

## **A New Lebanon Reborn, Again:**

*How can revolutionary energy escape the cycle of capitalist appropriation.*

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### **Abstract**

This research project deals with hierarchies of power at play in Lebanon in a so-called post-colonial moment. At the basis of this research lies an interest in understanding how established structures of power and social organization reinvent themselves through crisis and uprisings. More precisely this research aims to understand the function of crisis and revolution within the body of capitalism, which in turn allows a better understanding of the potentials and risks of the uprising of October 2019 in Lebanon. I will look into how the desire of the individual is modulated by being part of a social body, to then study the effect of the Lebanese social structure at the desire of individual bodies and the body politic, and how this desire is transformed by lack and crisis.

I will draw on Deleuze and Guattari, as well as Spinoza, first to centre affect, allowing me to uncover flows of power and capital on a wide temporal and spatial spectrum between multiple levels of social arrangements, second, to align my work to theories of productive desire. This research will also engage with the works of post-colonial theorists, such as Franz Fanon, and Edward Said in order to examine the role of colonial expansion in current social structures, and account for the historical accumulation that establishes the normativity of these oppressive and exploitative systems. Besides, I will make use of the work of Lebanese intellectuals and scholars, like Fawaz Traboulsi, and Salim Nasr, to contextualise and ground my research in historical and contemporary events.

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## Introduction: A Worn Out Nation

Lebanon is a country lost in its definition, fragmented into multiple realities. If I were to adapt Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation as an imagined political community (Anderson, 2006/1983: 15)—as the result of a group of people's desire to be a nation—then Lebanon would not exist. Lebanon would dissolve into a proliferation of conflicting desires modelled by the affect of regional and global powers travelling through a hierarchical network of relations that insures the concentration of power at its top. From each fragment of the Lebanese society, a different Lebanon emerges, with a different history, a different future, and a different present. Each Lebanon exists alongside the others in a different reality. This social fragmentation and hierarchization is a strategy as old as the concept of Lebanon (Traboulsi, 2012: 3) used by foreign powers to control and manipulate the desire of its citizens; placing the different fragments of society in a constant state of conflict fuelled by artificial, imaginary, and symbolic differences, choreographed to conserve the established hierarchy and reproduce exploitation and subjugation along its levels.

In October 2019, an uprising emerged out of the frustration of marginalized people, and of the young and unemployed. The straw that broke the camel's back was the oblivious expansion of uninterrupted traditional corruption into the digital world that escapes it. Namely, the spark was the institution of a tax on "WhatsApp" calls<sup>1</sup> as a desperate measure to recuperate a chunk of the money that was escaping the chains of enrichment around the two telecommunication companies operating in Lebanon towards relatively free web services.<sup>2</sup> As infuriating as such a decision was to the people already suffering from a worsening economic crisis, it was not out of line, it was the continuation of the natural mode of operation of governance in Lebanon. The fact that such a decision has led to an uprising does not signal an increase in the greediness of Lebanese politicians, nor a heightened sense of righteousness in between the risen. The fact that such decision has led to an uprising only signals the limit towards which Lebanese capitalism is tending. This limit and its expansion will be the focus of this research, without giving any particular importance to the decision itself. Instead, this project is interested in the production of Lebanon, the political unit and the socio-economic structures that made financial crisis and the suffering of marginalized citizens an essential component of the state of Lebanon. This thesis deals with hierarchies of power operating in Lebanon in a so-called post-colonial moment. It unfolds by unearthing social, political, and economic structures starting from the production, colonization, capitalization, and independence of the Lebanese nation, the Lebanese civil wars in 1975, until the

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<sup>1</sup>2019. Lebanon protests: How WhatsApp tax anger revealed a much deeper crisis. Accessed: 19-01-2020 from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50293636>

<sup>2</sup>Data charges still apply.

economic crisis which culminated in the uprising of October 2019, and the primitive accumulation that allowed these processes to emerge. Along with a historical investigation I will examine the channels through which affect travel in and out of Lebanon in order to study its effect on both the individual body, and the body politic, so to better understand how the body functions and relates to other bodies within a society like the Lebanese society. Doing so will in turn allow me to better understand why a minor tax has led to an uprising that shook the local political landscape and what are the risks and potential of such a movement.

