



**Understanding sectarianism in the development sector
in Lebanon
The Case of the Water Sector**

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Disclaimer:

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List of Acronyms

ADELNORD	Appui au Developpement Local du Liban Nord (Support of Local Development in North Lebanon)
CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
CNB	Charbel Nahas Bureau
Dar	Dar El Handassah
LRA	Litani River Association
MOEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
NERP	National Emergency Recovery Program
PEWNL	Public Establishment of Water of North Lebanon
PCM	Project/Policy Cycle Management

Abstract

This paper focuses on types of conflict that development practitioners in Lebanon face when dealing with the socio-cultural and political realities on the ground. Through this research, I attempt to develop a different angle to analysing the impact of sectarian conflict in Lebanon. sectarianism is a complex and culturally charged word which is used to define many plaguing problems in Lebanon. This paper aims to highlight nuances to how sectarianism is understood amongst practitioners who work in the context of planning and development.

Using the Policy/Project Cycle Management (PCM) as framework the results shine light on the connections between the stages of the PMC in which the conflict episode occurs, and the understanding of sectarianism which explains the relevance of the conflict episode. The results of this study discuss sides of sectarian conflict that are relevant to development practitioners, and which can assist more targeted interventions in development processes.

Keywords

Lebanon; sectarianism; development practitioners; policy conflict; Project Management Cycle

Chapter 1 Introduction

This paper investigates various conflicts that development practitioners face in Lebanon throughout the different stages of development projects. The research aims to shed light on how development practitioners in Lebanon understand inter-communitarian (Sectarian) Conflict in Lebanon based on their professional experience.

1.1 Overview

In Lebanon, a significant number of development projects, especially in the water sector, are either cancelled or remain unused, despite an established process for project selection and the availability of the required technical expertise. While an abundance of financial resources and manpower has been allocated to facilitate access to services, political tensions at the local and national levels result in major inefficiencies, deadlock, and poor connectivity throughout the different Lebanese regions (UNICEF, 2022). The majority of Lebanese citizens only receive a few hours of water per day despite relatively high levels of water precipitation. Even then, the water received is of poor quality. People who can afford alternatives resort to other options, notably bottled water and individual water tanks, therefore deepening inequalities in the country (World Bank, 2014).

When talking about governance problems and conflict in Lebanon, it almost always goes back to the impossible dilemma of sectarianism. “In the absence of a uniform definition in the literature”, Sebastien Illes defines sectarianism as a “form of social contract that attributes socio-economic privileges and political rights based on the adherence to a specific religious sect” (Illes 2021:3). In such an arrangement, Sectarian groups look out for their own interests, and thus remain governed by competing political elites. Sectarianism in Lebanon is a primary example of how wicked ethnic based tensions repeatedly impede economic and social development. As mentioned by Verdeil (2008:2) “the fragmentation of basic services supply (in Lebanon) is a long-term process”. While the embeddedness of sectarianism within social practices, public administrations and political processes is widely discussed in literature about Lebanon (Weiss 2008), fewer authors focus on the specific types of conflict that accumulate and result in inefficiencies, gaps, and deepened fragmentation in the provision of public resources and services. Rather than relying on state institutions for the provision of services and infrastructure, residents in Lebanon rest on a “multiple balance-of-power between the various groupings within the country” (Salamey 2009:83). These clan-based networks operate as individual nations within the Lebanese state, and the public administrations act as a negotiation arena between sectarian elites. “Each group enjoys some degree of self-government; it maintains its own elected bodies, institutions and competencies. Only few issues have therefore to be coordinated with other segments of society” (Schneckener 2002:205).

In practice, this results in weak state institutions run by conflicting groups. A significant number of development projects, especially in the water sector, are either cancelled or remain unused, despite an established process for project selection and the availability of the required technical expertise. The majority of Lebanese citizens only receive a few hours of water per day despite relatively high levels of water precipitation. Even then, the water received is of poor quality. People who can afford alternatives resort to other options, notably bottled water and individual water tanks, therefore deepening inequalities in the country (UNICEF, 2022).

My objective through this research is to provide a different perspective on the conceptualization of sectarianism as a phenomenon. By looking at the ways in which the experience of development practitioners shapes their understanding of sectarianism in various situations of conflict, I hope to shed light on practical ways to understand the reproduction of sectarian tensions in the context of Lebanon, using the water sector as a case study.

1.2 Relevance of research

The role of politics in the policy process has been emphasized by many critics of the orthodox (technical) approach to development. In the literature review, I discuss more specifically different approaches to understanding sectarian politics. However, a significant gap exists in scholars who look at these dynamics critically in the context of planning in Lebanon. This is no surprise: when put under a microscope, it is hard to distinguish and differentiate sectarianism in all its different practices, contexts, and forms. Therefore, from a technical standpoint, it is nearly impossible to theorize. However, “sectarianism is embedded in everyday life, particularly in the welfare regime, which structures the ways in which citizens attempt to meet their basic needs” (Cammett 2019).

While this paper focuses on the water sector, it does not relate to technical aspects of the sector. I hope to relate to literature that discusses more general trends in the experience of development practitioners in Lebanon. However, doing research that relates to the full scope planning and development work in Lebanon is too broad of a topic: sectors are different and include unique dynamics, institutions, and history. I chose the water sector for two reasons: first, because of the increased urgency for water reform and the foreseen difficulty of residents to access the most basic and vital of services. Second, is because water negotiations involve a high number of dynamics: it involves elite negotiations, international donors, local authorities, social agreements. Further, water negotiations have to mediate tensions that relate to people’s relationship to land around them (whether as individual property, clan strength, economic potential, natural resource, etc).

The objective of this research is to contribute to filling the gap in the literature which looks critically at sectarian dynamics by focusing on the intersection of three fields of study: Conflict Studies, Policy Studies and research about development practitioners. I build this

lens by investigating the experience of development practitioners, who navigate problems of sectarianism when envisioning development in Lebanon. The assumption is that when having a better understanding of sectarianism and conflicts in general, navigating through them and their consequences might become easier and could improve the efficiency of development projects.

1.3 Research question

In line with these objectives, I aim to look at how sectarianism interacts with development work in Lebanon, and more particularly in context of the water sector in Lebanon and observe more closely the coordination of state institutions, local authorities, water authorities, land owners, and other local actors (such as tribe leaders).

The main research question of this paper is:

How are conflicts in the development sector in Lebanon shaping practitioners' understanding of sectarianism?

By answering this question, my goal is to discuss the intersection of sectarianism in Lebanon and the context of planning and development work. More specifically, this research focuses on deconstructing conflicts faced in the process of planning to differentiate more specifically what about sectarianism is so sticky. Answering this question implies first a clear understanding of the context in which development projects and planning occur in Lebanon. Analysing the experiences of development practitioners with conflicts in different stages of the project cycle management and investigating how this influences their understanding of sectarian conflict can lead to more practical ways relating to development problems in Lebanon.

This will be done by answering the following sub-questions:

- What conflicts arise in each phase of PCM of water projects in Lebanon?
- How has sectarian-based conflicts affected each phase of the PCM in water projects?
- How is sectarianism understood by development practitioners?

1.4 Outline of chapters

After introducing the scope of the research and determining my research question in **chapter 1**, I will lay-out the research methodology and analysis tools used that shaped this research paper in **chapter 2**. I will then look at literature in the related fields of study which allow me to make the link between sectarian conflict as a concept and development work in Lebanon in **chapter 3**. In **chapter 4**, I will elaborate on the context in which sectarianism and development work interlace in Lebanon. Finally, in **chapter 5** I will discuss and analyse interviews conducted with various development practitioners, linking them back to the explored literature, before concluding the research paper in **chapter 6**.

Chapter 2 Research Methodology

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the methods that guided my plan for data collection and data analysis. Also, I reflect about my positionality and possible limitations of my research. In section 2.2, I present phenomenological research as my main method. Section 2.3 informs on how I build my semi-structured interviews to answer my research question. Section 2.4 describes how I selected my participants and collected my data. Section 2.5 concludes this chapter with a personal reflection about my positionality and its impact in my analysis.

2.2 Methodology

My research has a qualitative approach and the primary method used is phenomenological. The aim of this method is to understand a phenomenon through embodied experience (Starks & Brown Trinidad 2007:1374). In my case, I want to observe how the understanding of sectarianism varies depending on the positionality of my participants in relation to conflicts in the development sector.

One thing that I keep in mind during my analysis phase is how my own interpretation is conditioned by factors outside my control (personal beliefs, bias, previous experiences); hence, I constantly reflect about my positionality and how it might influence my results. The aim is not to achieve neutrality (Emiliussen et al. 2021:4) but to be aware of my role as a researcher deeply embedded in social reality; therefore, my interpretation will always be situational.

Since I want to uncover a specific phenomenon, sectarianism, and approach it by interpreting my interviewees' common experiences: I initially chose interviewees who worked in a particular project: ADELNORD. The selection of this project was intentional. I have a personal relationship with the gatekeeper (my father), who facilitated the access to participants with experiences connected to my research question (I will reflect later on this process and its limitations).

