Mattei also supports this claim and understands the commons as rights to be protected and as instruments for basic needs and satisfaction (Mattei, 2011). For Stavrides, institutions of commoning must remain permanently open and inviting to newcomers in order to prevent the accumulation of power. Space is always in the making and belongs to immediate and potential future users (Feinberg et al., 2021). Stavrides highlights the concept of "common space" which is neither public nor private and is used under conditions decided on by communities. This doesn't entail that the commons are free or open for everyone. In fact, sometimes commons are made exclusive (Hubbard, 2012) with only certain groups allowed to access and use the commons. These closed groups of users would then regulate it and ensure its sustainability (Huron, 2015). This is a statement which also supported by Elinor Ostrom where enclosure can be a result of commoning activities to ensure and preserve the quality and functioning of the commons (Feinberg et al., 2021). Urban commons are therefore in-between spaces, neither public nor private and there has been a shift in their study as they are being seen as more than just property, focusing on their social function rather than ownership. In addition, commoning extends beyond the distribution of rights to access, and involves duties and responsibilities which are necessary to maintain the commons and ensure their sustainability. Pedersen highlights it through the governing principle of "reciprocity in perpetuity" where he makes the use of the resources conditional on reciprocity in their care. This entails the production of not just mere resources but also community and social relations (Pedersen 2010).

Consequently, there is still much to learn about the urban commons as the concept is open for interpretation and while there have been debates on the types of ownership, reclamation and maintenance, there is still much to explore on their diversity and role as an organizing model that is an alternative to the market and the state and their significance in their contribution to the right to the city.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework contributes to the theory of the commons by examining and visualizing how urban commons relate and intersect with the concept of the right to the city.

For Lefebvre, the commons share a similar characteristic with the precapitalist city as it develops through collective appropriation of space. Many scholars have used "commons" to describe the collective effort of people to increase the effectiveness of available resources in meeting their needs, which the public and private sectors have failed to fulfill.The literature helps delineate three components of the right to the city as advocated by Lefebvre and other scholars which are also compatible features of the urban commons: the right to participation, right to appropriation, and right to self-management/autogestion of space and resources in the city. The framework highlights how these rights intertwine between both concepts and how they fit within the larger aspect of sociality and de-alienation.

- ***Right to participation*** refers to the right to participate in the decision making processes that relate to the production of urban spaces (Fournier, 2013) and the ability to appropriate and use these spaces to foster a sense of belonging. This right comes off as a response to the often distant and disconnected planning from citizens' actual needs. Marcuse (2009) and Harvey (2003) also highlight that the right to the city entails a right to participate in its creation. It is the capacity to expand the decision making control of citizens (Purcell, 2003) and results in the democratization of spaces of the city in terms of how the city is used, constructed and designed. It is also one manifestation of autogestion as inhabitants are managing the production of space themselves.

- ***Right to appropriation***: for Lefebvre, the "right to the city" involves the right to appropriate urban space through its access, use, occupation and production. It is a political process which involves contestation over urban spaces (Fournier, 2013). Appropriation also focuses on use value over exchange value and ownership. It is also linked to autogestion as people self-organize to reclaim the use and production of spaces and make the city their own again, and linked to de-alienation as urban spaces for encounter and connections are reclaimed and "inhabitants engage with each other in meaningful interactions through which they overcome their separations and learn about each other".

- ***Right to self-management/autogestion:*** Autogestion "refers to workers in a factory who take control of the means of production and manage the production themselves". It is a radical attack on capitalism. The right for autogestion or self-management, conceptualized by Lefebvre and others, refers to a continuous struggle to control one's own existence and regain control on all aspects of life. As Purcell puts it, it is a struggle for democracy, a struggle against alienation of one's power to another entity (state, capitalism…), a refusal to accept passively the commodified urban space of the neoliberal city. These struggles all fall under the need and the right to inhabit well.
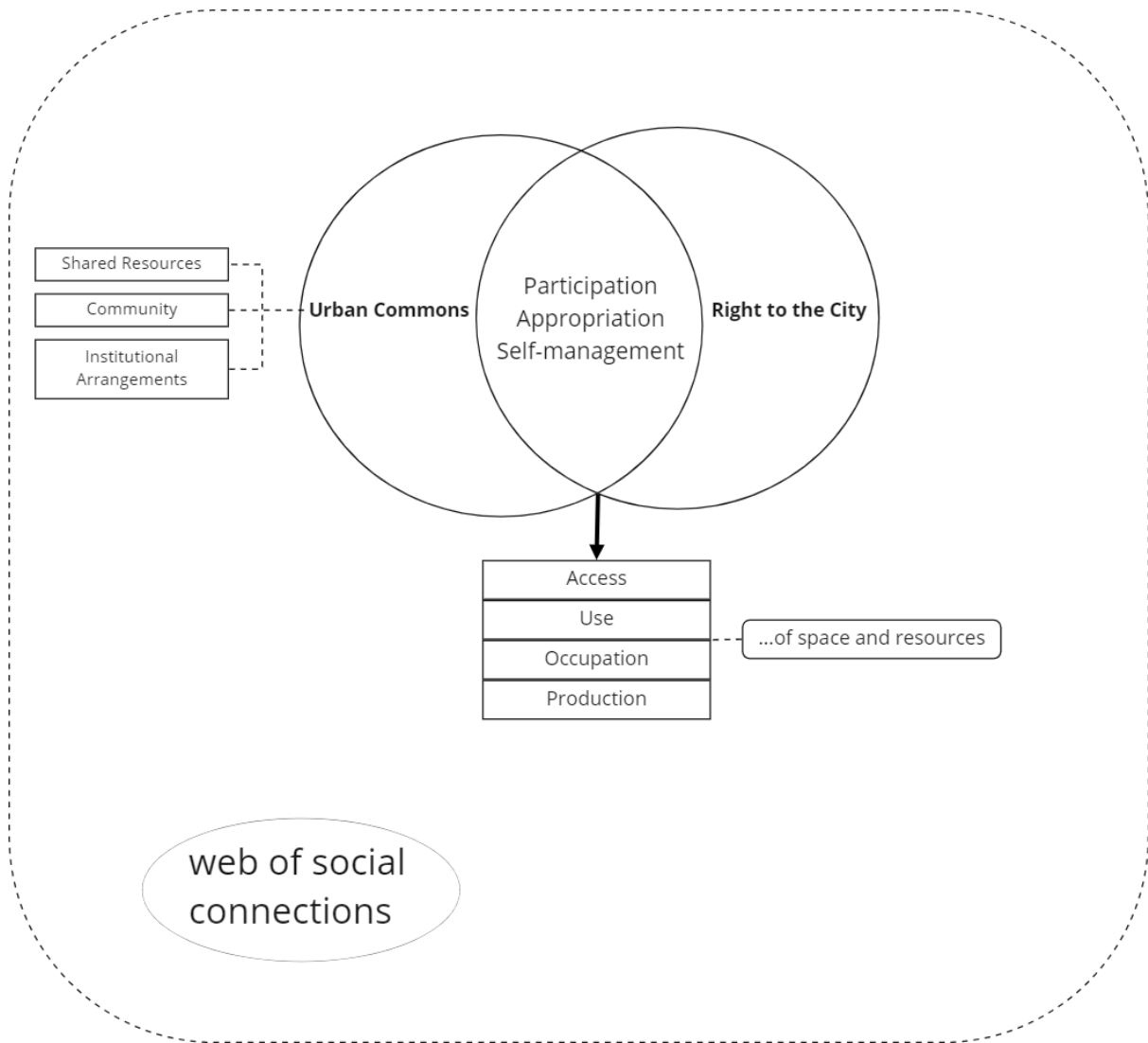
Figure 2: Conceptual framework

Chapter 3: Research design, methodology

3.1 Description of the research design and methods

The research design is characterized by a qualitative empirical research approach to get a better and more in-depth understanding of the different perceptions and experiences of users of urban commons in Beirut, Lebanon. The research will be mainly based on primary qualitative data collection such as interviews and observations and supplemented by secondary data such as news articles, journal articles and papers etc. for the purpose of triangulation.

3.1.2 Case Study

A multiple case study research strategy was chosen as the most suitable approach to examine different types of urban commons with different scales, reclamation and duration to understand more empirically the various commoning practices and how they contribute to the right to the city in the context of Beirut. The strategy is also relevant due to its explanatory and exploratory nature. This strategy consists of gathering qualitative data holistically through a detailed description of the phenomena under study (organization, emergence, social components…), gaining more extensive and in-depth knowledge on the topic in its specific context (Thiel, 2014; Yin, 2014). The case study is supplemented by quantitative data to support explanation and analysis.

Three case studies constituting different commoning practices in the city of Beirut were selected:

- A radical/spontaneous and momentary event: the case of the **October 17th revolution in 2019** where social movements and mobilization took on various commoning practices mainly focusing on the appropriation of public squares, parking lots and abandoned buildings.

- A radical and temporary event as a result of a crisis turned into a more "permanent" urban commons: the case of **Nation Station** initiated in 2020 as a response to the August 4th Beirut Port explosion. It started as a collaboration among friends to help their neighborhood and elderly neighbors and evolved into a community kitchen/community center.

- Everyday commoning: the case of the **informal shared transport system** focusing on **the informal bus** as the mode of transport which emerged out of the void of the public service from the state through personal endeavors and highlights everyday commoning practices.

These three cases were chosen due to their diversity in nature, duration, resources shared and reasons behind their emergence. What connects the cases is that they are bottom up initiatives that also share characteristics of urban commons in the way that they are governed, making them potential urban commons (Shared resources, Community, Institutional arrangements). This enables the researcher to explore the concept of urban commons and provide comparisons between the cases.

3.2 Operationalization: variables, indicators

Urban commons: The dimensions of the urban commons were based on DeAngelis' three elements that constitute an urban commons: shared resources, a community, and institutional arrangement for producing, sharing and managing the resources (DeAngelis, 2007). The indicators of Community and Institutional arrangements follow Valerie Fournier's take on the commoning process of organizing in common, for the common and of the common.

The right to the city: The concept is mainly discussed through the perspectives of Lefebvre, Harvey and Purcell and focuses on the dimension of the right to inhabit well to ensure a dignified life. The indicators chosen have been previously discussed in the conceptual framework section. They include the right to participation, appropriation and autogestion/self-management of urban spaces and resources which are key elements to achieve a right to the city based on the right to inhabit well.