## Bodies and Their Desire

Throughout this thesis, the concept of a body is used as defined by Baruch Spinoza, Frederick Nietzsche, and Gilles Deleuze; a body is made of connections, the relations of bodies to each other, the accumulation of these relations and interactions through time and the effect of these relations on the bodies involved. As such, the body of the individual, for example, transcends the organismic biological body to include parts/organs from outside the organism in addition to their affect and their effect on the organism and its parts/organs. These extended bodies, in turn, relate and affect each other as a part of a bigger body. Similarly, a nation's body is not only the territory as defined by its border, its citizens and their imagination. The body of the nation includes parts, connections and affects that lie outside the traditional borders of a nation, and parts, desires, and affects within it that escape its traditional definition.

Before going any further, it is essential to elaborate on how desire is defined and used in the context of this thesis. Desire, as seen from a Deleuzian ontological perspective, is the productive force responsible for the production of the world as we know it: it "(...) is the material process of connection, registration and enjoyment of flows of matter and energy coursing through bodies in networks of production in all registers, be they geologic, organic, or social" (Bonta & Protevi, 2004: 84). Desiring-machines are the subject of this process, of desiring-production: the process of universal production that does not follow nor recognize the human/nature distinction. This term: "desiring-machine" will be used throughout this thesis to designate human and non-human bodies as well as individual or multiple bodies, as a desiring-machine is always made of a network of smaller desiring-machines operating on a different register, and any given desiring-machine is part of a network that gives rise to another desiring-machine at another register (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 5).

To bring it back to the social, (the register in which this thesis is mainly concerned with) desire is automatically production, and desiring-machines, are the productive force of social bodies. Social reality itself is the product of the accumulation of actualized flows of desire in between desiring-machines through time, as perceived from a human frame of reference. Social production is the same as desiring-production, and desiring-machines are the same as social machines (Deleuze &

Guattari, 1984/1972: 30). As Deleuze and Guattari explain, “the truth of the matter is that social production is purely and simply desiring-production itself under determinate conditions. (...) There is only desire and the social, and nothing else” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 29). Deleuze and Guattari continue by noting that the social field is the historically determined product of desire. Desiring production accordingly is the same as social production when actualized desire is recorded through time. What is called the social is in reality desiring-production, the affect that regulates it, and its accumulation through time. In this sense, the determinate conditions mentioned in the quote above are the temporal relations of desires and their historical accumulation observed from a human frame of reference.

Colonization, the process that has produced the nation of Lebanon that I and you know, is defined in the context of this thesis as the actualized desire of concentrated power to expand to spaces where power is less concentrated. As Said puts it in his summary of Leroy-Beaulieu’s statement:

“The point here is that the space of weaker or underdeveloped regions like the Orient was viewed as something inviting French interest, penetration, insemination—in short, colonization.” (Said, 2003/1978: 218)

The Western power’s desire to expand is actualized by the invasion of foreign lands, the subjugation of its people, and the appropriation of their desire by a state that fits as a part within the machine of the colonizer. “Colonization is the expansive force of a people; it is its power of reproduction; it is its enlargement and its multiplication through space; it is the subjection of the universe or a vast part of it to that people’s language, customs, ideas, and laws”. (Cited by Said, 2003/1978: 218) The desire of the West in the orient is one of expansion and subordination, and this desire produces reality on its image in the form of nation states. Nations only became the norm by the First World War and the dissolution of empires, like the Ottoman Empire, and the creation of the League of Nations (Anderson, 2006/1983: 84). Nations are not a primordial universal structure, rather they are a structure that evolved from the conditions of colonial expansion. Consequently, the worldwide spread of the nation as the standard unit of socio-political organization and international relations is also not a natural phenomenon, but the product of the dissemination of capitalist European norms through colonial expansion. Nation states as such are products of the expansion of the West through colonialism creating a network of material flows that evolved into the Neo-liberal capitalist model.

The connections between social bodies, such as nations, are not inherently nor directly hierarchical. However, the affect travelling through these connections do not have the same power in all directions, and these discrepancies are what result in the hierarchical ordering of bodies: a certain body (*A*), might affect a body (*B*) in a more significant manner than (*B*) affects (*A*). This is

because, even though affect travels in a non-linear fashion, in all directions between (A) and (B), desiring-machines on the other hand, are connected linearly; which means that a machine is always dependent on the machine that comes before it in the linear series. Deleuze and Guattari describe the linear connections between machines in the introduction of *Anti-Oedipus* as follows:

“(...) There is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow (the breast—the mouth). And because the first machine is in turn connected to another whose flow it interrupts or partially drains off, the binary series is linear in every direction” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 29).