2.3 Data collection and analysis

To achieve the purpose of my research method, I conducted semi-structured interview questions. This helped me explore the experiences of the participants, finding commonalities and differences when faced with conflicts in the management of water projects, and how this shapes their understanding of sectarianism. The interviews were carried out in person between 20th August and 20th November, 2021. Recorded and transcribed by myself.

As mentioned earlier, I selected the ADELNORD project given its relevance to my research question and my relationship with its gatekeeper. This is a project based in Donnieh, in the North of Lebanon, funded by the European Union in 2013. It has three main components: development and rehabilitation of agricultural infrastructure, agriculture roads

and small lakes for irrigation water storage and supporting the protection of natural resources. Since the project started, it has gone through the different conceptual phases that I am interested in analysing through my interviewees' experiences, with different levels of conflict and repercussions on its governance.

My father has been working as Project Director for different rural development projects at the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) since 1990. The CDR is the main public administration in charge of planning and programming. He was able to connect me with different colleagues through his personal relationship with them. He selected the participants following my research criteria: people from different areas of the organization, who influence different phases of the project cycle, to give me a broad set of experiences in relation to sectarian conflicts.

In the first part of the interview, I introduced my research. I told the participants that my goal is to understand how conflicts influence their work, and how they experience it. With this framework in mind, I wanted to understand more about their position and main responsibilities in the project. This would then allow me to locate their experiences. Once I got clarity about their positionality, the particular stages in which they intervene and the main requirements of their job, I asked them about their experience with sectarian conflict at work, looking specifically for examples that could evidence their own interpretation about the phenomenon. Finally, I asked for which strategies they had used to overcome these challenges. through this process, I respond to my sub-questions:

- What conflicts arise in each phase of PCM of water projects in Lebanon?
- How has sectarian-based conflicts affected each phase of the PCM in water projects?
- How is sectarianism understood by development practitioners?

During the interviews, I found that some interviewees had more to say about other projects, which, according to their experience, represents a recurrent trend worthy to mention. Further, as the interviews were semi-structured and under a phenomenological method, I decided to allow each interviewee to focus on what they consider a relevant experience, rather than the specific conflict episode of ADELNORD.

All the interviews were scheduled by me, conducted in Arabic and lasted an hour on average. I recorded all of them, so I had the opportunity to go back and check any precision against my literature review, which also helped with the analysis of results. As van Manen (1990 cited in Starks & Brown Trinidad 2007:1376) mentioned, a phenomenological analysis is mainly a writing exercise. Through decomposing and recomposing the interviewees' narratives I capture the most relevant elements of their lived experiences that helps me answer my research question.

2.4 Positionality and Limitations

The relationship between the interviewees and my father was helpful for participants to open up. As they have an ongoing professional relationship with my father, they were doing their best to provide helpful insights with what I needed for the assignment. Furthermore, their years of experience and extensive work in different stages of various development projects provides a wide perspective which goes in line with my intention to use a case study to reflect on a widespread and abstract phenomenon (sectarianism). However, it is also important to mention the limitations of these choices. My father being the gatekeeper and the flexible interview structure are choices that include significant biases into the results:

Firstly, the interviews were conducted with people who, according to my father's judgement, hold important and critical insight when studying the intersection of sectarianism and development work. Therefore, my father's judgement is a first layer of bias, in which his choice of participants go in line with his perspective and understanding of the topic. He and the people chosen for these interviews come from technical backgrounds. Ideally, I would have diversified the profile and perspective of gatekeepers and interviewees. Due to time limitations, I was only able to add one interview which includes a more local perspective.

The interviews were also conducted in the form of a conversation. The process could not have been neutral, as both me and the people interviewed brought our biases into the discussion. Therefore, while this research is able to shed light on a specific perspective, it is important to acknowledge the highly subjective nature of the findings. Through the literature review and description of context, I am able to locate and highlight the relevance of this perspective.

2.5 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the method that guided my data collection and data analysis plan. I also reflected about my positionality and the potential limitations derived from my closeness with the project. The main takeaway of this section is how constant reflectivity is needed when approaching a phenomenon from a qualitative perspective. As a researcher, I'm deeply embedded in the social reality I planned on interpreting. Acknowledging this is essential to avoid any pretension of "objectivity" when presenting the results of my analysis.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

This research paper investigates a context in which strong social forces interact and dictate key decisions that influence efficiency and fairness in the management of development projects. In order to make sense of the complexity of the studied setting, it is important to ground my argument in the relevant fields of study. For this case I chose three fields of research within conflict studies: literature that relates to ethnic conflict in Lebanon (sectarianism), policy studies, and research about development practitioners. In the first category, I investigate how sectarianism in Lebanon has been studied and theorised. In the second category, I explore frameworks that frame policy analysis: Policy Cycle Management (PCM) and the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF). In the third category I investigate readings that analyse development problems through the lens of practitioners.

3.1 Sectarianism in the Literature

Sectarianism in Lebanon is constituted by an assemblage of legal systems, social networks, cultural identities and practices, etc. Thus, when studying sectarianism, scholars and researchers have a hard time differentiating between the different layers that constitute the phenomenon. Max Wiess's paper: *The historiography of sectarianism in Lebanon* (Wiess, 2008) provides a strong overview of the study of sectarianism as a phenomenon and as a discourse. Wiess divides literature about Lebanon into three major categories:

- One school of thought considers sectarianism to be unique to Lebanon, and rooted in primordial cultural, political, and economic systems. These identities were later “incorporated into the Lebanese constitutional system” (Wiess, 2008:142).
- The second category views sectarianism as an “invented tradition imposed by external forces and agents” (Wiess, 2008:142). At the peak of the Lebanese civil war, beginning 1980, several historians and social scientists questioned the nature of sectarianism in Lebanon, showing the negative impact that it has had on the country over time. These theorists portray sectarianism as the failure of competing groups to co-exist (Wiess, 2008:142).
- The last category of literature, which rose towards the late 1990s, comprises writings that “undertook a more thoroughgoing critical analysis of the cultural, social, and institutional underpinnings of Lebanese sectarianism” (Wiess, 2008:143).

In consequence of the rise of the Lebanese civil war, more recent scholars “integrated critical analysis of the origins, genealogies, and effects of Lebanese sectarianism, considering the cultural, discursive, and institutional ways in which sectarianism has been and continues to be reproduced over time” (Wiess 2008:150). This category of literature aims to find a middle ground between the previously mentioned literature “by identifying both the material and cultural factors that have contributed to the perpetuation of sectarian systems and sectarian society” (Wiess 2008:150).

In efforts to create more nuanced knowledge about the causes and implications of sectarianism, more practical research, with post-structuralist foundations, analyzes the relationships between various sectarian networks. Joanne Randa Nucho's *Everyday sectarianism in Urban Lebanon: Infrastructures, Public Services, and Power* (2016) looks at sectarianism as being created by “networks and interconnectivities between various institutions, though these

institutions, in turn, legitimate and ossify notions of sectarian community”. Nucho looks at the case of private Power Infrastructure in an Armenian neighborhood in Beirut to analyze how sectarian relationships are formed and reproduced. In her understanding, sectarianism is “an assemblage of signs, words and symbols that don’t necessarily represent a deeper form of knowing, but rather afford a certain potential for material action” (Nucho 2016:4).

In *Negotiating Conflict in Lebanon: Bordering Practices in a Divided Beirut*, Mohamad Hafeda (2019) theorizes about how the everyday activity of city dwellers and residents contribute in creating borders. Hafeda focuses on the ways these residents and dwellers engage in processes of negotiation and narration, which then “amount to political strategies and tactics that relate to everyday life” (Hafeda 2019:14). In that sense, Hafeda refers to “the ongoing Lebanese conflict as political sectarian” in his argument that “the dialectic of politics and religion produces social life” (Hafeda 2019:18).

Other critical researchers, such as Karim Eid Sabbagh, focus on more tangible aspects of power relations in Lebanon. In his PHD dissertation, Sabbagh, identifies 6 main characteristics, which make the water sector so inefficient in Lebanon: “1) the prevalence of sectarian clientelist networks and related patron-client dynamics in the administration and the private sector; 2) a need for consensus between the different elites also rooted in the constitution; 3) a frequently recurring deadlock of the political process; 4) which is often resolved through a distribution of resources among political elites and/or 5) through attempts to bypass the political and legal process” (Sabbagh 2015:41).

Sabbagh focuses on the prevalence of patron client relationships across public administrations and private sector, as well as a political process which leads to recurrent deadlock. Nucho and Hafeda, on the other hand, focus on stories that are carried through everyday life, and which construct the reality of sectarianism. In this paper, I hope to look at the different ways sectarianism is understood depending on the stage of the Policy Cycle Management in which the discussed conflict occurs. Therefore, these three authors bring important angles that uncover aspects of sectarian dynamics which are:

- Patron-client relationships between sectarian elite and Lebanese citizens,
- An ineffective legal and institutional set-up
- Cultural/discursive interactions.