Concept	Dimension	Indicators	Explanation
Urban Commons	Shared resources	Nature of resources	The nature of the resources that are shared and the type of reclamation looking at how the resource was (re)claimed whether through resistance or cooperation or if it was spontaneous or planned.
		Type of Reclamation of resources	
	Community of users	Users of the space	Identification of the users of space and referring to the collective use and consumption of the commonly held and allocated resources (Organizing for commons) (Fournier, 2013)
		Commoning practices	
		Community relations	Organizing of commons: refers to the collective production of common resources, the social process of creating communities and collective through sharing and reciprocity (Fournier, 2013)
	Institutional arrangements	Management and organization of resources	Organizing in common: refers to collective action and shared management of resources including co-creation of the rules and norms. (Fournier, 2013). It looks at how the urban commons are managed in terms of : Production, distribution, consumption of shared resources and the type of ownership and accessibility of the resources in terms of public or private property and in terms of openness and exclusivity of the commons. It also looks at the different methods used to sustain the commons and services/resources within it.
		Type of Ownership / Access	
		Sustainability of the urban commons	
Right to the city	Right to inhabit well	Right to Participation	The right to participation in the decision making processes that relate to the production of urban spaces (Forunier,2013) and the ability to appropriate and use these spaces to foster a sense of belonging (Fenster).
		Right to Appropriation	The right to appropriation of the urban space through its access, use, occupation and production (Fournier,2013) Appropriation also focuses on use value over exchange value and ownership.
		Right to Autogestion /Self-management	The right for autogestion or self-management refers to a continuous struggle to control one's own existence and regain control on all aspects of life. (Purcell,2014)

3.3 Data Collection Methods and Sampling

As a first step, data was collected through desk research to gain a better understanding of the three cases and the activities within them and to gather knowledge for primary research. Information was gathered through consulting webpages, social media pages, online articles and publications of the three initiatives. This also helped in finding the main individuals and organizations involved in the projects to subsequently contact them for the data collection. In this research, both primary and secondary data collection methods were used. Primary qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and observations, while secondary data included content analysis of academic papers, articles etc.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

To gain an in-depth understanding of the cases studied and the experiences of people, data was collected through semi-structured interviews which had open-ended questions and were based on an interview guide (Thiel, 2014). All three case studies had a common base of questions but were slightly modified to reflect each case' specific context as well as the people interviewed. A general outline of questions can be found in **Annex 1.** The interview questions were based on the indicators that were identified in the operationalization. People were contacted through Email and WhatsApp and the interviews took around 30-45min each for key actors and 10-15min for users of space. Some interviews were conducted face-to face while the rest were done online via Zoom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp call applications. An overall of 16 interviews were conducted. The majority of the interviews were conducted in English with only a couple conducted in Arabic and later translated by the researcher. In line with the GDPR Regulations, consent forms were sent via email or handed personally to interviewees to sign before each interview. When consent was given for audio recording, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed with the help of Otter.ai software. Transcription was stored into a word-processed document, for editing, coding, and further analysis. Issues of ethics and principles of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity were communicated beforehand and were respected.

3.3.2 Observations

The interviews were complemented by standard observations in the field as additional data sources. The observations took place in only two cases, Nation Station (C2) and the Informal bus (C3) on the Dora roundabout, since the Revolution (C1) was an event that had already passed. The researcher's observations and perceptions were written down in field notes. The setting, place, people and their activities were observed and photographed. The observations were done on two occasions for a duration of 2hours. Participant observation was also done by taking the bus and by volunteering at Nation Station. On the bus, the status as a researcher was not stated but was rather that of a regular rider. For C2, the purpose of the researcher's presence in the field was clear. Before entering the Station, the researcher had spoken with one of the founders of the initiative who assured that there is no problem in conducting the research as long as the privacy and anonymity of the people present there were respected.

The purpose of the observations were to get a first-hand understanding of the urban commons and commoning practices taking place within them. The focus was on the users (their relations, behaviors, social interactions), the type of activities occurring, and management of the spaces. The observation data was deployed to accompany, validate and authenticate the

analysis of the interview data collected from respondents and to see if the answers given by the respondents reflect the reality on the ground.

3.3.3 Secondary Data

Secondary data collection through desk research was gathered to have a greater understanding of the research topic. It involved reviewing the relevant literature and theories on the urban commons and right to the city. It was also gathered to triangulate and help validate field observations and interview data. News articles, academic documents, online publications and photographs were used for the analysis. They helped in better identifying the cases to study in Beirut through looking at various examples and commoning practices in the literature. Secondary data was also heavily utilized for the analysis of the revolution (since it is a past event). That particular case was challenging in terms of keeping in check the bias of the authors and the researcher as it is a political case. In addition, secondary data was also used to supplement case studies with quantitative data.

3.3.4 Sample selection

A non-probability purposive sampling approach was used to define the key informants for the interviews with the relevant knowledge, experience and expertise. It was also combined with snowball sampling to get additional people. The selection of the interviewees was based on users of the spaces, professionals, activists, academics and scholars in the field of urban planning. This resulted in a good mix of respondents which allowed for differences in perceptions between groups. Convenience sampling was also used in relation to protesters that were part of the 2019 revolution; and people and experts in the field of mobility which the researcher personally knows through her work with NGOs.

3.3.5 Sample size

Since the primary research strategy is a case study, the goal of the sampling was to acquire depth rather than generalization. The sample size was determined while conducting the research until saturation of information was reached. Therefore, there were a total of 16 respondents interviewed. Initially, five respondents, who were considered to have direct involvement or in-depth understanding of the phenomena, were chosen per case study for the research. However, not all requests for interviews were successful.

Specifically, for the case of the revolution the interview was done to academics, activists and citizens who were involved in the protests. For Nation Station, interviews were done for the founders, team members and volunteers and for the case of the informal bus, interviews were done for riders, activists and founders of mobility-related NGOs. A full list of participants can be found in **Annex 1**.
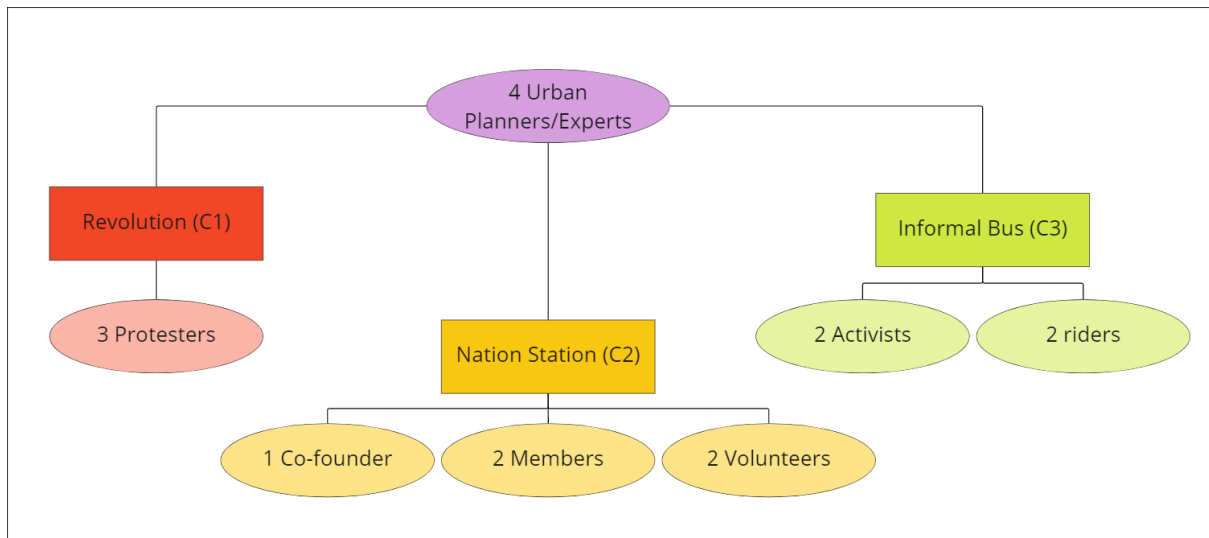
Figure 3 Map of Interviewees
Source Author

3.4 Validity, Reliability, Challenges and Limitations

To strengthen the internal and overall validity of the research, triangulation of data was employed. This consisted of a mixed-method approach combining different data sources such as primary qualitative data (interviews, observations) and qualitative and quantitative secondary data. Interviews were also conducted among diverse respondents with different professional backgrounds and degrees of involvement in the urban commons including activists, citizens, experts and scholars. This also increases reliability and validity by comparing responses from various perspectives (Thiel, 2014).

3.4.1 External and Internal Validity

In qualitative analyses and case studies, external validity is limited because findings are context specific to the case and are therefore hard to replicate and generalize to other contexts (Thiel, 2014).To strengthen external validity, elements behind the research such as the questions and operationalization had theoretical foundation. Furthermore, analyzing multiple cases and drawing commonalities and distinctions among them also strengthens external validity as realistic assumptions can be drawn and potentially applied to other cases.

To address issues of internal validity, it was important to continuously examine the researcher's bias throughout the data analysis process and draw on secondary data to support qualitative evidence.

3.4.2 Reliability

The open design of a case study might affect and reduce the reliability of the findings of the research. This matter was addressed by being transparent and detailing how data was collected and analyzed (interview guide, observation, fieldnotes, photographs). In addition, to address the flexibility of semi-structured interviews, interview guides were all based on the

indicators in the operationalization and were adapted in correspondence to the type of respondents.

3.4.3 Challenges and Limitations

This study primarily relies on a qualitative research approach, which may lead to the loss of objectivity and leave the analysis of data open to subjective interpretations. This was overcome through the triangulation of data using secondary data.

There is also potential weakness in sampling and potential bias due to the unavailability of some of the targeted interviewees, especially in C3 where main activists work for the same NGO. The inability to conduct an interview with a bus driver to get their insights also weakened the process. The use of secondary data helped in this instance. Inaccurate responses to the questions or not enough knowledge on the concepts at hand were also recorded and were balanced by the knowledge of academics and practitioners in the field. The time constraints, especially for field work and data collection might affect the quality of the choices made and the data gathered. If it weren't for that, the researcher would have reached out to more people to get a better insight on the cases.

The concept of the Urban Commons is very broad and has been portrayed in the literature in multiple different ways. Therefore, understanding the concept and recognizing their existence as true urban commons in Beirut was challenging. The identification of the case studies depended therefore on the three essential elements constituting urban commons which are shared resources, community and institutional arrangements. In addition, the urban commons and the right to the city are mainly of western ideals and not very much explored in these specific terminologies in Lebanon. Therefore, simplifying the concepts without losing their essential meaning was necessary but challenging.

3.5 Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered through the semi-structured interviews and observations was manually coded referring to the research sub-questions and based on the variables and indicators in the operationalization. Photographs were also presented to supplement and validate findings. Direct quotations from respondents were used to enrich the analysis and the presentation of results.

Chapter 4: Field Data Description

This chapter presents the findings of the research from the data collected through the interviews, observations and secondary sources. It will focus on the description of each case study organized according to the order of the sub-questions, dimensions and relevant indicators. The focus will be on three different types of urban commons that differ in their temporality, creation and commoning practices and range from social movements (C1), community centers (C2) to informal public transportation (C3).

4.1 Findings of First Case Study: The October 17th Revolution

One of the ways that urban commons have been portrayed is through social movements which have occupied squares and streets to reclaim their right to the city. The commons continue to be sites of political struggles and resistance and we explore this through the first case study of the October 17th revolution in Lebanon. The case involved mainly secondary data (since it is a past event) and interviews with protesters and experts to get a better understanding of the events that took place.

4.1.1 Shared Resources

4.1.1.1 Type of Reclamation

On the 17th of October 2019, protests erupted in Beirut, Lebanon after a series of tax hikes were announced by the Lebanese cabinet. For a while, the Lebanese economy had been in free fall and the country's unemployment rates were increasing. Coupled with one of the highest debt per country ratios, lack of public services, corruption, clientelism and austerity measures (El Houri, 2019), people took over the streets and mobilized to protest against the deteriorating financial and economic situation as well as the corrupt political system (Majed,2021).

Photograph 1 Protester blocking road with burning tires Source Marwan Naamani-Getty Images

Roads and highways were blocked with burning tires in Beirut and then spread across regions paralyzing the whole country (Majed, 2021). Thousands of people flooded the streets in an unprecedented manner expressing their anger and frustration over a system that has failed them across decades. They were demanding the downfall of the whole neoliberal and sectarian political system under the slogan "Kelloun Ya'ne Kelloun" (All means All).

When respondents were asked the reason behind their participation in the revolution, all responses were along similar lines: to fight for their basic rights and demand change in the current corrupt political system. One protester, Nour, says:

I was protesting for a decent life in our country, for our basic human rights, for transparency, and against our government that is not working for our benefit.