The body of the mother and the body of the child are connected in various ways that allow affect to travel between the two bodies in all directions, even to be part of a single body (ex: the family). However, the mouth machine, and in this case the whole body of the child, is dependent on the flow produced by the breast machine of the mother. The dependency of the child on this flow hierarchizes the relation of the mother to the child, putting the mother in the position of the sovereign. The well-being of the child, their quality of life and even their life itself depends on the desire of the mother, on the decision of the mother to feed the child, the frequency with which the child is fed, even the mother’s diet and overall lifestyle. Thus, a desire, a decision, or an action of the mother has a larger effect on the child, than the desire of the child has on the mother. Materially, the affect of the mother on the child is more effective than the affect of the child on the mother. The hierarchy of machines imposed by the linearity of their connections is thus attached to the bodies these machines are a part of. Bodies—non-hierarchical social arrangements—are hierarchized according to the relations in between their desiring-machines.

Affect shapes what a body can do through the regulation of its desire. Affect is how bodies influence each other. In Spinoza’s terms, it is the “affections of the body by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained” (Spinoza, 1996/1677: III D3). Affect informs the desire of a given body which in turn informs the affect of that body on other bodies (Spinoza, 1996/1677: II P16 D). Considering the fact that the connections through which affect travels are the same connections that produce the social body, and that affect and desire are not an attribute of individuals alone but bodies in general, the individual can determine the existence of a body through the felt affect travelling through the connections between the social body and the body of the individual, and the effect that this interaction has on the individual’s desire. All bodies have the ability to affect and be affected, and this ability is determined by the effect of other bodies on them and the interaction of these bodies’ affect with the body’s desire. Thus, a social body is not an abstract concept; even though the human mind cannot perceive the form of a social body as a whole, we can determine the existence of such bodies through their effect on ours.

## Desire and Its Affect

Affect circulates through connections of filiation and/or alliance in between all levels of social arrangements. Filiation is vertical connections; it is the connection of an individual with their ancestors. Alliance, in contrast, is lateral connections; it is the connection of an individual with their peers. In Deleuze's words "filiation is administrative and hierarchical, but alliance is political and economic" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 146). Accordingly, filiation allows the hierarchization of desiring-machines while alliance determines the power of the body. In primitive societies, filiation determines the connections of the social body with the body of the earth through the history of the ancestors of the group which inform the relation of the group with its territory. From the other side, alliance determines the relation of the social group with other groups, through, for example, arranged marriage between two individuals from two neighbouring groups (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 147). These two types of connections combined, determine the lines through which affect travels. Affect travels through these connections and shape them simultaneously. In other words, established social connections are the lines through which affect flows, but also by shaping what a body can do, affect shapes the connections that a given body is able to establish; the nation, the social environment, the political party, the family that an individual is part of not only determine the present state of the individual as such, but also the possible worlds that the individual can imagine and produce.

Nietzsche notes that the formation of a society is possible as long as humans are capable of forgetfulness, of repressing their biological memory and creating another collective memory made of words and signs (Nietzsche, 2003/1913: II). Deleuze explains that these collective memories can be divided into two categories: a biofiliative memory corresponding to ancestors and their legacy (or the filiative stock), and another memory of alliance and of words (or blocks of debt). These two memories or recording processes determine how affect flows in a simple social arrangement or a primitive society. The filiative stock and blocks of debt together determine what biological memories should be forgotten in order for a collective memory to be created; these two memories determine what desires an individual is allowed to have in reference to their filiation and alliances, and what desires should be suppressed. In other words, a society emerges when the relations of an individual body with its surroundings (whether that is a territory, human or non-human beings) are destructed to be reconstructed as part of a social body. This cyclical process of destruction and reconstruction of relations is fundamental to the production of primitive societies and later to their transformation to the feudal system, to the emergence of capitalism (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 222-225). I refer to these processes throughout this thesis with Deleuze's terms; deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Deterritorialization being the decoding of flows of production and the removal of the body from its connections, whereas reterritorialization being the recoding of flows of production and the reinstitution of the connections of the body (this reinstitution might mean the establishment of new relations or the re-establishment of previous ones) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 33-34).

To better understand how these terms will function throughout this thesis, I will try to re-examine the process of the emergence of society previously discussed with the help of Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari, but this time while invoking Spinoza with Deleuzian terms. When people forfeit their natural right—the right to do everything they have the power to do—in favour of the social group; they do that to ensure that they, collectively as a society, have the right to all things, and this right is no longer determined by the force and desire of each individual but by those of all of them together (Spinoza, 2007/1670: 343). Accordingly, the natural desire of the individual is detached from their body and appropriated by the social body they are part of. In other words, through deterritorialization a primitive society appropriates the desire of the bodies that form it for its own. Out of its own desire, the body destroys its individualistic desires to re-establish them in a way that ensures the emergence of society; the other stops being an enemy and becomes an ally, the territory stops being a source of uncertainty and fear and becomes a source of life. The desire of the social body is not the sum of the natural desires of its individuals, but it is the sum of the desires of its individuals as modelled by the affect of that body to the end of conserving its existence. Correspondingly, in more complex social arrangements, the desire of the social body as a whole is regulated by the affect of other social bodies, which means that the desire of the individual as part of society is not exclusively determined by the individual themselves but it is informed by their position within society as a whole.