I adopt an understanding of sectarianism which follows the logic of other recent critical researchers to shed light on interactions between diverse networks, institutions, and actors within a specific geographical and temporal context. However, rather than attempting to draw conclusions about the greater relationship that is built between citizens and institutions, this research aims to uncover the ways in which development practitioners are able to make sense of these dynamics to improve their practice. The work of the practitioners chosen for this research occurs at a nexus between international agendas, politically charged institutions, and complex local relationships.

3.2 The policy process, a complex reality

By definition, planning is a messy process, which includes multiple social, economic, and political forces at work. “Much mainstream policy and practice simplify and standardizes

real-world messiness, promoting uniformity in the face of diversity. While simplification and abstraction are necessary features of all attempts to comprehend a complex world, critiques of mainstream water governance approaches point to the undesirable effects this produces (Whaley 2019:22). In this section, I explore different attempts at framing the policy process in an interactive cycle which can be easier to navigate.

Conceptual model for policy

Scholars such as Robert Deyle (1992) focus specifically on the idea of policy innovation, which he analyzes through the lens of individual initiatives. By focusing on Policy entrepreneurs, who are public officials or individuals with political influence, Deyle explores policy beyond the rationale of comprehensive decision-making (Deyle 1992: 459). To deal with the complexity of his question, Deyle refers to Nancy Robert's (1992) conceptual model for policy, which she divides into three steps: "(1) creation, (2) design, and (3) implementation. The creation phase of the innovation process is the generation of a new idea and linking the idea with a problem. Roberts includes analysis of alternatives as part of this process. The design phase involves putting flesh on the idea, planning the details, and developing a prototype for testing. She characterizes implementation as "reality testing," and implies that this includes the processes of evaluation and reformulation" (Deyle 1992: 460).

Policy Conflict Framework

Weible's and Heikkilä's Policy Conflict Framework (2017) take a deeper analysis of conflict in the policy process. This paper presents a framework which centers around the understanding of a "conflict episode" to provide a deeper understanding of the environment which surrounds and impacts the subjective success or failure of a given policy or development program. The authors look at specific aspects of policy setting, policy actor attributes, policy issue attributes, event attributes, characteristics of policy conflict, and feedback effects of policy conflicts (Weible et al. 6).

Policy Management Cycle (PCM)

Cairney simplifies the complexity of the policy process by emphasizing key instruments of policy, notably the importance of understanding the policy cycle, Policy Management Cycle (PCM): "The policy cycle is the best-known way to organize the study of policy making (and the best way to introduce a discussion of policy theories). Cairney delves into the numerous complexities and uncertainties in existing understandings of policy: "It is tempting to view the policy cycle as a theory because it is used to represent the policy process in multiple political systems" (Cairney 2012:32). The idea of a cycle suggests that policy is a "never-ending process rather than a single event; different actors are influential at different stages and previous decisions often set the agenda for future decision" (Cairney 2012: 23).

The Project Management Cycle is also very commonly used to understand the life cycle of a policy/project. The European Commission describes it as a complex and creative

process – as much art as science – involving the negotiation of decisions acceptable to key stakeholder groups. Teamwork, negotiation and communication skills are thus central to effective PCM, as is an appreciation of the political context within which decisions are being made” (European Commission 2004:2)

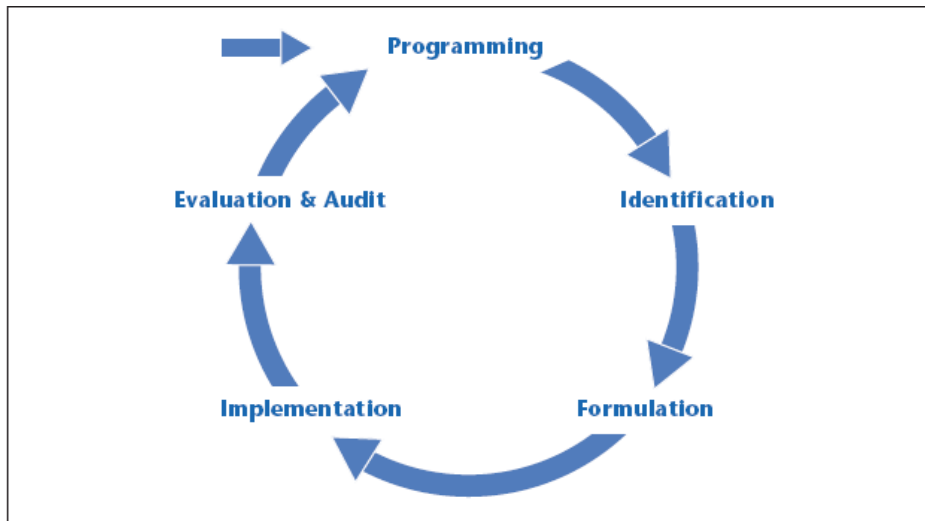


Figure 1 - Cycle of Operations as conceptualized by the European Commission (European Commission 2004:16)

As seen in Figure 1, the European Commission's *Cycle of Operations* is very similar to the Policy Management Cycle presented by Cairney (2012), which includes the following steps: Agenda Setting, Policy Formulation, Legitimation, Implementation, Evaluation, Policy Maintenance, succession or termination (Cairney 2012: 34). While these two models adopt the same structure, I decided to lean more towards the wording and order set by the European Commission for this research. The reason for this choice is that the ADELNORD project (main case study of the research), as well as the majority of projects mentioned by the interviewees are funded by the European Union or other European agencies. In the contextualisation chapter, I zoom in how each step of the PCM applies to Lebanon.

These different approaches to understanding conflict within the context of policy and development work in Lebanon complement each other. Through experience, development practitioners know things that have not been theorized. Further, their experiences show how national problems translate into strategic, bureaucratic, and professional aspects of working in development. Jantzi (2009) provides an interesting problem and model to look at development paradigms, and complex problems rooted in varied understanding of what development means. Weible et al. (2017) provide useful tools to analyze the context specific characteristics for the analyzed conflict episodes in my research. Finally, Cairney (2012) provides an in-depth understanding of the timeline and specific stages of the policy cycle, which has become a standard process in many practitioners' jobs.

3.3 Development Practitioners

The policy frameworks previously mentioned (Cairney's Policy Management Cycle and Weible's and Heikkila's Policy Conflict Framework) are examples of attempts that simplify a messy context by creating structure to this process; other researchers took interest

in the experience and stories of development practitioners. Development practitioners are diverse in nature: they operate within specific contexts, structures, ideologies, etc. In their paper, *Development Paradigms and Peacebuilding Theories of Change: Analyzing Embedded Assumptions in Development and Peacebuilding* (2009), Terrence and Vernon Jantzi analyze the relevance of theoretical disagreements, which are often unknown by practitioners themselves. The paper touches on underlying conflicts that occur when the theoretical understanding of the development paradigms influence relationships and interactions between practitioners in the field. The authors trace the understanding of development across two approaches to development (peacebuilding and development partitioners) and three development paradigms (modernization, growth and equity, and Liberation theory).

Terrence and Vernon Jantzi locate tensions that arise from blurred lines between peacebuilding and development practitioners and the different ideologies that influence each practice: “Development professionals chafe when peacebuilding is placed at a holistic, integrated center with development relegated to a poverty alleviation module on the periphery. In turn, peacebuilding professionals chafe when development is placed at a holistic, integrated center with peacebuilding relegated to a conflict-resolution module on the periphery” (Jantzi 2009:66). Further, Terrence and Vernon Jantzi discuss the relevance of three debates: While this division has not been investigated in the case of Lebanon, disagreements about the objective or purpose of interventions is of relevance when analyzing the context of development partitioners in Lebanon. Further, Lebanon’s history with development work and channelling of foreign funds has laid the ground for a significant professional setting, which is embedded within a number of professional and relational structures. In recent years, a number of working frameworks have been able to manage policy and development work.

John Forester describes the work of development partitioners, which he has spent years researching, as “diverse groups of public sector and non-profit urban practitioners who face the practical challenges of “doing democracy” on a daily basis” (Laws & Forrester 2015). Forrester’s academic career was dedicated to understanding the art of planning in chaotic settings, and to develop tools that study the complexity of urban planning. He studies conflicts they face on the job in an attempt to classify and categorize the roots and underlining conflicts of interest, ideology, belief, culture and history.

In his chapter, *Learning to Improve Practice: Lessons from Practice Stories and Practitioners’ Own Discourse Analyses (or Why Only the Loons Show Up)* (2016), Forrester explains the methods and interview style that he creates and promotes throughout his years doing research, to analyze the experience of professionals in the face of conflict and diversity of opinion: “I turned to explore a series of interviews with “mediators of public disputes” and community intermediaries, most of whom, instructively enough, quickly disavowed the clumsy label of “mediator” altogether” (Forrester 2012, 16).

Through this methodology, Forrester is able to study the complexity of practitioner’s stories in the urbanization sector, without being constrained by rigid research structures. Over many years of collecting such stories, the importance of understanding the subjectivity of each perspective becomes an important part of understanding the reality of governance and urban planning. In *Conflict, Improvisation, Governance*, David Laws and John Forrester

investigate the experience of “a diverse group of public sector and non-profit urban practitioners who face the practical challenges of “doing democracy” on a daily basis” (Laws & Forrester, 2015). While this book researches the context of Amsterdam, this brings important lessons to audiences that “extend to a great many other practitioners working in nominally democratic settings of urban planning and public administration” (Laws & Forrester 2015:6). However, what Forrester succeeds in doing, is to contextualize and study a world that is dictated by multiple subjectivities and imagined realities and conflicts.