Photograph 2 Protesters in Marty's Square
Source Rami Rizk
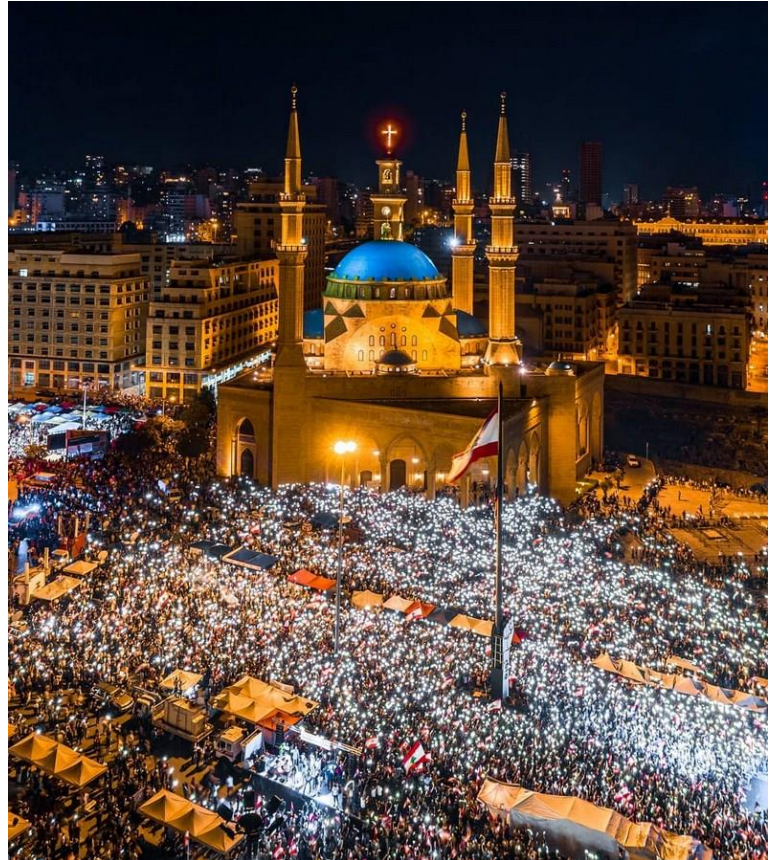
Photograph 3 Martyr's Square Protests
Source Louay Kabalan

4.1.2 Institutional arrangements

4.1.2.1 Management and Organization

Usually, when you have demonstrations, they take place in the public realm. Because of the scarcity of public spaces in this country, people resorted to even occupying highways, roundabouts, streets to congregate. -Chloe

As mentioned by urban planning professor Chloe, streets and highways were the first spaces that were occupied. Their takeover was spontaneous and chaotic lacking any form of organization as protesters were making a statement by obstructing the mobility of people through burning tires and garbage bins and raising their voices to be heard. Squares also became an important meeting point, mainly Martyr's Square, due to its historical representation in terms of mobilization which has become part of people's collective memory. The protests took on forms of self-organization and some aspects of the claimed spaces were destructive and rebellious while other peaceful attempts were also recorded.

As protests continued over several days, the internet played an important part in the communication and organization process of the revolution. More specifically, social media was used as a principle tool of organization and mobilization for the protests whether it was through WhatsApp groups, Facebook or Instagram posts. Many accounts were created to raise awareness for the various initiatives that were taking place everyday during the protests. "DALEEL THAWRA" (revolution guideline) was one of those prominent pages that people followed and used as a reference point. It was a space for free expression and played a role in the organization of certain events posting schedules, images, videos, warning of potential attacks, and calls for mobilization when needed.

The management and care for these spaces grew as people inhabited them over days, weeks and months and felt more attached and a sense of belonging to the city.

Photograph 5 Sunday Hunger call for mobilization
Source: Daleel Thawra

Photograph 4 Mobilization Schedule for November 6ᵗʰ
Source Daleel Thawra

Photograph 6 Call for road blockage of parliament session
Source Daleel Thawra

4.1.2.2 Sustainability

In addition, what makes the revolution specifically of great significance is the fact that in deeply divided societies mobilization on such a big scale is a very rare and unexpected occurrence, especially with Lebanese peoples' relations with politicians and sectarian dialogue. The large number of people protesting was one of the main reasons they were able to sustain their presence for as long as they did in several key areas of the city as it encouraged many others to join the protests. Protester, Bassima, mentions:

> *At first I was going down on a daily basis because I didn't think it was going to last more than one week. Every time I went I was shocked by the amount of people that were there as it kept increasing day after day [...] It further encouraged me to be part of the revolution.*

Usually the momentum of protests fades away in a few days or turns violent quickly as protesters clash with security forces. While violence occurred throughout the revolution, the increasing number of people, the economic grievances and austerity measures people were experiencing, as well as their intention to keep the protests peaceful made a huge difference in the lasting of the revolution:

> *I was motivated by how much the Lebanese population can carry out a revolution while still maintaining it as a peaceful process - Bassima*

However, these social movements were not bound to last especially as the revolution was kept leaderless and with time created more divides and tensions among the protesters. Eventually the state and the country's circumstances in terms of the covid pandemic, economic and fuel crisis put an end to the protests.

4.1.3 Community
4.1.3.1 Commoning Practices

During the days following initial protests, demonstrators started reappropriating the city and its urban spaces in relation to their specific needs whether to rest, have discussions, eat, dance etc.(Noubel, 2019). This is significant as Beirut had been inaccessible to most of its population following the 1975 civil war and the subsequent reconstruction process that was focused on capitalist urbanization, private development and securitization (Fawaz; Serhan, 2020). The case study also reflects Stavrides' analysis of Egypt's Tahrir Square during the revolution against the Mubarak Regime where "protesters removed physical barriers, claimed the square and built a community around it" (Venugopal, 2020).

Photograph 8 A plan of Beirut Central District during October Source: Antoine Atallah

The spontaneous mobilization of people grew into several self-organized initiatives by protesters and the general public. People deployed various peaceful strategies to reclaim the urban commons and their right to the city. They organized sit-ins and daily marches targeting strategic and symbolic spaces representing the corrupt political system such as the privatized Zaituna bay, the headquarter of Electricity of Lebanon, Justice Courts, the Central Bank and even politicians' residences (Lakrouf; Waine, 2020). Martyr's square and Lazarieh building's parking lot were occupied and appropriated and became at the center of all the action.

Photograph 9 Lebanese protesters dancing and celebrating Source Omar Imady

Photograph 10 Protesters eating Breakfast and reclaiming Zaituna Bay Source: IMLebanon Team

There were kiosks of local businesses selling crafts at affordable prices, street food stations, soup kitchens, recycling and cleaning initiatives, guerilla gardening... Tents were also set up

by various individuals and organizations granting first and legal aid with professional volunteers, and organizing educational discussion and debates to increase people's awareness on the political, legal and economic situation of the country (Sinno, 2020). Specifically Riad El Solh Square and Samir Kassir Garden were main spaces for debates where people from various backgrounds shared their opinions and views, creating a public sphere.

Photograph 12 Protesters Tents
Source Alexandra Kassir

Photograph 11 Tent providing
Legal Aid
Source Author

Photograph 13
Debates in Tents
Source Rayan Abou
Assi

Photograph 14
Protesters cleaning and
recycling trash
Source AFP

One protester shares some of the commoning practices she took part in:

> *I attended talks that were organized in tents, protests, and chanted revolutionary anthems and demands against the corrupted politicians. I was also cleaning the streets on a daily basis in the morning and recycling plastic and glass with a bunch of people- Rachelle*

The ring road, a highway from Hamra to Achrafieh, was also a highlight of the revolution. It represented symbolic claims that streets are for people: yoga classes were organized and a living room was even set up (Fawaz, Serhan, 2020). However, it was also one of the main places of clashes and tensions.

Photograph 15 Ring road turned into living room
Source Hussein Malla

The " Egg" and the Grand Theater also played an important role in the revolution and the reclamation of space as the abandoned buildings were revitalized.

Designed in the 1960s, what became locally known as the "Egg" was intended to be a cinema in the center of Beirut. However, its construction was set off by the civil war in 1975 and it has been abandoned and closed off to the public ever since (Sinno, 2020; Naamani, 2021). During the revolution, the cinema was spontaneously transformed and revitalized as public debates, screenings, events and even parties were held in it (Lakrouf; Waine, 2020). It became more of a cultural and community center organized by the population itself. All three protesters mentioned the "Egg" as one of the places they appropriated and explored. One respondent had to say about her visit:

> *I visited an abandoned building with my friend that was called the "Egg" building because of its shape and it was interesting to explore because we didn't really know what it was. It always felt like abandoned or prohibited to go and check out, but during the revolution there were talks and people gathered there. The place was vibrant. – Rachelle*

Photograph 16 People celebrating by the Egg Source Adam Rasmi

Photograph 17 Source Sally Abou Melhem

Photograph 18 Debates in the Egg Source Omar Darwich

Photograph 19 The Egg, Source Louay Kabalan

The Grand theater, built in 1929, was one of the last remaining landmarks of pre-war Beirut. It also fell victim to Solidere's powers and was abandoned and closed off to the public (Sinno, 2020). It was reclaimed, explored and used as an observatory by the protesters.
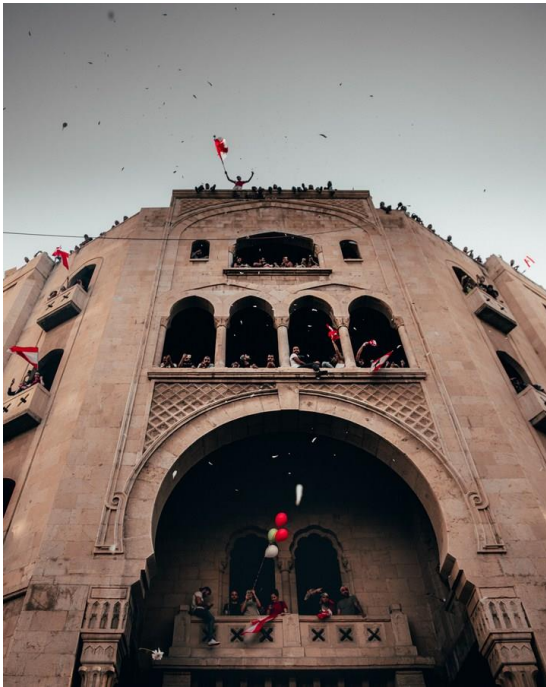
Photograph 21 Grand Theater Source Louay Kabalan

Photograph 20 View from Grand Theater Source Author

Photograph 22 Grand Theater from the inside Source James Kerwin

Through the appropriation of these spaces, people were exploring their city and its cultural history as if for the first time. They were learning about the city that was left behind and forgotten and discovering Beirut through a new lens which was once sealed off and prohibited to them. These cultural venues became important symbols of art, history and culture during the revolution. When asked on the importance of the reclamation of space one respondent mentions:

Personally I didn't even know I had to reclaim these spaces because I didn't know they existed in the sense that I never knew their background history, why they were there, who they belonged to, why they were abandoned. I didn't think it was ours in the first place for us to reclaim. So I benefited a lot during the revolution, learning the historical background of my country and fighting more for the cause because I realized that we were not only deprived from our basic needs such as electricity and water but also from public spaces. – Bassima

This answer wasn't very surprising as the concept of public spaces in Lebanon is practically non-existent but it showed new realization and awareness on the importance of public spaces.

Another commoning practice which is important to highlight is the Independence parade. For the first time in Lebanon's history, the independence parade held on the 22nd of November each year was organized by the people themselves instead of the customary civilian parade (Sinno, 2020). Several groups: actors, environmentalists, public transport activists, engineers, students, doctors…representing and demanding various rights paraded at the heart of Beirut. It reflected a beautiful unified moment of celebration.