After presenting the main theoretical and philosophical concepts that will help me deconstruct the body of Lebanon, I can now start with the historical investigation to give life to the abstract processes described in this introduction. In chapter 1, I will look at the social and political structures of Feudal Lebanon to highlight the social relations that the French mandate appropriated as the basis of the state of Lebanon, to then position this state within the contemporary global capitalist machine. Chapter 2, will focus on the appropriative qualities of the capitalist body as whole, so to understand the function of crisis and revolution within that body, which will finally allow me to have a better understanding of the potentials and risks of the uprising of October 2019 in Lebanon.

## Chapter 1: The Re-Production of a Nation

To begin, I will briefly restate a few points elaborated in the introduction that will be essential to the following chapter and to sharpen the frame of reference from which this chapter is written. A body is made of the machines that constitute it and the connections in between them. These connections are the lines through which affect travels. Affect interacts with the desire of a body, and desire is what produces reality. Correspondingly, deterritorialization is the erasure of connections and reterritorialization is the creation of new ones, which allows different circulation of affects. Colonization when defined from the above frame of reference is the actualized desire of Western powers to expand, which produce nation states as a means of multiplication and



reproduction. As such nation states as part of the colonial/capitalist machine are inherently ordered hierarchically in a way that ensures the actualization of colonial desire through the subjugation of the desire of the colonized.

### France Also Desires an Orient

France entrenched itself in Syria<sup>3</sup> and guaranteed its interests by taking on the role of the protector and the saviour of the “population souffrantes;” a term referring to the Christian population in the orient who were used as an alibi to justify France’s place in the East (Said, 2003/1978: 217). Even though the French colonial discourse was focusing on “sentimental interests” in the Orient<sup>4</sup>, the common western outlook as Said noted, was unquestionably homogeneous. “(...) The very designation of something as Oriental involved an already pronounced evaluative judgment, and in the case of the peoples inhabiting the decayed Ottoman Empire, an implicit program of action. Since the Oriental was a member of a subject race, he had to be subjected: it was that simple.” (Said, 2003/1978: 207) This hierarchical ordering of Occidental and Oriental is at the core of colonial and post-colonial thought, and nations as the product of the Western powers’ desire to expand reflect this hierarchy. Consequently, the nations produced in the nineteenth century by, or as a response to the desire of the West to expand, inevitably reflect the supremacy of colonial nations.

The establishment of the nation of Lebanon and its transformation from the feudal to the capitalist system, took place after the end of the First World War under the French mandate. “Greater Lebanon” and its frontiers defined on 1 September 1920, “is a product of the Franco-British colonial partition of the Middle East” as Fawwaz Traboulsi puts it. The Sykes-Picot Accords of 1916, that divided the provinces of the Ottoman Empire between France and Britain, is the basis of the political and geographical form of the Lebanese nation. The prevailing French narrative at that time to justify the colonization of Lebanon was the protection of the Christians of the Middle East from their Muslim neighbours. However, in Lebanon, even the Christian population which would supposedly benefit from its colonization was not unanimously in support of a French intervention. While some groups were calling for a Christian state with close ties with France, different movements were calling for a secular state with varying political identities among which Arab federalists, Syrian federalists and Lebanese independentists (Traboulsi, 2012: 80-85).

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<sup>3</sup>Syria here refers to “Bilad Al-Sham” or the Levant which includes Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and parts of Iraq.

<sup>4</sup>“La France a beaucoup à faire en Orient, parce que l’Orient attend beaucoup d’elle. Il lui demande même plus qu’elle ne peut faire; il lui remettrait volontiers le soin entier de son avenir, ce qui serait pour la France et pour l’Orient un grand danger: pour la France, parce que, disposée à prendre en mains la cause des populations souffrantes, elle se charge le plus souvent de plus d’obligations qu’elle n’en peut remplir; pour l’Orient, parce que tout peuple qui attend sa destinée de l’étranger n’a jamais qu’une condition précaire et qu’il n’y a de salut pour les nations que celui qu’elles se font elles-mêmes. (Cited by Said, 2003/1978: 217)

Nonetheless, the religious division that have been exploited by the Ottomans as well as France and Britain for the past century, is used again by the French to first, guarantee their share of the fallen Ottoman Empire, and second, as a source of tension used to regulate the desire of the people in Lebanon as part of a state within the French colonial/capitalist body.