For years, Forrester has refined his interview methods to bring out the story of the professionals he interviews. Rather than trying to understand planning from a scientific perspective, he preferred to embed himself in the ways planners describe and imagine their jobs to be: “Novels, after all, are “cooked”; they describe events that “never happened”, they’re fantastic rather than scientific, imagined rather than reporting empirical history, for example. So what sense can it make to argue that we can learn about real ethics—obligation, loyalty, kindness, betrayal, self-sacrifice, generosity, courage, care, and concern—from fantastic words on a novelist’s page?” (Forrester 2012, 14).

Through time and thorough systematic profiling, Forrester was able “to see patterns, structures, and ambiguities in the profiles, and the profiles helped to see how the theoretical arguments could come alive” (Forrester 2012, 15). When advising his students on how to conduct interviews, Forrester came up with four major takeaways: “

1. to inquire about work in real cases revealing both messy challenges and practical opportunities as well,
2. to ask, crucially, “How did you come to [do X]?” rather than “Why did you [do X]?”,
3. to ask, even more importantly, persistently actor-focused rather than spectator-focused questions (“How did you work on that committee?” not “How did that committee work?”),
4. to ask persistently, whenever possible, “How did you respond to (...)?” instead of, “What did you think about (...)?” (Forrester 2012, 15)

3.4 Conclusion of chapter

In the literature review I engage with concepts from three fields of studies (sectarian conflict, policy studies, and research about development practitioners), which allows me to build a lens that looks at the impact of sectarian tensions onto development work in Lebanon. In the first section of the literature review, I look at how sectarianism has been conceptualized historically, and highlight recent critical researchers, who deconstruct the ways in which a sectarian reality is constructed. In the second section, I look at different concepts that frame the study of policy and policy conflict. And lastly, I investigate the work of other researchers that have studied the work and subjective experiences of development practitioners. Through this lens, I hope to engage with the highly volatile reality of planning and development work, while laying the ground for more research to identify recurrent trends and alternative ways of understanding sectarian conflict.

Chapter 4 Development policies and the water sector in Lebanon

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I contextualise the concepts mentioned in chapter 3, by elaborating on how their arguments and assumptions relate specifically to the Lebanese context. I first explore the various stages of transformation that the development sector has gone through since the 1960s. During this period of time, the development sector became more formalized and national processes for planning began to adapt to the political landscape in Lebanon. We then place these various elements in the context of the water sector in Lebanon. First, I discuss the major challenges faced in the water sector. This is followed by a short summary of the history of the water sector in Lebanon. Lastly, I explain the established legal, procedural, and institutional structures that govern the sector.

4.2 The aspiration towards a balanced development

In the case of Lebanon, a significant majority of nation-wide studies were developed during the period between 1960-1975 (before the war). “The development policies of Fouad Chehab, President of the Republic (1958-1964) sought to achieve the universalization of basic infrastructure and much progress had been accomplished in the following years” (Verdeil 2009:2). During this period, the concept of balanced development, aiming to resolve regional inequalities, became an important political tool in mobilizing development efforts. The ministry of planning, which was later divided into smaller sectoral ministries, was created for the provision of equipment and infrastructures in the poorer regions of Lebanon. In collaboration with the IRFED mission “conducted between 1959 and 1963, a scientific reflection is developed on the whole national territory” (Harb El-Kak 1999: 119). This resulted in the implementation of complex national level projects (major infrastructure, airport, port, etc.) During the rise of the civil war (1975 to 1990), much of the development progress that was achieved in previous years was undone: “infrastructure provision has been used as a political weapon in the hands of the militias that controlled the fragmented country. The deliquescence of the management has led to the development of informal and substandard provision means, like electrical generators, private wells or private water supply” (Verdeil 2009:2)

4.3 Recovery, reconstruction and development

During the reconstruction period (1990-2000), recovery from the war and the revival of a vision for development were the priority. The National Emergency Recovery Program (NERP), which was put in place in 1991, was the main document for identifying priority projects. These projects were financed by the national budget and by international donors. The execution of the public facilities proposed by the NERP plan was practically

completed in 1998. Also, during this period, the CDR produced other plans to anticipate the period of development (2000-2019). Since then, these plans are still pending approval, and programming in Lebanon is constantly blocked by political authorities to avoid long-term visions or strategies (Dar & CNB 2005:5)

As seen in figure 2 below, the net official development assistance (in USD) received in Lebanon has been fluctuating and can be correlated to post-war developments in the country. While the professions of development partitioners became incrementally more defined starting in the 1990s during the reconstruction period of Lebanon (Dibeh 2007). This expanded further following the Israeli war in 2006 and the refugee crisis starting 2011 (LCPS & OXFAM, 2018). At this point, Lebanese institutions began to develop more intricate processes for the identification, planning, financing, implementation, and maintenance of infrastructure and service provision projects. Being a major recipient of foreign funding, Lebanon developed various processes and tools to absorb and attract funds. Where does all this money go? It is difficult to say exactly. Figure 3 below shows that from 2011 to 2015, 28.05% went to the public sector, 16.46% to NGOs and Civil Society, 30,82% to Multilateral organizations, 9.03% to teaching and research institutions (LCPS & OXFAM 2018).

During the development period (2000-2019), lack of state funding led the CDR to rely mostly on international donors. Also, considering continuous deadlock to approve large-scale projects, the CDR broke down the developed plans into a list of priority projects. These are agreed upon by the concerned ministries and submitted to donors to obtain funding. It is therefore on the basis of this list that the selection of projects is made after negotiation with the donor agencies (Dar & CNB 2005: 12). Political powers are involved in the selection process when discussing the financial proposal which needs approval from the council of ministers and ratification by parliament for it to be effective (Dar & CNB 2005:13).

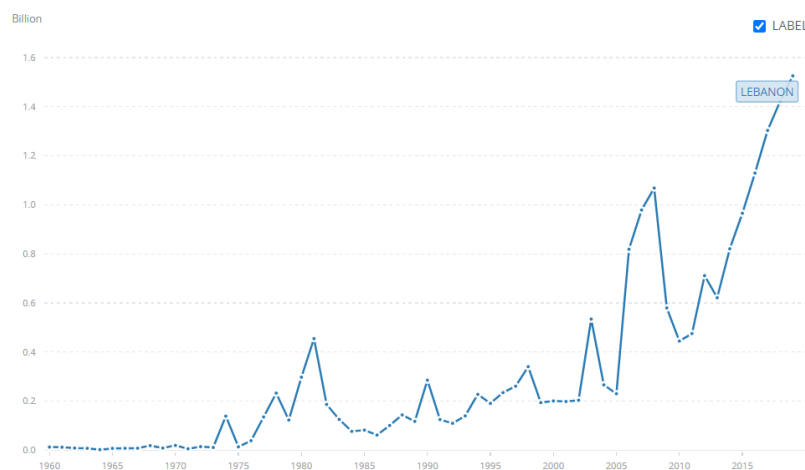


Figure 2- Net official development assistance received in Lebanon from 1960 to 2019 (World Bank 2022)

Figure 1: ODA to Lebanon (2005–2010)

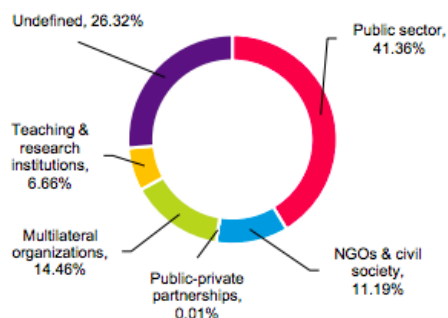
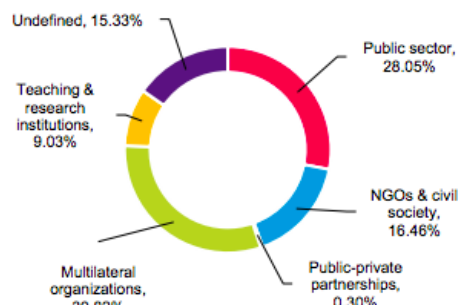


Figure 2: ODA to Lebanon (2011–2015)³



Source: OECD's Creditor Reporting System on Official Development Assistance to Lebanon. Creditor Reporting System website: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>

Figure 3- Distribution of official development assistance (LCPS & Oxfam 2018)

4.4 The policy cycle management (PCM) in Lebanon

According to the gatekeeper of the ADELNORD project, Sami Feghali who was interviewed in the context of this research, the PCM in Lebanon follows the European Union cycle, but with the following particularities:

Programming Phase: Lebanon relies heavily on foreign donors to finance development projects and public investments. Further, medium and long-term visions and strategies are rarely approved by political bodies (Council of Ministers and Parliament). For several years, the programming phase has been reduced to a list of projects stemming from the ministries' sectoral policies.