Photograph 23 Source Hassan Ammar

Photograph 24 Independence parade Source AFP

On the other hand, while the protests remained essentially a peaceful initiative full of joy and celebrations, it was not always the case. In some instances it was more about destruction, rebellion and chaos of the claimed spaces mainly in terms of forcibly blocking roads, burning tires, writing graffiti on buildings...It also involved destroying some private property that were a representation of the injustices, the segregation and inaccessibility of the city center.

In addition, there were multiple violent encounters between people and the internal security forces who wanted to quell the protests (El Houri, 2019). Other forms of destruction came from anti-revolutionists close to ruling political parties. They physically attacked protesters and activists, broke their tents and stalls and burned one of the symbols of the revolution: "the revolution fist". The violent practices were however always reciprocated with peaceful approaches as people and CSOs replaced the things that were broken and burnt, cleaned graffiti off the walls and the streets. These practices therefore also contributed to the continuity and sustainability of the revolution as people didn't retreat in the face of power.

Photograph 25 Protests clashes
Source Historical Materialism
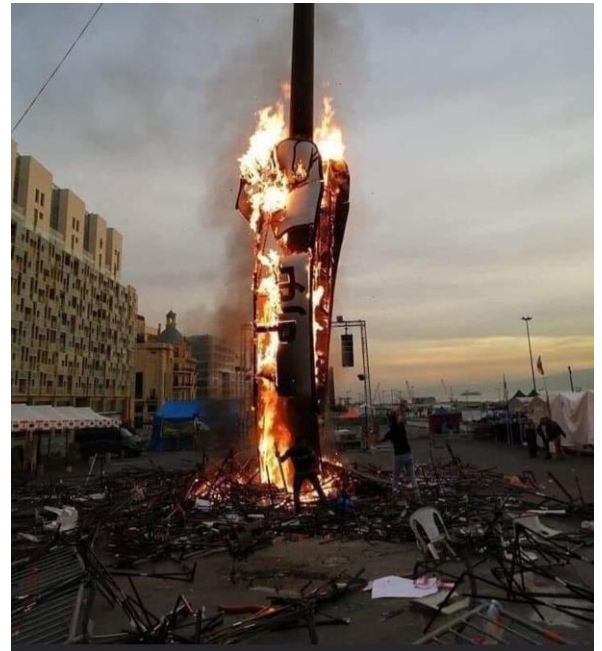
Photograph 26 Revolution Fist on fire
Source Sandra Pollek

Photograph 27 Source Hussein Maila

Photograph 28 Protester on top of Broken Tents
Source Sam Tarling

Therefore, the reclamation of the urban commons took various forms. Streets, highways, public squares, abandoned buildings and parking lots were all reappropriated as sites for discussion, debates, art, and mobilization, as people reinvented and transformed the city as a whole.

4.1.3.2 Users of Space and Relations

In terms of users, spaces of protests were open to everyone to use, manage and share the resources at hand. People from different socio-economic, religious and political backgrounds came together from all ages and generations to protest against the state and the corrupt political system. The everyday appropriation and commoning practices that were taking place under one purpose and raising one flag, the Lebanese flag, changed the relations among people and brought them closer together:

> *What surprised me was the unity of the people from all ages, all religions and socio-economic backgrounds. I was also able to meet a lot of people and listen to their points of view of [...] even children who didn't understand anything and wanted to demand their rights.-Nour*

Bassima echoes this statement:

> *There was also this sense of belonging and I loved how celebratory the revolution was. Like of course we went to the streets because we were angry and sad about our situation but at the same time we were celebrating our unity. You could say that the revolution was a mix of a rebellion and celebration at the same time.*

Therefore, while the revolution might not have resulted in satisfying changes in the system, it has nonetheless impacted people and their relations and *"shifted their mindsets irreversibly"*. It reignited a sense of hope and unity among a deeply divided society and strengthened their sense of belonging to the city.

4.2 Findings of Second Case Study: Nation Station

The second case study, Nation Station, also revolves around a radical event, this time following a crisis. While the urban common started more of a temporary relief initiative, the growing need of people during the hard economic and financial times in Lebanon turned it into a more "permanent" community kitchen/center. Five interviews were conducted with members and volunteers which were supplemented by 2hour observations across two days.

4.2.1 Shared Resources

4.2.1.1 Type of Reclamation

On August 4th 2020, the detonation of tonnes of ammonium nitrate resulted in the Beirut Port explosion which claimed the lives of more than 200 people, injured over 7,000 and left around 300,000 people homeless (Wilkins, 2021). It was deemed one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history and left the city of Beirut in ruins. With the absence of the State in emergency response and with citizens blaming the government itself for the tragic incident, spontaneous initiatives came about in response to the population's needs following the crisis. People gathered and initiated clean-ups, blood donations, food and water distribution, reconstruction efforts to help each other recover from the disaster. One of those initiatives was **Nation Station.**

Photograph 29 Source @Jennineak

Nation Station began as a temporary relief station in one of the most affected neighborhoods in Geitawi, Ashrafieh. Maurice, an architect and one of the founders of the space, recalls that day. His home was destroyed from the blast and realizing the immensity of the destruction when cleaning the debris with his friends, they decided to help the neighbors, many of whom were elderly people. As shops were destroyed, the need for basic necessities such as water and food were huge. They therefore decided to claim an abandoned gas station, amid the chaos where they can be easily accessible to people and limit the spread of Covid:

> *There was this gas station next to our place. It was already abandoned before the explosion for like 2-3 years, and with the explosion it was really destroyed. So I told them maybe we can go there because it's an open space and we can be accessible to people, and covid at the time was like really bad, so we cleaned the space a little bit and set ourselves there. -Maurice*

One of their friends was a farmer and had vegetable crates which they decided to distribute to affected people and then people joined in to help with donations of food, water, and medication. The centrality of the station on a main street in Ashrafieh made it a focal point for people coming from all over Lebanon and wanting to help. This also shows the importance of space in urban commons.

Photograph 30 Volunteers serving food after blast
Source @jennineak

4.2.2 Institutional Arrangements

4.2.2.1 Management and Organization

When asked on the organization of Nation Station, the co-founder Maurice remembers how overwhelming it was:

> *For the first two weeks, it was a bit chaotic. Everyone was doing everything. We had to sleep at the station at the beginning because the stock of food and food boxes was growing really big and the car washing space was used as a stocking space. We were providing medical support, stitching and changing some wounds, giving whatever we can provide as medical help and myself in reconstruction for the windows, doors or whatever I can do.*

The organization and management of the space and resources evolved throughout the days and grew from a chaotic direct response to the blast and needs of the population to a more organized form. It included departments and even head of departments each of which were specialized in their respective areas of expertise and worked on projects related to food security, food provision, reconstruction, medical support, as well as data collection and management.

Photographs 31 & 31' Inside the community kitchen
Source Author

This organization didn't stem from only the five friends who started the relief station but also from the help of multiple volunteers and NGOs who provided their time, knowledge and workshops to assist Nation Station in its projects and development. Today, there are five official co-founders, bi-weekly meetings are done to come up with new projects and decisions come down to majority voting. Two respondents mentioned how there aren't major clashes because everyone at the organization has the same objective of creating this community center together. If challenges beyond their scope arise they refer to what they called their "sister NGO" that helped them establish Nation Station.

4.2.2.2 Type of Ownership

Over time, Nation Station grew out of this chaotic self-organization to become an official legal organization with its own legal consultancy, accountancy and bank account which helps them receive donations from abroad:

> *We registered as a CSO because it was the fastest and most reliable way[...] We started creating projects and for those projects we need funds and we need to be legally registered. That's why we really aimed to register fast because there was so much attention to Lebanon especially after the blast.- Maurice*

The importance of having a legal status was also mentioned by one expert as fundamental not only for funding, but also a basis for everyone's rights to be protected. Nonetheless, the users and founders of Nation Station are not owners of the space and their presence is uncertain since it is based on a verbal agreement with the owner of the station as he respects their cause.

4.2.2.3 Sustainability

Carl, an Italian volunteer, explains how Nation Station is able to sustain its projects. They do daily meals, which people can order for lunch, catering events and an aperitive night twice a month on Thursdays. Sometimes the space can be rented out for workshops as well. All the money generated from these activities goes back to the organization and its projects such as the community kitchen and the clinic. In addition, Nation Station depends on project-based funds mainly through applying for grants and a bit on donations.

Photographs 32 & 32' Source Nation Station

4.2.3 Community

4.2.3.1 Commoning Practices

Lots of commoning practices take place within Nation Station to respond to the needs of people in Geitawi area. The community kitchen seems to be at the core of these activities where 250-300 food is made daily to serve people. This activity is significant as food prices soar (over 550% between 2020 and 2021 according to HRW) and people's purchasing power diminishes due to the economic crisis.

Photograph 33 & 33' volunteers preparing meals
Source Author

The commoning practices of the community kitchen were observed and included multiple people preparing and washing dishes, cleaning surfaces, packing and distributing meals either to people directly or through delivery. The first round was for food deliveries, four people started packing up food in plastic containers in a type of supply/chain management for maximum time efficiency. The second round was at lunch time and people came to pick-up their meals around 12:30pm. People/Beneficiaries stood in line behind the counter and told a member the number of portions needed as others filled the Tupperware boxes. On the side there was a big whiteboard placed where names of all the pre-registered beneficiaries are listed and every time a person comes and is handed their food, a member of the team checks off their name to keep track of pickups and deliveries.

Photograph 34 Members and volunteers packing meals
Source Author

This observation showed the management and commoning practices of the social kitchen which was also exclusive to certain people registered in the database. There didn't seem to be any form of hierarchy among the founders, members and volunteers. Everyone was respectful and friendly towards each other, it was well-managed and people participated in whatever was available. It felt that everyone cared deeply about the cause.

Besides the community kitchen, another initiative is the clinic which has established doctors and "*provides free consultation for people and the necessary medicines, scans or physiotherapy*" as mentioned by Kamal, a member and head cook at Nation station. He also explains that in the same space a women's center was also created which offers sewing and digital literacy workshops to help women acquire certain skills. They also started a weekly farmer's market in collaboration with NGOs and farmers who sell cheap and organic produce to the neighborhood; and a cineclub where Lebanese filmmakers showcase their movies for free and discuss them. All these commoning practices showcase how different resources are produced and shared among various people and also how the work of the organization is expanding to meet the needs of the people in Geitawi. As Maurice mentioned, the goal of Nation Station is to be more of a community center rather than an NGO and provide services and opportunities for the neighborhood. This also highlights how the station is being sustainable by adapting to changing circumstances and needs.

Photograph 36 Famer's Market
Source Nation Station

Photograph 35 Aperitive Night
Source Nation Station

4.2.3.2 Users of Space and Relations

The users of space are mainly people from the neighborhood:

> *The users are people of Geitawi area. We don't expand beyond this reach. They are usually registered in our database so there are certain rules on who and how you can get the free meals, but of course if there are homeless people or beggars coming in, the rules don't apply to them and we know who they are by now. - Kamal*

However, the accessibility to the urban commons and its resources differs in terms of projects, the community kitchen and the clinic are accessible to people in the neighborhood, the women center targets women of the neighborhood, while Cincelub targets everyone, even beyond Geitawi to enjoy cultural events.

The users were also observed during both field visits. While mostly there were elderly people waiting in line to get their food, you could find people from all ages: elderly, middle-aged men and women, kids and young adults. It is noticeable that they come from different backgrounds because of the quality of their clothes, and some even spoke French showing differences in income and social class.