In Lebanon, the societies that emerged from primitive social relations became part of a larger local system which in turn is part of an even larger Ottoman Empire that interacts with global powers. Meanwhile, global powers—mainly the British and the French—interact not only with the Ottoman Empire as a whole but also with particular social groups inside of Lebanon and affect their social organization internally.<sup>5</sup> From the inside, the division between religions, the tension between a religious majority and a religious minority and the creation of local rulers for each religion was a strategy adopted by the Ottoman Empire to control Lebanon while giving it its relatively autonomous status. In addition to the religious stratification, in Lebanon the system of land property and land rights created a schism between peasants and landlords; the former worked the land and the latter controlled the land by the authority of hereditary titles bestowed by the ruling emir, the Ottoman wali or the sultan. This double fragmentation of the social is first sign of the nation of Lebanon; this social structure is the base that the French mandate appropriated, and upon which further fragmentary devisions were grafted to produce the heterogeneous mush that is called modern Lebanon. The West's interest in Lebanon at that time was centred around its export (sericulture) (Traboulsi, 2012: 92). France was using the protection of the Christian population as an alibi to guarantee their benefits and influence in the Orient (Said, 2003/1978: 217). After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the social relations that underlie these divisions are appropriated by the colonial machine in order to construct a society that reproduces oppression and exploitation on all its levels behind a facade of bourgeois openness. These lines of division are the basis of capitalist Lebanon as designed by the French mandate.

The nested social structure of the feudal system means that the natural right of the individual is no longer attributed to their immediate social group. With the expansion of society, natural right becomes an attribute of social groups of the highest order; the state or the empire. This hierarchical structure is the product of the process of reterritorialization according to the feudal system that guarantees the concentration of power at the top of the biggest social body. In other words, the social structure of feudalism arranges bodies in a way that power concentration is reproduced along the vertical lines of filiation sustaining a flow of power towards the top. On the ground, this means that the desire and production of the individual are appropriated by a feudal lord, the feudal lord's desire and production are appropriated by a local authority, and the local

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<sup>5</sup>In the light of the situation in Lebanon in 1857 a Lebanese chief complained: "Our affairs have become the concern of Britain and France. If one man hits another the incident becomes an Anglo-French affair, and there might even be trouble between the two countries if a cup of coffee gets spilt on the ground." (Quoted by Salibi 1965: 79)

authority's desire and production are appropriated by the empire personified in the body of the sultan. Deleuze mapped this hierarchical structure in relation to the primitive society which he refers to here as the territorial machine.

“In place of the territorial machine, there is the “megamachine” of the State, a functional pyramid that has the despot at its apex, an immobile motor, with the bureaucratic apparatus as its lateral surface and its transmission gear, and the villagers at its base, serving as its working parts.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 194)

While the feudal system is closely associated with territory, Deleuze argues that instead of looking at the state as a system of territorialization that inscribes people according to their residence, the feudal state is better seen as a “movement of deterritorialization that divides the earth as an object and subjects men to the new imperial inscription, to the new full body, to the new socius” (the body of the despot, the emperor, the empire). What Deleuze is referring to by the movement of deterritorialization is the process of appropriation of desire by rearranging the connections established by the territorial machine of primitive societies. The feudal machine replaces the connections established between bodies and the body of the earth with connections between bodies and the state in order to regulate material flows of production and reproduction. In this way, production stops being the natural process of actualization of the desires of individual bodies and becomes the actualization of the desire of the state.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the right and power of the state is expanded through the systematic oppression and exploitation of the people through the bureaucratic apparatus (or later politics), that regulates the possible connections that the body can establish; correspondingly, politics defines the rights of individual bodies in a manner that conserves hierarchy, concentration of power and the right of the state.