Identification Phase: The identification of projects is also dependent on the strategy of international donors. Usually, each donor has a specific strategy, and this will define sectoral plans and determine the regions which will benefit from projects. A first identification of projects is made on the basis of a compromise between national priorities (defined by the sectoral policies of the ministries) and donor strategy. The final identification of projects follows pre-feasibility and feasibility studies. The selected projects are accounted for in the financing agreement proposal which is approved by the Council of Ministers and ratified by the parliament.

Financing Phase: In most applications of the project cycle management, the financing phase follows the formulation phase. But in Lebanon, since the majority of funding comes from international donors, the approval and ratification of the proposal for the funding agreement occurs before the details of the projects have been developed.

Formulation Phase: This phase involves carrying out detailed studies of the selected projects and preparing the tender documents. These studies take into consideration the recommendations of the feasibility studies

Implementation Phase: This involves the execution of the project work. This is unique to each project.

Maintenance/Evaluation Phase: The project is reviewed and evaluated based on its initial objectives. This is an important aspect of ensuring the sustainability of projects. However, this process in Lebanon is done through the guidance of international donors, and does not result in national efforts to improve results.

4.5 Wastewater and water sector management (water , irrigation, sanitation)

4.5.1 Historical overview of the water sector

Historically, the water sector in Lebanon is characterized by laissez faire and lack of central planning. Throughout the rule of the Ottoman Empire and the French Mandate in Lebanon, a highly centralized system of governance was established. However, the management of these utilities was handed over to private (mostly foreign) investors. This was the beginning of de-regulation and lack of central planning in Lebanon. While efforts in the 50s and 60s attempted to strengthen the role of the Lebanese state, the Civil War which lasted from 1975 to 1990 caused a deeper fragmentation of access to water. At this point, control over water sources was important in building strategy over territorial control. This resulted in informal solutions such as privately drilled wells and unlicensed water vendors to become the new alternative for water access. These methods remain extremely common until today (Pluschke 2016:2).

In 2000, Lebanon began an important reform process to improve the water sector. Before discussing the different legal frameworks, institutions, and actors that play important roles in shaping the water sector in Lebanon, it is important to recognize the deep influence that global water governance has had in Lebanon since the end of the Lebanese civil war. More specifically, the World Bank and other international donors such as the AFD, GIZ and USAID have played a role that has been critically analyzed by some scholars. These international donors join “state administrations, which in themselves operate at multiple scales, to produce local development projects often of an infrastructural nature” (Eid-Sabbagh 2014:16). The influence of international donors became a lot more essential around the year 2000, when Lebanon underwent a significant restructuring of the water sector.

Before May 2000, drinking water was mostly managed by 21 Water Authorities under close tutelage from the Ministry Hydraulic and Electric Resources. The jurisdiction areas of these Authorities were defined according to physical, administrative, or social boundaries rather than hydrological limits. The Authorities had the responsibility of the operation and maintenance of the water systems and fee collection. However, because of the gaps in coverage, a significant number of municipalities and 209 local committees were managing independent domestic and irrigation systems (Dar & CNB 2005).

4.5.2 Legal framework of the water sector

For the reform project, the World Bank focused its efforts on privatizing the executive functions of the water sector. Under this advice, the government should be in charge of restructuring the roles and responsibilities of ministries and water authorities and to oversee and regulate the financial feasibility and of projects (also the review and the approval of tariffs

for potable water, waste-water and water for irrigation). Local authorities and actors started setting up companies for the construction, operation and maintenance of installations and the management of water services (Catafago 2005:82). While these guidelines have framed the efforts of reform, the Lebanese government focused on three major aspects:

- “Carry out studies, implementation, operation, maintenance and renewing of projects for drinking and irrigation water distribution, (except for irrigation water in the South and South Beqaa that remains under the responsibility of the Litani River authority), within the frame of General Master-Plan according to a Ministry’s prior permit to use public water resources.
- Propose tariffs for drinking and irrigation water services taking into consideration general socio-economic conditions of the Country.
- Control the quality of the drinking and irrigation distributed water” (Catafago 2005: 82).

In May 2000, the introduction of the 221 law merged the 21 Water Authorities into four Water Establishments (Beirut and Mount-Lebanon, the North, the South and the Bekaa). Since this date, the definition of responsibilities is still being developed and finalized. The law states that these Establishments have financial and administrative autonomy. “The main objective of the Law is to separate clearly between the macro and micro management of water, and to strengthen the policy of decentralization by granting more autonomy to regional authorities involved in management of water supply and separating between policy-making and service provision” (FAO 2000).

Pluschke (2016) identifies 13 categories of actors that play a role in the water sector in Lebanon: The Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), the Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Municipalities, Water Establishments (WE), the World Bank (WB), Donors, NGOs, Research, Media, and Water Users.

From these organizations, the role of the CDR, MoEW, Municipalities, Water Establishments, and Donors are the most relevant to my research:

- The Council for the Development and Reconstruction (CDR) was originally created in 1977 to coordinate post-war reconstruction efforts. Until today, the CDR is considered to be the key actor in the allocation of foreign funding. While, on paper, the CDR should only assist in the financial aspect of water management. However, its reputation of being more experienced and efficient than the MoEW drives international Donors to opt for working with the CDR instead. The CDR continues to be “actively involved in funding, planning, constructing (e.g., contracting) and operating networks and treatment facilities” (Pluschke 2016: 30).
- The role of the Ministry of Energy and Water was clearly outlined as part of the reform project in 2000 as being responsible for the development and implementation of a national master plan for the water and wastewater sector. Also it is in charge of “the construction of large-scale infrastructure projects, the evaluation of water needs and uses, the setting of quality standards, the licensing of water permits, the control and monitoring of the WE, and public relations (Law 221)” (Pluschke 2016: 31). However, the Ministry remains dependent on funding of the CDR and international donors, and still suffers greatly to fulfill the requirements set by Law 221. The CDR, being more equipped, takes on these responsibilities (Pluschke 2016: 31).
- Lebanese Municipalities have traditionally been responsible for the operation and maintenance of water infrastructure. The reform in 2000, however, determined that the operation and maintenance of this infrastructure should be transferred to water

establishments. This decision was met with much resistance from municipalities, who have not allowed establishment to “disown them”. There therefore remains much ambiguity for the role of municipalities in the water sector (Pluschke 2016: 33).

- One of the major objectives of the reform in 2000 was to merge the 21 water authorities into four Water Establishments, which were assigned with the overall management of water resources. This includes the planning, funding, and implementation of water projects. However, Water Establishments are far from being self-financing, or from meeting their goals. Further, as municipalities continue to play their part in the operation of maintenance of water infrastructure, the role of Water Establishment is still uncertain (Pluschke 2016:34).

4.5.3 Major challenges in the water sector

“More than 80% of the population concentrated in a narrow coastal strip with Beirut at its center, sandwiched between the sea and limestone mountains rising to over 3000 m. Water resources in Lebanon are subjected to severe pressures acting on both the quantity aspect in terms of over exploitation and wasteful use and on the quality of resources with polluting practices proliferating in all sectors” (Comair 2007:7). As a result of the severe lack in infrastructure, resource management, and effective decision making, the water sector resorts to wasteful solutions: Water quality is affected by intrusions of saltwater bacterial contamination, which is the case for 70% of all natural water resources. Less than 8 percent of all wastewater is collected and treated, resulting in the contamination of fresh water resources and the Mediterranean Sea. Most raw sewage is discharged into the rivers of the sea. Although several treatment plants have been built (or remain under construction) their use and maintenance prove to be very difficult (Pluschke 2016: 1).

According to a study effectuated as a collaboration between Dar al Handasa (Dar) and Charbel Nahas Bureau (CNB) (2005) problems of water management run across the board:

- Most large-scale municipalities have sewage treatment plants that are either under construction or in the pipeline of planned projects. However, very few of the treatment plants are able to operate, thus discharging water waste without treatment.
- A large number of rural communities neither have sewerage networks nor treatment plants. These municipalities present a considerable risk of groundwater contamination. The quality of groundwater reserves is contaminated to unacceptable levels because of waste water discharges.
- The lack of treatment facilities for wastewater constitutes major reasons for the pollution of water resources and the mediocre quality of the drinking water.
- Water losses due to the poor maintenance of water infrastructure are estimated at 50% of the water distributed by water authorities: a considerable majority of the water supply networks are over 30 years old.
- The management of large-scale irrigation projects is defined under the responsibility of the Litani River Authority. Other smaller-scale projects fall under the responsibility of regional water authorities. Given the lack of human and financial resources, these water authorities are not capable of delivering the agreed upon services.
- The integration of militia politics into the role of the state causes the prioritization of private/community interests over the general interest. This results in deep fragmentations and inefficiencies in water provision.

4.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter gives us a good overview on the context in which development projects occur in Lebanon. The complexity of the country's history and current structure makes it almost impossible to draw clear or definite conclusions on the root causes of the inefficiency of the development sector and government institutions in general. However, context and theories all refer to sectarianism as a system (in the case of Lebanon) that exacerbates already existing inefficiencies. In the next chapter, where results of the interviews are laid out, I investigate further into the relationship between sectarianism and the policy cycle, and how the experiences of practitioners with conflicts shapes their understanding of the concept.