Photograph 37 & 37' People picking up food and enjoying meals
Source Author

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Some people observed were seated on the side benches, others on tables under the shade either chatting or eating their meals. They all had friendly interactions with the team and many came in all smiles thanking the team for their efforts. These interactions and relations between the users of space were enthusiastically mentioned by Maurice:

> *The relationship grew really well. We can say more than family. Sometimes they come to say hi or just want to visit us. It's not always about just picking up food and we always invite them to sit and eat with us during lunch. It wasn't anymore an NGO relationship. It's more like neighbor to neighbor.*

The internal team at Nation Station is also diverse in terms of backgrounds and nationalities. Many started as volunteers and some of them are now full-time workers. They are mainly people living in the neighborhood and get paid symbolically. The day of the observation, the team was made up of three migrant men, two Europeans, and four Lebanese: two female young adults, one male adult and an elderly woman. Upon asking, most people have been here from the start of the organization right after the August 4th explosion.

The relations between workers themselves was also explored. During both field visits, a sense of familiarity and ease among the people was observed especially in the way they spoke and joked with each other. The atmosphere between the people was nice and on both occasions the researcher was offered food and lemonade to enjoy alongside their company. Friendly conversations were also witnessed and an invitation to join some of their events and even volunteer with them was encouraged by multiple people. The familial atmosphere was also noticed as kids and grandchildren of members helped out in the kitchen and two mothers with their strollers and babies came to say hi and help out.

Photograph 39 Members having lunch
Source Author

Photograph 38 Familial Atmosphere
Source Author

What was observed was also translated during interviewees responses. The "ambiance" of the space was one particular mention among all five respondents. Alain, a member at Nation Station, kept coming back everyday to volunteer because he wanted to help and very much enjoyed the atmosphere of the space and the people. He feels like people are there because they believe in what they are doing and states that *"there isn't a business mindset"* at Nation Station.

Sentiments were echoed by two French volunteers: one was interviewed and the other was observed helping out in the kitchen before saying her farewells and leaving to France later that day. Louise joyfully describes her experience:

I enjoy practicing my Arabic with everyone, meeting new people, having conversations, and getting to learn how to make Lebanese dishes. I keep coming back because of the people and the friendly atmosphere but most importantly the cause because of how much it has an impact on people's lives and how much Lebanon needs initiative like these during these moments.

Therefore the interviewees' responses and the observation both highlight the production not only of the shared resources among people but also of relationships as it has brought people from various backgrounds together to work for one particular cause. This reflects Fournier's take on commoning and the "organizing of the commons".

4.3 Findings of Third Case Study: Informal Bus

Both previous cases tackled urban commons from a radical event and their use as temporary spaces, one of which turned into a more permanent common. The following case studies a type of "mobile commons" that focuses on the everyday commoning practices in reclaiming the right to the city through the informal bus system. Interviews were done with mobility activists and riders and supplemented by secondary data and a 2hour observation on the Dora roundabout.

4.3.1 Shared Resources

4.3.1.1 Type of Reclamation

In its history, Lebanon had mass transportation systems including trains, tramways, buses, taxis, and "service"[1]. However, as was the case with the rest of the world, Beirut evolved into a more car-dominated city with other modes of transport deemed unattractive and replaced to suit the mobility of cars. The public transport network faded over the years and later weakened and destroyed during the 1975 civil war. With the destruction of the relevant infrastructure and lack of political will and resources to reinvest and redevelop public transportation, the car took center stage which also led to the organic emergence of informal practices to satisfy the need and demand of the Lebanese population in terms of mobility.The major reliance was on personal initiatives: individual drivers of taxi, service, vans and buses or companies took over lines and started operating them. The focus of this research is mainly on the informal bus which is considered part of the public/shared transport system in Lebanon. As two transport and mobility activists, Charbel and Firas, have stated, the informal bus system emerged as a *"substitute"*, filling the gap when the *"role of the state became weaker"* especially in rural areas where state buses didn't operate.

"*The informal system prevails on buses*" Firas, a human rights activist and member of LUPD and Riders' Rights NGOs, firmly mentions. Beirut's informal transit includes around 35 state-owned buses compared to more than 4,000 privately-operated licensed[2] buses and minivans and around 8,000-10,000 unregulated ones operating illegally (MoEW/UNDP/SODEL;2017). After the explosion all state buses stopped operating. The modal share of transport according to latest statistics is 80% for cars, 18% for taxis and services, 1.7% for vans and buses and 0.3% for un-motorized transport (Anas et al., 2017). What is interesting to highlight is that state buses were operating as an informal system rather than a formal one and competing with other informal buses.

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[1] A service is a from of ride sharing system in Lebanon.

[2] Vehicles are licensed and regulated through the red license plate which enables through law any person to operate the service of commuting people either by bus, van, taxi, or service.

4.3.2 Institutional Arrangements

4.3.2.1 Management and Organization

Photograph 40 Source Greg Demarque

The public transport sector lacks planning and a national transport strategy and suffers from major organizational and technical problems especially in terms of maintenance, efficiency and reliability. Nonetheless, the informal system in Beirut is a self-managed practice to the chaos in the transport sector. While the informal bus system emerged organically, a 1995 plan by transport expert Dr. Tammam Naccache provided a base for some of the current existing lines. Therefore, the organization of the current system is a combination of the 1995 plan and the informal system that had existed before that and has been evolving ever since. Charbel, co-founder of Riders' Rights, an NGO working towards mobility justice in Lebanon, explains:

> *What we know is that the network that is operating now is based on some lines that were planned in 1995. The service is based on the demands. The lines that are still operating are the lines with the high demand, so those operators still operate in each line based on compromise between each operator. Some lines were shut down because there were no demands on it or the informal operator didn't find their value especially in Greater Beirut.*

Even if there isn't a formal organization of the system that doesn't mean that it is completely chaotic or that no form of organization exists. In fact a term that applies not only to the transport system but Lebanon in general in terms of planning is "organized chaos". The informal buses are organized in a way, they have fixed lines they operate on, a daily schedule, even some roughly fixed intervals between each bus. The parking and place of departures are known hubs and are organized by the private operators. They are the Charles Helou station, the Cola station, the Dora and the Hadath hub in the Greater Beirut Area. The management of the system among drivers was also mentioned by a frequent student rider, Samir:

> *In general the line is known that it is from A to B. I can also say that there is a really good management system among the drivers. They even have a WhatsApp group on each line to keep each other posted on arrivals and stop points and organize themselves.*

This type of organization and system was observed at the Dora hub which is one of the essential hubs for buses. The Dora intersection acted as an unofficial stop for riders and drivers. Buses were going to different places and cities (Tripoli, Antelias…). They can be known by their numbers or route which some have put at the front windshield of the bus, others can be distinguished by a company's name. Buses and vans stop on the side of the road and wait for about 10minutes for riders and when they leave another bus/van takes their place and waits at the same zone. There are quite a few empty buses coming back from their route and ready to pick up other riders. Some bus drivers also honk for people and ask where they want to go. Other buses don't stop but do a U-turn under the bridge where they let off riders and continue their journey back to the city center.

Photographs 41 & 41' Buses at the Dora roundabout
Source Author

The self-organization of the system through bottom-up initiatives from citizens who don't necessarily have background in planning and transport meant that things might not be as organized if an official entity were to take control. Firas, frustrated, mentions:

> *Even if you know in a way the schedule of the buses, they are not set and specific. As a rider, I don't know the exact timings of the bus, what time it arrives, how long it takes, so often you take other mode of transport like "service".*

The lack of knowledge on the lines, the timings, the areas covered, lack of official bus stops and clear schedule are all things that inhibit people from using and accessing the system. It also makes the system unreliable and unattractive and even prevents certain people from acknowledging its existence. Some other bottom-up initiatives and CSOs have been trying to close this knowledge gap such as the "Bus Map Project" which showcases the different lines, numbers and unofficial bus stops that buses use. The map was mentioned by Oscar, a bus rider, which helped help him in his commuting.

4.3.2.2 Type of Ownership

Informal transit is mainly undertaken by the private sector which provides the public service. Each bus line has its own management system organized by different people with different levels of operations; making the accessibility to the system and its control complex:

The informal system has a lot of private companies operating. You have buses that are for companies and these companies organize and manage their drivers and lines. The buses can be for the company, or the driver might own his own bus but work for and on the company's line. So you have families, businessmen, companies and there are some lines that are open to everyone and any driver to use. You can't really control it.- Firas
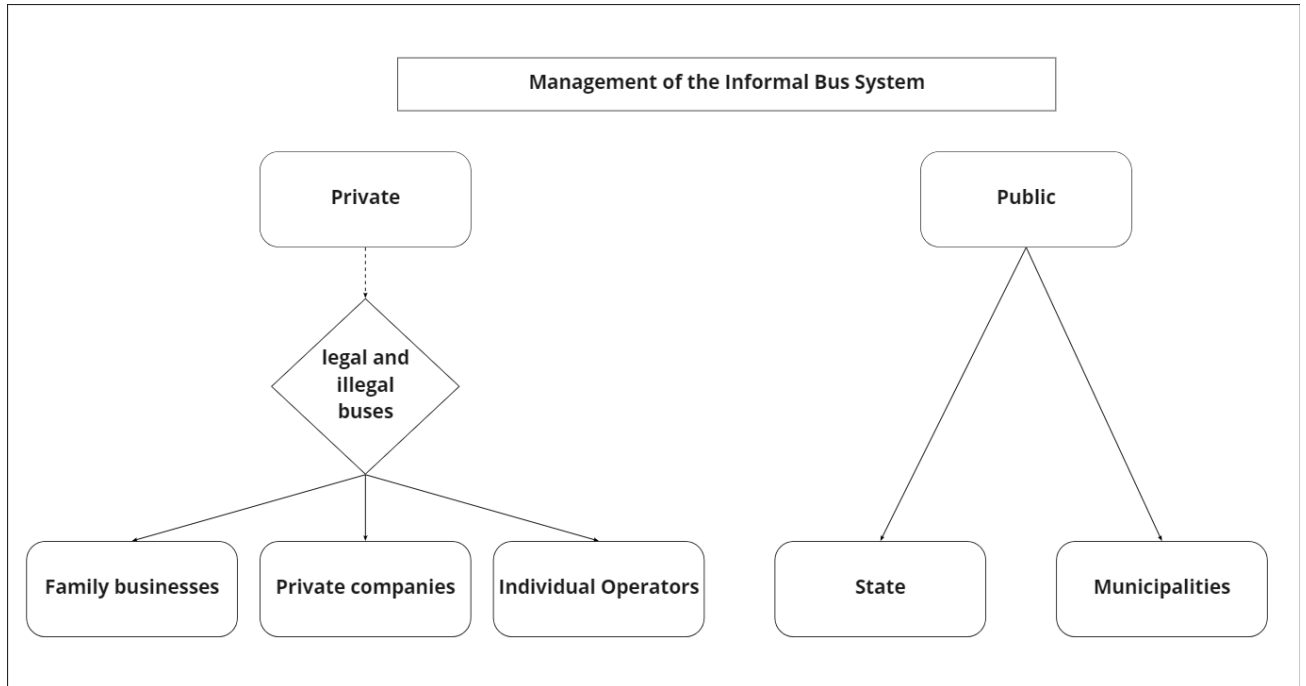
Figure 4 Management of Informal Bus System
Source Author

These different types of operations and management have also created monopolies on certain bus lines which remain exclusive to few people or families. This is done because the operators can't risk other drivers taking their clients upon which the service and their whole livelihood depends on. Firas further explains:

Behind these monopolies you can find groups of people or drivers, taking over a bus line that goes from a certain region to the other and agree with each other that no one else is allowed to use this line. It may also be one person who owns 4 to 5 buses and doesn't let anyone come in and share these lines with him. There is nothing, no rules or laws that protect or organizes the system because there is chaos and there is also the factor of power.

Many people have characterized people behind such monopolies as "Mafias" that are controlling the service and taking a percentage of the profits on the lines they monopolize. Accessibility in terms of providing the service can't be done without some form of agreement with the people in charge. In fact there will even be consequences for intruders which may also turn into violent instances.