After the colonization of Lebanon, the Ottoman feudal model of oppression and exploitation is deterritorialized, removed from its connections to the empire, the despotic state, and attributed to a nation state connected to the global capitalist market through the relation to the metropole of the colonizer. The connection of worker–feudal lord/feudal family is deterritorialized and reterritorialized as worker–capitalist/capital. Material flows, of desire and production, are no longer bound to the empire and the Sultan, but they are freed as capital and labour (Protevi, 2009: 98). As John Protevi explains, “Capitalism's command is utterly simple: connect deterritorialized flows of labour and capital and extract a surplus from that connection.” During the process of capitalization of non-European countries, the reconnection of deterritorialized flows happen through colonization; local flows of desire and production are plugged into the capitalist machine

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<sup>6</sup>It's important to remember that the state is not an imaginary entity. The state as a body includes all the people that form it, however the desire of the state is determined by a few holding positions of power.

of the colonizer, in a way that the local market becomes a continuation of the global flows of capital, regulated by the metropole. The extraction of surplus capital from the colony is guaranteed by internal politics based on Neo-liberal principles; in Lebanon this translates to a political system favourable for French interests, produced by local desire under French affect and legitimized by The League of Nations. In other words, the establishment of an internal political system (the duty of the French mandate) produces a political system conceived as a continuation of French bureaucracy to serve French interests.

On this basis, the argument that the nation of Lebanon is a product of colonial desire established to serve as a part in the global capitalist machine even if its functioning requires the oppression and the subjugation of its citizens<sup>7</sup> starts to take shape as one side of a coin. On the other side we see etched the following premise from the introduction to this thesis: new nations are not sovereign; the nation's right and power are defined by their relations to the colonial power they are attached to (Fanon, 2004/1961: 98). To further elaborate on this statement, I will look into the process of production of the political systems of such nations starting with the creation of a national bourgeoisie that fills the roles of capitalists and national leaders by leaning on the work of Franz Fanon and specifically his book "*The Wretched Of The Earth*," where he provides a psychological analysis of the effect of colonial social and political structures on colonized bodies.

## Colonial Vows

While the national bourgeoisies that sprouted after the colonization and capitalization of non-European nations seem like the buds of private initiative taking advantage of its new environment, Fanon shows us otherwise. Fundamentally, the creation of a new leadership corresponds with the strategy of divide and rule used by colonial and imperial powers (Sartre in the preface to Fanon, 2004/1961: xlvi). Under the Ottoman Empire, this strategy was applied by concentrating the power in the hand of a minority of feudal lords that control the rest of the people. In the process of colonization, the feudal lords are replaced by capitalists, even though the replacement of role and title, does not necessarily mean a replacement of people. In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre in the preface to *The Wretched of The Earth*, "feudal lords, and a fake, fabricated bourgeoisie served as go-betweens." Sartre continues:

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<sup>7</sup>While this premise is mostly agreed upon in post-colonial studies, it remains foreign to the ear of the Lebanese middle class (from which I come); a community that still considers the privileges of exceptional treatment by its colonisers throughout history an essential aspect of its identity.

“Like mothers, of sorts. The European elite decided to fabricate a native elite; they selected adolescents, branded the principles of Western culture on their foreheads with a red-hot iron, and gagged their mouths with sounds, pompous awkward words that twisted their tongues. After a short stay in the metropolis they were sent home, fully doctored.” (Sartre in the preface to Fanon, 2004/1961: xliii)

Like other colonies, Lebanon was *blessed* by the French with the education of leaders who were groomed to take over power at the end of the colonial regime. And like other colonized countries, the national bourgeoisie of Lebanon was not geared towards production, but it was created to be the intermediary between the colonized nation and the colonial power (Fanon, 2004/1961: 98). Like a child dependent on their mother’s milk, the national bourgeoisie is dependent on the flow of capital from the metropole. Both the mother (the colonizer) and the child (the national bourgeoisie) are part of the same capitalist body, but the body of the colonized nation is dependent on the body of the colonial power. In consequence, this national bourgeoisie does not represent the desire of its people or its nation, but rather its desire is regulated by the affect of foreign powers to fulfil its role as a pipeline of capital in a global Neo-liberal market.

France provided the opportunity for wealthy locals to pursue their education in the metropole; these graduates then went back to their nations as leaders, to rule according to the knowledge they gathered and the norms and values they acquired from their colonizers. The leaders that colonization produces are not prepared to fulfil their declared function as nation builders, instead, they function as agents for the actualization of the desire of colonial power to expand. Accordingly, the production of masses that correspond to such leaders is the first function of the educational system developed by the French mandate in Lebanon. This initiative is the product of the desire of the colonial power to create a native population indoctrinated with Western norms, which out of their own desire guaranty the continuous dependency of the new nation on the colonizer. This Western desire is illustrated in one of Maurice Barrès passages from his book *Une enquête aux pays du Levant* published in 1923, where Barrès starts with a sense of fake respect towards *Oriental* norms, to quickly regress to the original Western anxiety when it comes to the global south in that era: the production of internally colonized people.