Chapter 5 Sectarianism and the PCM through the eyes of development practitioners

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate the relationship between sectarianism and the PCM, and how the experiences of practitioners with conflicts shapes their understanding of the concept. In these interviews, I apply Forrester's approach, which allows me to study subjective experiences of development work in Lebanon. As mentioned in chapter 2, I have chosen a diverse panel of interviewees, all involved in the different phases of PCM.

5.2 Position and profile of key informants

I order the results in accordance to the phases of the project cycle. In reality, there is no clear cut between professional positions and project cycles. While this overlap will be made clearer throughout the discussion of findings, I will discuss the profile of each interviewee individually.

Presentation of interviewees and their position

- **Mr. Sami Feghali:** Director of National Land-use Planning for local development projects. Feghali is responsible for coordinating amongst several actors to: set the criteria for priority projects, verify the conformity of proposed projects with guidelines of national land-use planning and discuss with funding agencies the role of various actors in the implementation of projects. Feghali is also the primary coordinator between donor agencies, the CDR, the operations team (consultants, contractors, etc), and municipalities.
- **Ms. Wafa Charafeddine:** Director of the Financing division at the CDR. Director of the financing division at CDR. Charafeddine's work influences the process of development projects during the initial negotiations of project planning, most notably in the Financing of projects. When asked to summarise her work, Charafeddine identifies three major roles: 1- finding a donor that can finance suggested projects and to prepare and negotiate the financial agreement. 2 – Suggests this financial agreement to the Council of Ministers. 3 – Financial Auditing to ensure comply
- **Mrs. Faten Adada:** Operations Manager for the ADELNORD. Adada intervenes during the identification, formulation, and implementation of projects. In the case of ADELNORD, Adada's involvement started before the drafting of a Financial Agreement. She is part of the team who initially studied the ground (both in terms of landscape and socio/politics), and identified the priority projects. Once the donor was found, she took part in the formulation of the project and managed the implementation of the different projects within ADELORD from an operations perspective. This means that she was highly involved in the technical assessment of the project and in anticipating

and handling conflict at the local/community level. Furthermore, her position interacts with a wide variety of actors (both at an expert level and local level).

- **Mr. Abou Ibrahim Allaw:** A member of a family who participated in the selection and cancelling of an irrigation project. This example follows the cancellation of an irrigation project, which, technically speaking, negatively impacts all parties involved. This project was conceived under the Adelnord project, which was previously mentioned. The selection of a hill lake and an irrigation network was done in close cooperation with local authorities, including members of 4 rival families (or tribes), who own the land that would collectively benefit from this project. Just before starting the implementation of the project, the four families actively opposed the public consultation, and demanded to cancel the project.

5.3 Conflicts in the different phases of the PCM in the water project ABELNORD

In this part I lay out the results of the interviews with the above-mentioned stakeholders. At each phase of the PCM, different issues occurred and have affected the efficiency of the phase and the overall implementation of the project; showing once again how identity-based conflicts affect the projects and how it shapes the participants' experiences with sectarianism.

5.3.1 Conflicts in the programming and identification stages

According to Charafeddine, the initial phases of project planning are based on an outdated Master Plan which dates back to the 60s and 70s. These same documents were revised after the Civil War in the 90s, and remain in use until today. This Master Plan is a purely technical document, which has to be approved by political institutions to be implemented. This includes plans for domestic use, wastewater, and irrigation. At this level, sectarian leaders with government positions avoid approving updates or new propositions for the Master Plan. Therefore, when a fund is allocated to a water project, the national planning agent (in this case the CDR) has always had to keep a list of priority projects in line with the recommendations of the Master Plan.

The selection of development projects in Lebanon is made on the basis of four factors: urgency, planning vision, political lobbying and the availability of external financing. Considerations of urgency and programming visions should be the only ones to prevail in the context of a reasoned planning and programming procedure. But, in the case of Lebanon, political lobbying and the availability of external funding are also perhaps even more influencing factors in final decision-making. This situation directly affects the smooth operation of the development process (Charafeddine, 2021).

Politicians force the CDR to balance the list of projects between the regions according to the principle of "balanced development"; each politician defending the "share" of his region. Thus, little account is taken for macroeconomic or financial constraints. The practice of listing priority projects is not healthy. Once registered with

a Ministry or at CDR level, a project is almost never cancelled even if, for special circumstances, this project is no longer a priority. Each ministerial change leads to the addition of projects to the list, resulting in an endless accumulation of projects (Charafeddine, 2021).

The main consideration of the politician is the location of projects. Since parliamentarians and national representatives are elected on the basis of regional constituencies and religious communities, their interests remain stuck at these two levels. Therefore, the main debate of parliamentarians, before the ratification of the financing agreement, mainly focuses on the share of the region and the community of each of them and becomes a kind of bargaining that does not take into account the national interest. This debate ends with a fragmentation of the proposed project and which no longer respects a rational logic for a project.

Charafeddine suggests the problem of wastewater treatment as an example which typically shows the problems with such decision making: “When we are speaking of wastewater management, the original project is usually fully scoped. However, in practice, one of the paralyzing aspects of project implementation is that these projects ended up scattered interventions that lack proper coordination and distribution network. A good example of this was in the early 2000s, when a realization of a well-integrated treatment project was split into 3 different projects. The agreement was that foreign funds, which was the French mission at the time, was to fund the building of the treatment plants and provide equipment for sewage networks. Another part of the project was the construction of networks, which was under the responsibility of the Ministry of Energy and Water. However, the Ministry did not have the appropriate funds nor capacity to take on such an endeavour. There was also some push-back from a specific sectarian elite within the ministry, because the projects were to be implemented in areas where the sectarian group was a minority. This shows once again that sectarian divisions within the ministry have delayed any decision making and exacerbated its inability to plan for the networks. As a result, the 7 purification plants that were later built all lack networks” (Charafeddine 2021).

In this framing, sectarian politics intervene through the political elite in formal central institutions. The problem of Sectarianism is thus expressed through a legal and institutional framework which reinforces clan-based thinking at the expense of coherence in project selection. Rather than following a coherent logic to choose projects, Lebanese decision makers are split in between a Master Plan that assumes rational decision making and a political arena which instils regional fragmentation of funds. This has significant repercussions which can significantly harm the performance of selected projects. It can result in:

- A considerable delay in aggregating on projects selected and allocation of funds
- Underfunding projects under the pretext of regional balance

- Significant financial losses due to realization of unfinished work and putting these stations on the back burner pending the construction of sewer networks and their operation
- Difficulty to work in logical steps towards improving water services

When donors identified these problems, they quickly adopted a new process as this is common practice in many developing countries. The new process consisted of decentralizing the project implementation to the local level. In theory, this would help people directly, and establish bottom-up approaches. There are now a lot of local interventions, but the problem with this is that these projects tend to be too small and do not include any coordination with neighbouring communities, which makes them more vulnerable to the power of the decision makers at the central level. Therefore, these projects cannot achieve scalable change, nor ensure their sustainability (Charafeddine 2021).

5.3.2 Conflicts in the financing and formulation stages

Given the financial situation of the Lebanese State since 1998, the vast majority of development projects are financed by international donors in the form of credit (mostly) or subsidies. At the technical level, and in the case of a wastewater treatment plant project for example, the national planning agent (in this case the CDR) prepares a complete study of an integrated project and submits it to the donor for approval. In addition to the station project itself, these studies include extensive assessment of the sewer networks to bring wastewater to a given station. It also presents an economic, environmental and institutional feasibility study which takes into account the availability of human capital and financing for the operation of this station. After approval by the donor to finance the project, a financing agreement is signed. For it to be effective, it needs to be approved by the Council of Ministers and then ratified by Parliament. Charafeddine feels that, more generally, the challenges that she faces during the financing phases of the project cycle also come from the clash between the technical requirements of following through with International Donors and the politicised nature of resource distribution in the country. Though this rarely occurs, the Council of Ministers can still reject a project after all this work (Charafeddine 2021).

In her interview, Adada describes her experience working on the ADELNORD project. Both Charafeddine and Adada agree that the ADELNORD project did not face many conflicts in the identification and financing stages. The Adelnord project was financed by a grant from the European Union, and was carried out in close collaboration between the central institutions and local authorities. This project aimed to develop rural infrastructure in the Akkar region located in the north of Lebanon. Concerning the ADELNORD project, much of its conceptualization happened on a very high level, including mostly members of parliament and ministries. It was mostly determined by political pressures, connections, and availability of resources. The idea is produced in this manner, without ever consulting the technical and social side of things on the ground. On the technical level, the problem can be solved more or less easily: the expert can run an assessment and determine what is feasible, what is not, and can mould the project in a way that can be effective and effectuate a positive feasibility study (Adada 2021).