4.3.2.3 Sustainability

The informal bus system has faced many crises over the years with the instability of the country and even more so recently with a series of events such as the Covid pandemic, Beirut port explosion, economic crisis, fuel crisis all of which have impacted the system but have also shown its resiliency. The system has also faced threats internally in terms of the competition on lines. Charbel positively affirms:

> *The system is one of the most sustainable systems as an informal system because it had overcome a lot of crises especially in the last years. During covid time we overcame the crisis without any subsidies or help. We're able to overcome a bit of the fuel and the financial crisis and it is still operating even with the inflation and dollar rate. When we had the August fourth explosion, even the state and municipality buses failed in a lot of places but the informal system still operated.*

While the port explosion resulted in the stop of the state buses, the informal system managed to conquer the challenges and sustain its services not only because it relies on the demands of citizens but also because drivers themselves depend on the system for their own livelihood. It shows us a different version of an urban common reliant on capitalist endeavors which will further be discussed in the analysis section.

However with the fuel and economic crises, there are threats that certain lines will no longer be covered as less buses are circulating. This also doesn't mean that the system is always managing to be resilient and sustainable on its own. It was highlighted how during the covid pandemic one NGO, "Riders' Rights", provided PPE and gave trainings to protect the drivers and also help them recoup their livelihoods through an online campaign as the state stopped the system and failed to protect them through the challenging times. On the other hand, when mentioning the possibility of the end of the system in Lebanon both activists stated:

> *There is no threat to the overall system, it will not disappear. If it stops then there will be nothing and initiatives in Lebanon are never ending. But also it will not improve if we don't work to make it better and develop it and make it attractive, which now it isn't. - Firas*

4.3.3 Community

4.3.3.1 Commoning Practices

The different commoning practices that take place within the bus system differ per bus but we can mention how the lines are organized and managed between the drivers, the WhatsApp groups used, and the ticketing practices which certain buses adopt can be considered as commoning practices. In addition, these activities are complemented by practices from other organizations such as NGOs, that highlight the buses routes through bus maps, provide safety measures through provision of PPE, and create online riders communities to share knowledge and information on the system as a whole.

The commoning practices are also done among people themselves and with drivers. These practices could be better highlighted during the observation that was done on the Dora roundabout. There were drivers honking for people, asking riders' destinations, picking up drivers along the road, drivers chatting by the side of the road and people hailing for a ride by

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a gesture of the hand. The practices seem to be widely known and used by the riders community.

4.3.3.2 Users of Space and Relations

The informal system in Beirut is a stigmatized system with a bad reputation projected onto it such as the operators are a type of Mafia monopolizing the system, that the bus is mainly for the poor, that it's a harassment system, it's unsafe, unclean etc. Such safety and sanitary issues were mentioned by Samir:

> *The bus is also a bit unsanitary and is in need of much cleanliness. The lack of maintenance of the buses creates safety and security issues. It has a risk on people's lives. You never know when the driver might lose control of the bus. There is also racism, which is reflective of society, mainly targeted in regards to people of color and women.*

This stigma meant that not everyone was using the shared transport system and in fact many people don't even acknowledge or know of its existence. *"It is not our system"* as a lot of Lebanese see it, mentions Charbel in an unfortunate tone. While the bus supposedly caters to the whole population many people are excluded from this service due to its non-accessibility for certain people with disability and wheelchair users as well as its minimal scope of coverage beyond Beirut. On the other hand, you also find people who exclude themselves from the system (mainly from the middle and higher class).

**Photograph 43 A family getting their belongings from the bus
Source Author**

**Photograph 42 Users of the bus
Source Author**

The main users of the space were observed and mentioned by all 4 interviewees and included people from all ages and backgrounds. They generally concern economically vulnerable and low-income people, elderly people, public health workers, university students, migrants, domestic workers, low rank army military, foreigners and refugees. It was also mentioned that only a small percentage were riders who acknowledged the system and took it as an initiative to commute by bus.

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On the other hand, highlighting behavioral changes among users after 2019 due to the fuel and economic crisis, one respondent mentions how more people are using the bus as a main mode of transport. However, while the increase in prices might bring new ridership, it might also push out other usual riders as they could no longer afford the current prices.

Photograph 44
Inside the bus
Source Author

"The bus is a world on its own" - Oscar

Taking the bus is not just about sharing a resource and a method to ensure the mobility of people, it is also about creating social ties among them. When asked on the impact and community relation for people using the bus, the general response was that it does bring people together creating a community among riders in hopes to impact society as a whole.

> *We have sectarian, class, and racial problems in Lebanon and in the bus you have both Lebanese and non-Lebanese, old and young all sitting together and the impact can be seen especially if the commuting is frequented and if the same people use the same buses, the same lines at the same time. So riders' views on society start to change and they start building relations as they become more in contact with people from different ages, backgrounds, nationalities and religions because the system links to different people and regions and connects them together. – Firas*

In that sense, public transport helps society more than using a private car as it is very individualistic. It links to different parts of the country which were once separated and segregates and plays a role in breaking sectarian barriers. It can also have political and religious backgrounds. Not only that but a community is also created among riders and driver. Charbel states:

> *It's a whole community. Every bus line has its own culture, its own music, languages, reflecting the region it comes from. So it has a lot of values and reflects people's lives. We had a lot of segregation [...] The system is linking a lot of cities from different backgrounds and sectarian dimensions so the system is stitching part of the country.*

The interactions and relations among people and the driver was also observed during field visits. During a bus ride, seats were reserved to regulars, there was oriental music playing, people charging their devices by the driver. At one point, the driver got out of his vehicle and helped a woman and her family with their luggage to put them in the van and then continued his journey. There is one instance where one passenger was leaving and the driver wouldn't agree for the rider to pay showing familiarity and generosity.

Samir shares similar sentiments:

> *Buses bring people closer together regardless of the differences. It creates a very tight community and a bonding experience. It's a place you can meet new people, make new friendships. I started learning the language of Bangladesh because there is this woman from Bangladesh whom I met on the bus and every time I see her she teaches me a new word. The more you use the bus the more you start recognizing some faces. So riders recognize each other, drivers recognize riders and this also makes you feel more safe using the system as it becomes familiar to you and people become familiar as well.*

These close relations are in line with the commons literature and only by using the bus frequently can one attest to such relations. Indeed, frequency in the use of the bus has been highlighted by all 4 respondents on how it impacts and strengthens relations among people.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

The three case studies have shown us three different types of urban commons that emerged through a radical and temporary matter involving social movements (C1); through disaster/radical event which started as temporary and evolved into a more "permanent" practice and focused on a community center (C2); and finally through everyday practices focusing on the informal bus as urban commons (C3).

This section analyses the findings based on the commonalities and differences in the commoning practices perceived in the case studies and how they fit within the larger context of the urban commons and right to the city literature. They will be analysed through the three common components between the two concepts: right to appropriation, right to self-management and right to participation.

5.1 Right To Appropriation

5.1.1 Based on a Need

The cases showed how people reclaimed their right to the city by right of appropriation of spaces through their access, use, occupation and production. What can be first highlighted about the three urban commons is that all of them emerged as bottom-up approaches that came in response to a **need**. The needs of the population differed in each instance, one was based on the need for justice and basic rights for a more dignified life by challenging the corrupt political system and its austerity measures, the other was based on the need for food security, medical aid, local knowledge, and finally the third case was based on the need for mobility, to move around the city. As one respondent said: *"We exist because help was needed"*. The need of citizens as an essential basis for the creation of the urban commons was unanimously mentioned by the experts and scholars that were interviewed. Urban planning professor Chloe states:

> What I know about urban commons is that they serve the purpose of meeting a collective need, which is usually not met necessarily through tools of planning.

These needs are not just of a physical resource or space but also a right to be included in the production of the city and benefit from its resources (Fournier, 2013). All three cases highlighted the commons as spaces for the marginalized be it the poor, the elderly or the migrants, to be included in the mechanisms of society showcasing how income as well as social discrimination could result in the emergence of urban commons as people appropriate them for their need to exist in free and accessible spaces. While the needs offer a basis for urban commons to emerge, it isn't necessarily a result of incidents that affect people's lives such as a financial crisis (C1) or explosion (C2) but also a desire to change and make things differently and having the resources to do so (C3).

These findings are in line with scholars, like Mattei, who understands the commons as instruments for basic needs and satisfaction (Mattei, 2011).

5.1.2 Legality, Ownership, Accessibility

In addition, people are reinventing the city to accommodate their needs through different types of appropriation whether through agreements, rebellion, illegal occupations… In terms of **legality,** all three cases started as some type of illegal presence in the spaces they were appropriating. In C1, unlawful occupation and rebellion was at the essence of the urban common as protesters used insurgent practices to reclaim their right to the city. Rebellion often stems out of oppression and frustration pushing people to provide for themselves what couldn't be offered by the state. These rebellious acts however don't have to be explicitly visible in all cases and could take place through everyday commoning and develop organically out of the need of the population.

In C2, the appropriation of space started as an 'illegal' and sudden occupation but quickly progressed to one that is based on a verbal agreement between the owner of the station and the founders and users of space. The organization also became a legal entity as a CSO. In C3, the informal buses imposed themselves on the public sector and the transport system. It is also rebellious in its lack of formalization for the legal buses and circularity of the illegal buses. These findings are similar to urban planning professor's thoughts:

> *I don't think that it needs to be rebellious or insurgent. It could happen through informal agreements, or even verbal agreements.- Chloe*

The aspect of legality can also be reinterpreted in terms of different property rights, **ownership** and **accessibility**, of the urban commons and the different arguments present in the literature is highlighted empirically in these cases. The size and scale of the initiatives is also interesting in terms of accessibility as they differ from small area to the whole city.

In C1, the city was accessible and open to everyone, while the state was the supposed "owner" of the commons, in that instance, people owned and shaped the city as they appropriated it. The case echoes Stavrides' own study of Egypt's revolution and he believes in that urban commons must remain open inviting to newcomers to prevent accumulation of power. A view also mentioned by Samia an urban planning researcher at Beirut Urban Lab:

> *I think if we think of urban commons, to me, it's about something that is accessible to everyone.*

Nonetheless, not everyone believed in the openness of the city and its appropriation as several violent instances between the security forces or protesters among each other occurred and challenged the rightful presence of the various groups. This leads us to asks whose right to the city it really was and showed how conflict is an important dimension of the commons when it comes to political acts of reclamation (Mattei, 2011). Andrea, co-director and head of the research unit at Public Works Studio, also mentioned that:

> *I mean complete appropriation of downtown Beirut, the way people inhabited buildings that have been abandoned and completely used them, the way people drew graffiti and started breaking the buildings that were built and are owned by the class of investors and real estate developers[…] There were expressions of resenting these buildings, that really symbolizes the financial collapse that we were living, but there were also appropriating other places for economic activities and social practices. So protests were a beautiful expression of what really the right to the city means.*

This mass scale urban common is also reflected in C3. While the ownership of buses was different between operators, state, companies... the bus as a "mobile common" covers and is accessible not only in Greater Beirut but also links to various regions outside the city. The interesting part is while it caters for the whole population, minus wheelchair users and geographic constrictions, it isn't used by everyone since people exclude themselves because of the lack of acknowledge and stereotypes on the system. This self-exclusion is also interesting to further explore in the urban commons literature. In addition, referring to Stavrides' openness to prevent power accumulation, the system has created monopolies because while it is open and accessible to people to use the service, it is exclusive for the service providers; highlighting the complexities of the commons.