“How will we be able to form for ourselves an intellectual elite with which we can work, made out of Orientals who would not be deracinated, who would continue to evolve according to their own norms, who would remain penetrated by family traditions, and who would thus form a link between us and the mass of natives? How will we create relationships with a view towards preparing the way for agreements and treaties which would be the desirable form taken by our political future (in the Orient)? All these things are finally all about soliciting in these strange peoples the taste for maintaining contact with our intelligence, even though this taste may, in fact, come out of their own sense of their national destiny.” (Quoted by Said, 2003/1978: 245)

The second objective of colonial education is to create an army of bilingual clerks and bureaucrats, as Anderson notes:

“The colonial state, and, somewhat later, corporate capital, needed armies of clerks, who to be useful had to be bilingual, capable of mediating linguistically between the metropolitan nation and the colonized peoples.” (Anderson, 2006/1983: 106).

This second objective is carried on by missionaries and foreign educational institutions that infiltrate the native society in order to spread European systems of thought along with their complications (even the ones that undermine the same people that they are trying to educate). The native population’s education is not geared towards production, creation and invention, but like its national bourgeoisie, its education prepares it for intermediary activities. This type of education from one side, prepares the masses to fill limited jobs in intermediary sectors dependent on outside flows of capital. From the other side, it fosters the love of harmony and respect for the status quo that instils in the population “a mood of submission and inhibition” (Fanon, 2004/1961: 103).

These educational objectives are one form of the manifestation of colonial affect that aims to reproduce colonial desire at the level of the nation state; create a native ruling class that suppress and exploit the native working class in order to extract surplus value, while at the same time making the people accept such behaviour from their leaders. As such coloniality is internalized and assigned a productive function in the global capitalist machine. This social and economic subordination of the people of new nations is informed and regulated through the national and international politics of such nations. A political system born out of the integration of new nations in the Neo-liberal market and designed to meet the standard of exploitation necessary for the functioning of the free market.

After the independence, the national bourgeoisie takes over the state without breaking out of its intermediary function. The economy of the state has always developed outside of the control of the national bourgeoisie, and that does not change after the independence (Fanon, 2004/1961: 99). As Franz Fanon explains, the national bourgeoisie limits its claims of nationalization to obtain businesses and firms previously held by colonialists, without any real attempt to create an independent national economy (Fanon, 2004/1961: 100). Instead, the national elite demands that major foreign companies operating in the country should operate through them.

“The national bourgeoisie discovers its historical mission as intermediary. As we have seen, its vocation is not to transform the nation but prosaically serve as a conveyor belt for capitalism, forced to camouflage itself behind the mask of neocolonialism.”

The development of the nation after the independence is in reality equal to the enrichment of the national bourgeoisie. The leaders use their position of power to accumulate wealth from leaching of the flows of capital to and from the nation they manage. They design the political system in a way that allows their enrichment through associations with Western capital from one side, and through the establishment of tourism as a national industry that accommodates Western tourists from the other (Fanon, 2004/1961: 101).

After the independence, the leaders who were trained to be the link between the metropole and their nation are “forced against the wall” as Fanon puts it, and instead of learning from their people, and making available to the natives the intellectual and technical capital it accumulated from their time in colonial universities (Fanon, 2004/1961: 99), this bourgeoisie imports the colonial gaze to the new nation to be. In a manner that is consistent with this fragmentary gaze and Neo-liberal values, the national consciousness is based on the fear of the other (the fear of difference) which develops into racism and xenophobia against neighbouring countries (Fanon, 2004/1961: 108-110). This fear that is born from the bourgeoisie’s call for nationalization and nationalism as a mean to take over colonial businesses, is mirrored by the produced masses on their own level. But on this level aggression is not directed towards the colonial power, but towards the *newly* declared foreigners from neighbouring countries (Fanon, 2004/1961: 104). While the bourgeois call for nationalization is centred on acquiring the power previously held by colonialists, the masses direct their post-colonial anger towards foreign workers from neighbouring countries. Workers that have been subjected to the same oppression and exploitation as the natives. Structurally, this bourgeoisie, which is building the state and its apparatus, does so in alignment with *Orientalist* views that corresponds to its education. It creates an image of its people—lazy, sly, thieving, etc.—that reinforces the internal colonial divisions (Fanon, 2004/1961: 106). In the case of Lebanon, these divisions happen along the lines of religion and territory. The French mandate adopted preferential treatment towards Christians through strategies of developing

the primarily Christian territories. This discrepancy of development, including the concentration of businesses and schools in Christian territories and its resulting inequality, will be the centre of the differences produced by the fascist bourgeois discourse in the period that preceded the Lebanese civil wars.