To analyse the needs of this region, the European Union commissioned a team of international experts which worked in the field for several months. This expertise worked with the central administrations concerned (in particular the Ministry of Agriculture), municipalities and unions of municipalities, agricultural cooperatives, farmers, civil society agents, etc. On the basis of these assessments, a large number of projects, with total costs that far exceeded the allocated budget, were listed. Technical and social criteria were adopted as a second filter to select the priority projects in close consultation with the local authorities (Adada 2021).

However, conflicts happened at the formulation phase, when it became apparent that the institutional framework to ensure the construction and maintenance of the infrastructure was not clearly stated: At the legal level, the sustainability of these installations would fall under the competence of Public Establishment of Water of North Lebanon (PEWNL) which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Energy and Water. Mrs. Adada explains that after consulting with the PEWNL, she realized that, despite recognizing its legal responsibility, this institution possesses neither the administrative structure nor the financial means to manage these new installations. The concerned municipalities also lack the legal authority and the financial means to take this responsibility (Adada, 2021).

Ms. Adada explains that to fill institutional gaps, there was an attempt to organize the operation and maintenance of irrigation infrastructure at the beneficiary/community level. Beneficiaries were assisted in organizing themselves through associations. To make this arrangement legally binding, the Water Users Associations were required to ensure that the laws in force are respected. However, this did not go according to plan and the creation of the association was rejected. Until today, the association operates without an official legal status. This significantly increases its vulnerability to any external pressures (lack of funding, local conflicts, etc)

A team of experts worked closely with the beneficiaries on the structure and operation of the Water Users Associations. On the one hand, the experts provided assistance with technical, financial, and administrative/management needs. This would allow the organization to gain some autonomy and competence. On the other hand, the team worked closely with administrative actors (Ministry of Agriculture and PEWNL, concerned municipalities) to find a legal framework for the Water Users Associations to abide by the laws. Other important collaborations were made with key stakeholders to ensure the legitimacy and effectiveness of the association: this includes the representative of the Ministry of Energy and Water, and the representative of the PEWNL.

The team of experts resulted in proposing the following:

1. Administrative and organizational statute which can be adopted for the creation of Water Users Associations. The board of directors for these associations will be composed of representatives from the beneficiaries (users), a representative of the PEWNL, and a representative of the concerned municipality.
2. A tripartite agreement between the Ministry of Agriculture, the PEWNL, and the Water Users Associations which legalizes its administrative status.
3. A first official request was launched according to all the agreed terms and documents. But the director general of the Ministry of Energy and Water considered that the management of the irrigation networks remains the legal responsibility of the PEWNL and that any other solution would be illegal. “Much work has been done in close collaboration with the representative of the ministry to ensure the total compliance of the water users with current laws. Multiple meetings were held to train

water users in the management of the installations. All that was needed to jeopardize the whole process that ensures the sustainability of a project was an institutional hiccup” (Adada 2021).

The drawbacks of such a situation are numerous:

1. These infrastructures are currently managed by the Water Users Associations, which do not have a legal status. This makes them vulnerable
2. Public funds, time, and expertise were poured into a project that could not stand on its feet
3. This re-affirms citizens’ lack of confidence in state services

5.3.3 Conflicts in the implementation stage of the project cycle

The implementation phase of the project cycle is one which includes many problematic aspects. Firstly, many conflicts that were avoided in previous stages of the cycle only emerge once works has started. There also are many problems at the local level, that could not be foreseen within the current framework of planning. The people in charge of implementation start dealing with various conflicts: one prominent example is conflict with landowners when the project will be implemented on privately owned land, they can change their minds. Sometimes, projects do not properly consult with landowners, and sometimes landowners are resistant to allowing others benefit from a good that they perceive as theirs. In the latter cases, there usually is a pre-existing conflict between sectarian groups, families, political parties, etc. The kinds of divisions that are faced really depend on the context. In areas that are ruled by tribal families, things do not operate in a way we understand. In other cases, sectarian conflict is a lot more prominent (Adada 2021).

Generally speaking, sectarian networks play an essential role in sabotaging any attempts to reach common solutions. A lot of citizens’ dependency on sectarian parties for their access to services can be traced to the Civil War. The case of potable water is a perfect example to show the permanent effect of the civil war on the water sector. During the war, Ethnic militias took over access to potable water. Each region would decide to dig its own well, and to take care of themselves, without depending on the government to bring a regional container, etc. Local solutions started to remedy this problem, and the fact that there are wells anywhere is very dangerous in terms of quality management and maintenance, pollution, and the general quality of the service. When public institutions came in to take a hold of certain regions, it would find much difficulty, because over a long period of time, people created ways to become self-sufficient in illegal ways. There are many examples in Akkar and Qobayat, in projects where the CDR designs certain projects with the Ministry of Water and Energy. The problem was that once these wells were dug, the water was now seen as the property of the community. Communities did not want to share these resources with their neighbours. This mentality, which formed during the war, became very dominant in the water sector (Charafeddine 2021).

According to Adada (2021), when there is an issue of water distribution, if people did not already have a consensus, and are not from the same family, sectarian group, or political direction, you very often have the thinking of why would I give him something that should go to me. In Lebanon, projects that are not made up of a homogenous target group complicates its realization. This is also very common in matters of marketing, where these

projects are promoted as something that serves a specific community (Adada, 2021). While the context of the Civil War explains a significant deepening in dependency on sectarian leaders and weakening of the Lebanese state, this logic also applies in regions with independent contexts of community and inter-communitarian tensions. In some of the northern rural areas in Lebanon (notably in the regions of Hermel and Akkar), powerful families (also referred to as tribes) have a long history of conflict and disputes over land and resources. Although homogenous in sectarian identity, these regions are very difficult to involve in state development programs.

5.3.3.1 The case of Ain al Bayda

A significant portion of the ADELNORD aimed to cover regions that are dominated by these families. One project, the project of Ayn al Bayda shows very clearly the tensions that can surface unexpectedly and cause the cancellation of a project that would benefit many. This project was first mentioned by Ms. Faten Adada during her interview, in which she explains that the identification of the Ain al Bayda project was conceived within the framework of the Adelnord project. This was carried out in close collaboration between the central government (MoEW, CDR) and local authorities (in this case the Union of Municipalities of Hermel in North Lebanon). After conducting a participatory assessment for the identification of priority projects (to which members of the benefiting families contributed), a consensus for the build of a hill lake in "Ain el Bayda " was created. This would include an irrigation network to increase the surfaces and the profitability of agricultural areas. Economic feasibility studies and detailed technical studies have supported the effectiveness and relevance of this project. Just before launching the call for tenders for the realization of this project, a delegation of four land-owning families (the families: Allaw, Nassereddine, Jaafar and Dandash), belonging to the same religious community in the same region, called for the cancellation of the project (Adada 2021). The pretext was that, although this would provide them with better access to irrigation water, they do not want to let their water pass through the property of the other family. They were afraid that the other families would have more benefits than them. Through this action, not only did they block other families' access to water, but they also stopped themselves from having an effective water distribution system, and a good management of the project (Adada 2021).

What became apparent is that people that were invited to the negotiations had in mind larger political agendas, rather than the direct development and social needs of local populations. It is very difficult to actually anticipate these problems. Also, local authorities try to implement a project at any cost, and then later deal with fixing the details. Worst comes to worst, we will be able to change the project. It is a common strategy for municipalities to pretend the existence of a project to guarantee funding. Then, once implantation starts, they consider that they now have the funds and redirect them towards other goals that they have in mind (Adada 2021).

To understand the reasons behind the cancellation of project, an interview was conducted with Mr. Abou Ibrahim Allaw, farmer and active member of the Allaw family. Mr. Allaw was part of the discussions in the identification of the projects, as well as in the delegation that requested its cancellation. Mr. Allaw recognizes the advantages that this project would offer by increasing a considerable amount of irrigation water, which will allow the perimeter agriculture and improve its profitability. According to him, the reason this project was not pursued is because of a continuous familial rivalry: Ain el Bayda is made up of two tribes, and each tribe has several branches. During the project in question, there was an attempt from one of these subgroups to take over as much land as possible. The project

would significantly spike the prices. These rivalries all happen in the absence of awareness and cooperation at the level of local institutions. In this case, the absence of adequate authority did not allow to contain these tensions. People took advantage of this situation to turn local authorities against the implementation of the project under the pretext that it does not serve everyone. (Allaw 2021).

Allaw explains that tribal rivalries were historically enhanced by the presence of the Lebanese state., tribal disagreements over water can also be traced back to a council of tribes which was established in 1958 by a consultant named Boutros Abdel Sater. This does not exist anywhere in Lebanese institutions. This was at a time when there were UN conventions which scared people in the area, who formed “the guards of the northern borders”. Therefore, to gain control over the area, rather than including the land in national development plans, the Lebanese state bought the leaders loyalty and encouraged competition and conflict between them (Allaw 2021).

According to Adada, this phenomenon holds both a cultural aspect which have been introduced to people’s know-how and logic. Though these can be analysed from a historical perspective, they are difficult to undo. However, another more important aspect is the lack of confidence in the Lebanese state. People are not given reasons to trust the quality and fairness of state services.