Although commons are believed by many scholars and some respondents to be open, free and accessible to everyone, sometimes they are made exclusive (Hubbard, 2012) where a closed group of people have access to it and regulate it for sustainability (Huron, 2015). This was implied in C3 but more visible in C2. Nation Station is more of a small-scale initiative that caters to the needs of the population mainly within the Geitawi-Ashrafieh region and accessibility was dependent on the commoning activities and was restricted to certain people within the commons. Going with Ugo Mattei's argument on commons being resources that should be excluded from privatization and made public because of their collective importance, Nation Station (C2) highlights that through its provision of free food, medication and knowledge. In addition, in terms of ownership, while the verbal agreement could be broken and constitute a threat to their continuous presence, there were few reassurance with offers from other spaces for the organization to settle but as they have mentioned they adapted their work to that environment.

The results showcase the diversity and complexity in ownership and accessibility of the urban commons while also highlighting how land doesn't have to be owned by those making use of it. Indeed, ownership of the commons as Fournier (2013) mentions, is seen more in terms of rights of use rather than appropriation. It was also about creating alternative or in-between spaces beyond the state and capitalism and beyond the public-private dichotomy based on co-ownership and belonging. It also emphasizes that the major importance lies in the provision of the services and meeting the needs of the people rather than ownership itself. As mentioned by mobility activist Firas:

> *What the rider cares about is that the service is provided, not about ownership, public or private, of the bus. Most of the time they don't even know the difference between them.*

Indeed, the rightful presence of the people within the commons and their reclamation of the city was based on the continuous appropriation of the resources shared and commoning practices that took place within these spaces. This constituted a radical alternative from the property rights conception of ownership and a focus on the city belonging to those who inhabit it (Purcell, 2014).

5.2 Right To Self-Management

Lefebvre's critique of neoliberalism calls for a new society that goes beyond capitalism and the state and is based on the collective self-governing and self-management of society (Lefebvre, 2003). The urban commons studied portrayed the right to self-management, as people took matters into their own hands since the public and private sector failed to provide the essential services to citizens.

> *In a plan you don't plan for urban commons, you could plan for public spaces, but not necessarily urban commons. So this is not a top down approach, but rather a bottom up approach.– Chloe*

These different types of reclamation and needs meant that the way these urban commons were organized and managed was different. As mentioned by planning professor Chloe, they, however, all started as **bottom-up initiatives** through the self-organization of the people and for the people. Many included personal endeavors with people that were not necessarily experts in their field. The revolution (C1) resulted in a mass self-organization of the city; the city as a whole was the urban commons (Stavrides, 2016). It was also leaderless and many believe the reason behind its failure. Nation Station (C2) became self-organized through the collaboration of friends from different professional fields and the help of other established NGOs. Informal bus system (C3) was self-organized by individual operators and companies and resulted in monopolies which is against the idea of the commons but further showcases its complex management.

It can be said that all three cases started more or less chaotic and spontaneous organization of the city and later evolved with time into better and more organized collective actions. They were also all complemented and supported by other new commons (Hess, 2008) such as the cultural and knowledge commons (NGOs, social media) and by the help of volunteers.

5.2.1 Third Approach Beyond The State

Ostrom and scholars conceived the commons as a "third approach" or a "third way" to the state-market dichotomy.These bottom-up approaches were an attempt to fill the gap as a result of the neglect and **absence of the state** in the provision of these services. It therefore entailed that although some urban commons might not have started as a direct confrontation against the state (C1), it is through their commoning practices that they represent such confrontation (C2,C3). This meant that urban commons were also a form of **political statement**, which was mentioned among several respondents, as the state itself is also sometimes behind some of the crises and grievances people face. Maurice co-founder of Nation station states:

> *It is a political statement because what we're trying to do as a society and at the station, they're supposed to be provided by the government but given the situation of our government we had to do it ourselves. We are also showing that young people can take things into their own hands, they can really work to make Beirut a better city and make Lebanon a better country.*

It is a statement to be included in the city and have access to its resources:

> *The informal system as it is, is a kind of resistance of the whole system in Lebanon [...] There is a stigma about it because it serves those left behind but it is a value for*

> *us because the state has left them and the informal system is giving the opportunity for those people to be part of society-Chadi*

What is intriguing in C3, adversely to C1, is that even though the service is provided, albeit not in the most organized way, both activists believe that the state needs to take back charge of the system and integrate it in the sector instead of competing with it and leaving it for individual endeavors.

5.2.2 Third Approach Beyond The Market

With the increased privatization and commodification, urban commoners attempt to create spaces based on sharing and cooperation that put people before profit. As Bollier(2011) mentions, these spaces are not only challenging the state but also in certain instances **capitalism** and **privatization** as the principle socio-economic and political system that allocates resources. When asked whether urban commons emerge against capitalism, Bahaa, project manager at Eutropian and leader at Placemaking Europe mentions:

> *In theory not, because urban commons is just bringing people together who have certain visions and offers needs, but in practice, it was always there.*

The revolution (C1) started as a direct cry and counter-insurgency movements against the state which later evolved through the appropriation of strategic locations into direct protests against the privatization of the city center and commons such as the coast, Zaituna bay…mentioned by various respondents. There were also various resources that were shared freely among protesters.

> *In the context of neoliberal urban planning, this city being privatized and its spaces completely controlled and limited, people in the city have claimed their own right to the city by appropriating and claiming spaces-Andrea*

Nation Station (C2) also offered space for various anti-capitalist and non-profit activities such as the distribution of free meals, medicine, free workshops and film screenings.On the other hand, the informal bus (C3) is not strictly against capitalism and privatization because the system itself is based on private operators and companies. It is also involved in capitalist activities where the service is paid for by the people and proceeds go to the drivers as a means to secure their livelihoods. Therefore, although this urban commons has for-profit aspect as a core of its existence, the price for the service is the cheapest and most affordable being kept at an ultimate low for the accessibility and inclusion of all population in the service.

Furthermore, all three cases are in a sense going against capitalism while also being involved in capitalist activities themselves. The porosity of the commons allows the flow between commons, market and state (Zapata Campos et al., 2020) and feed into capitalism. While the first two cases differ in that their central activity is free (appropriation of space, provision of food, medicine and knowledge) commercial activities are also present within them through side initiatives such as kiosks of small businesses (C1) selling food/catering (C2) which also ensures their sustainability. When asked on this matter, Bahaa states:

There can be aspects for profit, I believe, so it's financially viable. But as a sum, it should be nonprofit, because as soon as you have profit in there, then you have different interests and different goals.

Therefore, there is an important political significance to the commoning practices in line with alter-globalization movement which criticize capitalism and try to reclaim the commons (Mattei,2011). Through these acts people defied the state authority showcasing the collective power of people to deliver the services that the government failed to provide; and defied the market by creating common spaces in the city that were based on shared resources, cooperation and belonging. Spaces where use value is given priority over exchange value in an increasing privatized world. Andrea also highlights them as spaces of politics:

I think the commons are a place of politics in the sense that it is through the commons that we can build an alternative type of relationship between city dwellers [...] and that we're able to organize and protest, able to show that we are visible, that certain communities, excluded communities, can say we are there. And so it's through the existence of the commons that I truly believe we can build a brand of politics and we can fight for the change and break sectarian, racial and class boundaries.

5.2.3 Adaptability and Sustainability

Another major element of the urban commons studied in the three cases is their capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and needs of the population whether it is providing informative debates, protective equipment, or rebuilding broken tents in C1, to going from reconstruction to food and workshops in C2, or continuously providing the service even during challenging times (C3). This showed their resiliency and ensured their sustainability which is one of the most vulnerable and uncertain parts of the commons. Several elements were highlighted by the cases and urban experts and show that sustainability depends on:

- The way users organize themselves with a focus on horizontal governance
- Having different sources of income for both members and the activities of the urban commons such as combining businesses: e.g. Aperitive night/daily dishes (C2)
- Having as a core group professionals with the relative skills needed to run urban commons (reflective in C1;C2)
- The intention behind the initiatives and activities taking place in the urban commons with less focus on profit and more on provision of services and the cause

In C2 what is interesting to mention is sustainability and quality preservation was also ensured through the enclosure of the commons limiting the accessibility of people in certain activities, a method also advocated by Ostrom even if many believe the urban commons should be free and accessible to all (Feinberg et al., 2021).

5.3 Right To Participation

Citizens were claiming their right to the city by having a say in the decision making process, appropriation and management of spaces and resources claimed. These commoning practices were also linked to de-alienation as urban spaces were reclaimed and provided opportunities for encounters and meaningful interactions with inhabitants and their environment.

5.3.1 Relation People and Space

Commoning practices showed the potential and transformative power of citizens and their ideas. They revived the city giving new life to spaces that were privatized, abandoned, securitized and created common spaces for activities serving their own needs and demands:

> *The commons really talk about people's relationship to land that has historically been tied to social and cultural practices, but also to economic activities. So people have built relationships to spaces because it's through these spaces that they build livelihoods and they practice cultural habits and social heritage -Andrea*

It is through people's participation in the production of the space and everyday commoning practices, that the spaces studied were converted into the urban commons. This continuous appropriation provoked a realization that brought awareness to the importance of public and common spaces for the democratization and functioning of more just and inclusive cities. It also strengthened people's relations to land and their surrounding built environment. While people at Nation Station developed close relations with the neighborhood and adopted their work to that space, and buses linked people and regions together and adopted their work to certain lines, this awareness was mainly noticed in the revolution. With a ruined idea of the commons since the civil war, fighting for the commons was not something at the forefront of people's demands when the revolution started as they were protesting for their basic human rights. However, as protesters reclaimed and transformed the city, it ignited their civic duty and strengthened their sense of belonging as portrayed by their care and responsibility for the commons throughout the revolution. Samia shares her experience:

> *It really showed how much we need these public spaces. I know I used to go everyday to Martyrs square even if there was nothing there and to me this was as if I was looking for something to happen.Is there anything happening today? Is there a debate happening? It became what in other countries where people go to parks and do these things to check if there's an event.*

These responsibilities reflect Pedersen(2010)'s governing principle of "reciprocity in perpetuity" where the use of the resources is dependent on reciprocity in their care, necessary to maintain and ensure the sustainability of the commons. However, while all interviewees highlighted "awareness" as a key word on how the relation of people with space changed and their importance, this understanding was momentary and was hard to maintain especially as the state overpowered them.

In addition, going back to the idea of self-exclusion it is also based on the feeling of safety in these spaces. That aspect of urban commons was mentioned by three interviewees and also empirically portrayed through C1 and C3. The violence during the protests prevented people from going to the streets and the violence among drivers can exclude other drivers. Lack of perception of safety in the bus whether from the bus condition, speed, harassment or racism

also prevent people from using it. The fear of the other is also something very prevalent in a divided society like Beirut and perhaps something to be further explored through the lens of the commons. As Samia mentions:

> *We don't have the concept of public spaces. Some people acknowledge it, some people fear it. They fear going there, they fear the other.*

5.3.1 Relation People and People

The right to participation in shaping the city revolved not only right to manage and organize the commons through appropriation but also to de-alienate people and relink them into the "web social connections" as advocated by Lefebvre. Therefore, commons are not only resources that are shared, but a social process (Linebaugh,2007). The three cases portrayed how commoning practices brought people closer together from various backgrounds and nationalities and even formed communities through the everyday encounters, sharing and cooperation. However, the impact on the larger scale is not something that is quite visible, easily measured or even maintained. In C1, the revolution showcased a type of unity among people that was never witnessed before. "Hope", "unity" and "belonging" were key words mentioned among respondents. When asked on the impact, researcher Andrea responded:

> *I mean, definitely impacted society at the moment, when all of these protests and acts of claiming the city were happening, a lot of people were transformed on an individual and collective level[...] They felt enlightened, they felt there's a purpose to life, that they have a political vision. They felt they were able to connect to others that they would have otherwise not met at all. So there was a massive impact.*

However, while the protests did impact people to a certain extent, the persistent of the impact beyond the event was not necessarily maintained. The majority of respondents agree with that statement and believe it was momentary and short-lived. Andreas says *"The problem is that we didn't build as a society on this momentarily impact"* to sustain longer relation with the city.