5.3.4 Conflicts in the maintenance stage of the project cycle

The maintenance of water projects in Lebanon falls under the responsibility of Water Establishments and Municipalities, who should be supervised by the Ministry of Environment and Water (Adada 2021). However, all of these institutions lack the human and financial capital to fulfill these requirements. Fact is, these institutions are run by persons appointed through sectarian networks who do not fit the requirements of employment. There is no real incentive, nor a clear legal repartition of responsibilities.

Several public administrations overlap in functions for the designs and execution of projects. In some cases, there is an overlap of duties and lack of coordination among them. As for the water resources management, Law 221 is ambiguous in terms of allocation of responsibilities. The MoEW is responsible for the preparation of studies pertaining to the management of the water resources, while the Litani River Authority is responsible for the hydrologic measurements at the national scale. The Law does not establish the cooperation means and mechanisms. The same applies to the water resources shared among two adjacent establishments.

After the reform project, and with the creation of the Water Establishments and the emphasis of the role of the MoEW, local authorities were threatened to lose control over water resources. Further, the failure of these institutions frustrated citizens’ and deepened lack of trust towards governmental institutions. Many local authorities “took matter into their own hands” (Adada 2021). By this, it means that most activities surrounding the water distribution happened in informal ways with no clear guidelines for quality and sustainability. These solutions pose great threats on the environment, increases the cost of accessing water, and results in great losses of water resources.

5.4 The understanding of sectarianism in the different phases of PCM

My research question aims to evaluate how development practitioners in the water sector understand the repercussions of sectarianism onto their work and ability to effectively plan and implement development projects and policies. Throughout my interviews, I wanted to know more about the different understanding of sectarianism, and in which context it is applied by practitioners. More specifically, I was hoping that the examples provided in the interviews would help me engage in a more nuanced discussion about what sectarianism means in Lebanon, and how it is experienced in water negotiations.

In the previous section I laid down the stories of the practitioners and actors which were interviewed for this research. The stories are compiled based on the project phase discussed. This allowed me to break down the complexity of sectarian conflict throughout the timeline of projects in the water sector. As discussed throughout this paper, sectarianism can be understood in many ways. For this research, I identify three understandings that are relevant to the study of sectarianism and development work. These three understanding were first mentioned in the Literature Review and are helpful to categorize the experiences presented above:

- Patron-client relationships between sectarian elite and Lebanese citizens: The involvement of political leaders in negotiations during project planning. This includes patron-client networks, as well as political alliances to international powers.
- An ineffective legal and institutional set-up: The different institutional and administrative bodies that govern project planning in the sector of water in Lebanon. This includes foreign aid agencies and Lebanese governmental agencies (specifically the Ministry of Electricity and Water and the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) Water Establishments, Municipalities).
- Cultural/discursive interactions: Identarian conflict between local communities are embedded in Lebanese society through various understandings, practices, and relations of power.

In this section, I locate conflict episodes within the PCM, and break down how sectarianism is framed in this particular instance to expresses regularities and trends in the type of conflicts that arise. Each of these episodes opens a different can of worms, relating to problems that have a unique historical, institutional and social context. Thus, through my interviews, I hope to take part in a discussion that is able to engage with the complexities of sectarian politics in Lebanon, while finding a comprehensive framework that can collect these stories into a comprehensive narrative.

My findings show that:

- In the programming and identification phases: interviewed practitioners mainly relate to the first understanding of sectarian politics, which serves the interests of the political elite through sectarian frictions in central institutions (Council of Ministers, Ministries, CDR, etc.). Due to their continuous competition over resources, sectarian leaders try to pull funds to their respective communities with no coordination over planning issues. This set-up also makes it difficult to come up with new solutions or

amendments to the Master Plan. To avoid deadlock at the level of the ratification of the financing agreement (from the Council of Ministers), Charafeddine describes the solution amongst her colleagues as a “shopping list” of projects presented, which politicians can negotiate. At this point, the location of projects becomes the priority.

- In the financing and formulation phases: interviewed practitioners relate to the second understanding of sectarianism, which focuses on Lebanese institutions. During the formulation phase is when the problem of institutional ambiguity becomes difficult to overcome. In the case of the water sector, Municipalities and Water Establishments have many overlapping roles which they compete over. Furthermore, the Ministry of Electricity and Water is far from capable of fulfilling its role. Lebanese institutions give the Lebanese state a role of mediator amongst sectarian groups. These variables make the formulation of a project and the division of responsibilities a lot more difficult.
- In the implementation phase: interviewed practitioners relate to the third understanding of sectarianism, which looks critically at how sectarianism is constructed socially. These conflicts are hard to predict and always unique in nature. The examples provided shows how clan-based thinking is intertwined between institutional arrangements, land owners, sectarian leaders, municipalities. Further each example rests on a unique context (geography, social dynamics, history, etc.). However, solutions seem to all gear towards clan independence. Although some of the presented projects promise better use of water resources, communities prioritize control over the resource over the possibility of scaling their infrastructure. The Civil War accentuated this issue, which was presented in the example of drinking water: until today, people are fearful of any attempt of the state to manage water resources. The example of Ain al Bayda shows that clan-based thinking finds its roots in several contexts in Lebanon and not only amongst “sectarian groups”.
- In the maintenance phase: interviewed practitioners relate to the second understanding of sectarianism which focuses on Lebanese institutions. The maintenance of projects requires a clear distribution of responsibilities, qualified personnel, and sustainable sources of funding. As a result, Lebanese citizens do not trust any public intervention and prefer to rely on local solutions. Municipalities play an important role as they operate both public infrastructure and private/informal services.

5.5 Conclusion of chapter

In this chapter, I present the important parts of my interviews through the structure of the PCM. Through this structure, I was able to identify the most dominant understanding of sectarianism which is associated with the discussed incident or conflict. It is important to mention that in real life, there is no clear division between the three understandings of sectarianism discussed above. The results show which one of these factors is emphasized in a given context and through a certain positionality. Therefore, in this discussion, when talking about Sectarianism, it is to find the different lenses used to describe the problem. This approach aims to help practitioners in understanding and mitigating sectarian conflict in their job, resulting in more targeted interventions.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

In this paper, my objective was to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of sectarian conflict in Lebanon. I took a special interest in investigating how the experience of development practitioners shapes their understanding of sectarianism. While this scope is too large to be achieved with this paper, I focused more specifically on the experience of individuals who have dealt with conflicts in different stages of the PCM for water projects. What this paper achieved, was to draw on the complexity that practitioners internalize throughout their professional practice. Furthermore, the organization and analyses of the experiences according to the PCM allowed to draw clearer connections between sectarian conflict and the development sector in Lebanon.

To answer my research question, I first explored three different fields of study that helped me understand how practitioners in development encounter sectarian conflict: The study of sectarianism through the lens of conflict studies explained how sectarianism is understood, conceptualized, and experienced. Policy Studies provided a valuable framework which structures the work of development practitioners. Finally, research about development practitioners helped understand the relevance of studying their perspective, as well as to present methodologies that interact with the subjectivities and complexity of planning. After reviewing relevant literature, I presented more specifically the context in which I conduct the research. This started with a broad historical overview that reviews how the development sector evolved alongside a sectarian political landscape. I then looked more specifically at the water sector in Lebanon.

In the results, I identified three big understandings of sectarianism, which is used to explain problems throughout the project cycle. Further, each cycle in the PCM was associated more strongly with one understanding than others. In the initial stages of the PCM (programming, identification, financing, and formulation) conflicts were strongly associated with the problem of the sectarian elite competing for resources through political representation and patron-client relationships. In the implementation stage of the PCM, which is also the most volatile phase in a project, conflicts were more strongly associated with local politics. This is closely related to unofficial governance structures, collective memories of war/conflict, and cultural understandings. Finally in the maintenance and evaluation phase, conflicts were more often explained as a problem of weak and inadequate institutions.

The question of how to manage development in the context of Lebanon is an ongoing debate. Also, the focus on sectarianism silences important planning problems, such as class dynamics, the problematization of donor interventions, regional politics, etc. It also opens doors that are difficult to ignore: when speaking about sectarian politics we speak about a “clan-based” logic which echoes throughout Lebanese streets, government buildings, homes, infrastructure, etc. It is therefore difficult to find a straightforward answer to the question of sectarianism and development in Lebanon. However, the methodology chosen told a more relatable story than is normally told about sectarianism. I hope that by analyzing practitioners’ experiences in Lebanon, I was able to bring to light important and relevant subjective realities, who act daily in the eye of the storm of plaguing issues such as poor development planning, uneven and uncoordinated distribution of resources, continuous local frictions, intra communitarian conflict, etc.

These findings are primarily relevant to professionals in the development sector in Lebanon, as it framed the problem of sectarianism in ways that can be applied to their work. The experiences discussed through my fieldwork alone were not enough to make defining claims about how practitioners understand or navigate sectarianism. However, many of the examples provided can be applied in other sectors, and reflects important national trends. Further, it opens the door for more research that investigates how various understandings of sectarianism are integrated into the experience of professionals or actors in the development sector. While this improves the understanding of sectarianism in the development sector, it can also lead to more effective practices that take into consideration the experienced problems of development practitioners, and to better coordination amongst the different actors who work on improving access to services in Lebanon.

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