Nation Station (C2) also provided a space where a community was created as people developed relations and solidarity based on collective sharing and cooperation. The familial atmosphere was unanimously mentioned by respondents. It portrayed not only the distribution of resources but also the coming together of people from different backgrounds together to enjoy these resources. Informal buses (C3) as places of social interactions have also been portrayed, creating a community of riders who know their way around the system and linking people between different cities and from various socio-economic backgrounds:

> *When you go on a bus, you meet people from different nationalities, different sects, different classes, different backgrounds. These hubs themselves, they become sort of the meeting point for people. And if I have to celebrate something, that's what I would celebrate, honestly, when it comes to how people claim the right to the city. -Samia*

Frequency was also highlighted by respondents and plays an important role in tightening communities as people become more in contact with each other, they feel closer and safer. An important mention, is that these commons were based on a **horizontal participatory governance** and equal decision-making in the management practices, which is essential to

the functioning of the commons (Hardt and Negri, 2009). This was even visible in C3 where there is agreement between operators monopolizing lines.

The formation of communities is not easy in cities as they require the coming together of strangers which might create conflict which we have seen in both C1;C3 but can also bring people from various backgrounds together (Huron, 2015). It is even more challenging in religiously divided societies such as Beirut. And while urban planning professor Chloe believes in that the territoriality of commons can mean that it will serve people surrounding them and will result in people from a homogenous fabric due to the segregation of Lebanese society, and to some extent it is true, the cases have showed us how the urban commons were able to bring a diversity of users together. Hence, this shows how commoning and urban commons contribute to the right to the city through coproduction of not only resources but also community relations between urban dwellers. It nonetheless leaves us wondering on its potential role in addressing or integrating the divided society.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to deepen the knowledge on the concept of the Urban Commons in terms of its diversity and variety of practices as well as its relation to "the right to the city" by empirically studying three cases in Beirut, Lebanon. The study of the revolution, Nation Station and the informal bus highlighted how urban commons are made through various forms of appropriation of public spaces, food, transportation and portrayed three examples of in-between spaces varying in duration (temporary/ongoing), management (spontaneous/planned), ownership, formality (informal/legal/illegal)…expanding the literature on the commons in the Middle East and in the general literature. The aim was also to look at urban commons as potential alternative organizational model for collectively managing the city and its resources and explore how people not only reclaimed but also maintained the urban commons. Therefore, going back to the main research question *how are people reclaiming their right to the city through the urban commons?* The research looks at how, as cities became sites for struggle and growing socio-spatial inequalities, the need for a just city that caters for all citizens, especially the most marginalized, became more pronounced. Considering the failure of both the state and the market in providing resources and services, people have taken matters into their own hands and self-organized to achieve their right to the city. They began exerting this right through various forms of appropriation, participation and management of spaces and resources. These appropriations were physical, symbolic, intellectual, artistic, and gave life to empty spaces and transformed the city through insurgent, civil and everyday practices. Therefore, the right to the city didn't entail a singular right but rather a set of rights: a right to dignified life, to food security, health, knowledge, mobility which were also intertwined with other rights such as housing, education, choice...all of which fall under the right to inhabit well. The urban commons became transformative tools for inclusive cities as people controlled the conditions of their existence themselves and reimagined the city based on different political and socio-economic activities. By putting the concept of right to the city in practice, they collectively created spaces, or an "oeuvre" per Lefebvre's' saying, that put people before profit and explored alternate ways of ownership, production, and management of the commons beyond the influence and control of the state and the market.The research reflected empirically several major academic debates in the literature as the urban commons took on various forms of ownership, property, reclamation where the importance lied on the right to inhabit and use value rather than exchange value and property rights. It also portrayed the complexity of the commons in the informal system and the need to further explore informality as mode of production of space. In addition, the urban commons were not only collectively shared urban resources, but also a relational phenomenon. They provided spaces of de-alienation and not only brought people and communities closer together, but also created awareness on the importance and need for common spaces to regain sense belonging and a connection to the city and its environment. Therefore, urban commons, while many were not recognized as such, provided new organizational forms of resistance to address crises and injustices. They stemmed from the needs of the citizens and became spaces where resources were managed by local communities for their well-being. Therefore as we go into deeper crises which the market and the state can't get us out of and are also partly responsible for creating, urban commons are gaining more relevance and should be further explored as alternative organizational models.

Limitations and further studies:

Among the challenges endured during the research is whether the cases chosen truly constituted an urban common due to the fluidity and openness of the concept. In general it is

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hard to recognize urban commons with the open definition still in the exploratory phase, and ongoing debate in the literature on what they actually are and how they work. The research also attempted in one case to look at informal bus as an urban common which was particularly challenging due to its complex system and the limited literature in this perspective. Choosing three case studies also meant that the researcher couldn't go deeper into the analysis of the cases.

Furthermore, the study was able to explore a variety of commoning practices ranging in size, temporality, practices, needs, giving a better idea of the commons while also opening up prospects for future studies. The aspects of safety, conflict and self-exclusion briefly mentioned in the analysis are interesting to explore when looking at commoning practices from another perspective in terms of violent or negative practices since it has been mainly portrayed from a positive angle. This also pushes us to further develop the theory based on the limitations and successes of urban commons.

In addition, the commons have mainly non-profit purposes while we explored one case (informal bus) that had capitalist endeavours leaving us to ask: Can profit-driven initiatives be considered urban commons? Informality and informal public transportation could also be further explored as types of urban commons.

The relational and social component of urban commons have also shown how communities are created and people brought together either temporarily or continuously, but the study nor the literature go into the impact on a larger scale of these relations. It would therefore be interesting to further investigate: how can urban commons go beyond small scale changes to larger scale impact? Do the relations formed go beyond the commons or are they limited within the space? And how can we make these relations last beyond territory or momentary impact? The case of Beirut also leaves us questioning: How can urban commons, if at all, play a role in integrating divided societies?

Finally, the notion of the urban commons has been expanding more and more and has potentially been diluted over the years through its use and applications with each author and scholar adopting it from a different perspective. This pushes us to ask until what point can we talk about urban commons?

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Appendix 1: Research instruments

1-LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Pseudonym	Background/Profession
Maurice	Co-founder of Nation Station - Architect specialized in Architectural Restoration and Conservation of Cultural Heritage
Kamal	Member at Nation Station - Head cook
Alain	Member at Nation Station
Carl	Italian Volunteer at Nation Station
Louise	French Volunteer at Nation Station
Charbel	Co-founder Riders' Rights NGO and Bus map project – Transport Activist, Telecom engineer and social entrepreneur
Firas	Human Rights Activist and Member at the Lebanese Union for Persons with Physical Disabilities (LUPD)
Samir	Student
Oscar	Italian worker in an NGO
Bassima	Protester- Background in Public Health and Nutrition
Rachelle	Protester-Background in Economics
Nour	Protester-Background in International relations
Samia	Urban Planning Researcher coordinator at the Beirut Urban Lab
Andrea	Co-director and Head of the Research Unit at Public Works Studio BA in Architecture, MA in Urban Development Planning.

Chloe	Associate Professor in Urban Planning, Urban Design, and Architecture at the FAAD
Bahaa	Project Manager at Eutropian and Leader at Placemaking Europe

2-INTERVIEW GUIDE

N.B.: The questions in the interview guide reflect some of the main points discussed during interviews. Some questions were removed or added spontaneously. In addition, questions were adapted to reflect each case study and the word "urban commons" was replaced and simplified in certain cases. Questions were also adapted to reflect each interviewee and their knowledge and experience with the urban commons studied and differed between users, members, scholars and urban planners. All interviewees were communicated the topic and objective of the research prior to the interview.

General Questions

1. Under which circumstances and for what purposes do you believe urban commons emerge? *(Is it out of need? A rebellious act or both?)*
2. Do you feel that they emerge strictly against capitalism and privatization?

Institutional Arrangements:

3. There are different types and examples of how urban commons are governed, managed, different access, ownership... What do you think is the significance of it or what does it tell us about the nature of UC?
4. Who is the owner of the resource and who has access to it? Is it open to everyone? Is it exclusive?
5. How are the Urban commons managed and governed?
6. What are some of the challenges that urban commons face and how do you overcome them?
7. How are you able to finance the commons and what are ways you are working on to ensure their maintenance and sustainability? *(members)*
   How do you think UC can ensure their maintenance and sustainability? *(experts)*
8. How has (UC)/initiative changed or evolved since it started?
9. What components do you think are needed for the success of urban commons?

Lebanon

10. How do you see the Urban Commons in the Lebanese context? Can you give me some examples?
11. Do you think mobility or informal public transportation in the way that it is managed can be considered an urban common? If so, how?
12. Besides the revolution, how do you think people have been reclaiming their right to the city in Lebanon? Can you provide me with some examples?

<u>Revolution</u>:

13. How do you think people were exercising their right to the city during the revolution in 2019?
14. Why do you think reclaiming spaces was an important aspect of revolution?
15. In what ways did these acts of reclamation impact society? Did it last? What is an important takeaway from it?

<u>Community:</u>

The Social component is a very important aspect of the UC as many scholars have said there is no commons without a community:

16. Who are the users of space? Is there a specific target group?
17. How can you describe the community of users and their relation among each other?
18. How do you think the relationships between people have changed, if at all, since the start?
19. What impact do you think the urban commons have on the community specifically, and society in general?

<u>Urban Commons and the right to the city:</u>

20. How do you think the Urban Commons contribute to the right to the city?
21. Do you think you and people are reclaiming your right to the city through this initiative/(UC)? If so, how?
22. How do you see the future of the urban commons in Lebanon?

<u>Closing:</u> To Wrap it up

23. What does the right to the city mean to you? And how do you think we can achieve it?

Appendix 2: Privacy regulations: addressing the GDPR

Interview consent form: Urban Commons and Right to the City

My name is Karen-Jo Mourad Karam and I am carrying out a research study in Beirut, Lebanon as part of my Master's program at the Institute for Housing Studies and Urban Development, Erasmus University, in Rotterdam. The research study investigates the topic of the Urban Commons and the purpose is to critically examine the notion of the Urban Commons and its relation to the Right to the City in the Lebanese context.

As with any research activity involving human participants, I would like to make you aware of the data and interview ethics that I will abide by. The data will be used strictly for educational purposes. All the information provided for this study will be treated confidentially. In any report on the results of this research, the identity of the interviewee will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing the name and disguising any details which may reveal their identity or the identity of people they speak about. All data will be stored in safe and encrypted files and audio recordings will be deleted after the end of the Master's program on the 26th of August 2022.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to omit any questions or stop at any time. You are also free to withdraw your consent and ask for data erasure before the dataset is anonymized or manuscript submitted for publishing.

Upon signing of this consent form, I confirm that: I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study ***Additionally I give permission to:***

	YES	NO
I give permission to audio record the interview *(used for research only and deleted on the 26th of August 2022)*		
I give permission to use quotes from my interview		
I give permission to use my name with the quote(s)		
I give permission to use the institution/initiative's name in research		

Should you require more information please contact:
Researcher: Karen-Jo Murad Karam; Email: karenkaram98@gmail.com
Supervisor: Dr. Anitra Baliga; Email:baliga@ihs.nl

Researcher Name: **Karen-Jo Mourad Karam**
Interviewee' Name _____ Initials_____
Date _____

Appendix 3: IHS copyright form

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