The concentration of power of the national bourgeoisie in Lebanon was mainly centred around the Christian president. The exceptional executive and legislative powers of that position made a tradition out of the instrumentalization of the presidential seat by the elites. Traboulsi explains:

“The commercial/financial oligarchy that came to power with independence was estimated at some 30 families ranged around a nucleus composed of ‘the consortium’ : the president’s two brothers, his sons, and a dozen related families.” (Traboulsi, 2012: 116)

The estimated value of 15 of these families was the equivalent of nine times the state budget for 1944, out of which a significant portion was invested outside of Lebanon. The source of the capital of these families came from the silk trade, emigrant money from Africa,<sup>8</sup> the Americas, and oil producing Arab countries, ownership of local or mixed banks, insurance companies,<sup>9</sup> import of Western products, luxury hotels, summer and ski centres, public service companies (in association with French interests), national and regional construction companies, main air and land transport companies. In addition to the main industrial firms in electricity, cement, textile, beer, matches, agricultural products, vegetable oil, paint and glass, and of course large holdings in real estate (Traboulsi, 2012: 117). As Traboulsi remarked, this tradition of the conjunction of capital and political power, “which began under the independence regime, still until now constitutes a major aspect of Lebanon’s political economy.” Between 2005 and 2014, on average, the richest 10% of adults accounted for 56% of total national income (Assouad, 2019: 8), whilst at the same time the national elite is still populated by these families and their partners in addition to a new category of political leaders made out of presumed reformed militia leaders and their associates.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>“Almost everywhere economic power was either monopolized by the colonialists themselves, or unevenly shared with a politically impotent class of pariah (non-native) businessmen – Lebanese, Indian and Arab in colonial Africa, Chinese, Indian, and Arab in colonial Asia.” (Anderson, 2006/1983: 114)

<sup>9</sup>“The biggest insurance company, the Union National, was a partnership between members of the Consortium and French Capital” (Traboulsi, 2012: 117)

<sup>10</sup>A fact that makes of political leaders in Lebanon of socio-economic class on its own, which overlaps with the bourgeoisie but extends beyond it to include ex-militia leaders to religious leaders, and technocrats and political reformists.



## A Fragmented Unilateral Political System

The political system being the space of relation of the leaders and the masses in a colonial context, already gives us an idea of the principles that might have informed the production of such a system based on the functions that the leaders and the masses fulfil in the colonial capitalist environment discussed above. In Lebanon, the first constitution (which was drafted under the French mandate) was a hybrid one: “on a republican body, emphasizing individual rights and liberties and political and judicial equality were grafted articles concerning communal rights and representation most probably at the initiative of Michel Chiha” (Traboulsi, 2012: 90). The preamble to the constitution states: “the economic system is free, guaranteeing individual initiative and private ownership” (Lebanese Constitution, pmbl: F). This presupposition of the freedom of the economic system and the market limited the development of political ideologies outside the line of Neo-liberalism, allowing alternative political and economic views to be directly labeled as conflicting with the core values of the state Lebanon. One of the manifestations of such uniformity of principles can be seen still in 2016, in a study comparing the administrative reform plans of main political parties. In the introduction the authors remark that the majority of parties considered “decentralisation and privatisation as key components of administrative reform” but each party “worked individually on entirely different action plans and recommendations”(Ahmad & Maghlouth, 2016: 5). Perhaps, the most problematic thing here is not that all parties have a unified approach to reform, but rather that the proposed reforms (decentralization and privatization) the primary fields of corruption in Lebanon, are casually framed as reform strategies. In this context, it becomes clear that the whole of the political reality in Lebanon is limited to parameters that ensure the continuation and the reproduction of the same hierarchies, the same leadership which in turn ensures the continuation of the concentration of capital and power towards the already privileged.

It is essential to remember that some alternative political movements emerged during the economic crisis at the beginning of the seventies (Traboulsi, 2012: 165). However, by 1975 these movements were given a sectarian identity and accused of conspiring with foreign powers against the sovereignty of Lebanon. This process of othering based on sectarian differences and the accusations of treason can be understood on two levels. On the first, it was the result of an effort by the rightwing bourgeois parties to frame the economic crisis as the result of the presence of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon which also allowed them to justify their armament in the name of defending the existence of Christianity in the East<sup>11</sup> (Traboulsi, 2012: 181). On a second level, it was the result of the appropriation of social movements into the capitalist system as a source of energy.

The events that unfolded after the economic crisis of the 1960s/1970s through the civil war and until today, stand as a witness to the vital role of crisis within capitalism. In addition, the re-

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<sup>11</sup>Based on the continuation of the French claim that the Christians of the Levant are under existential threat.

emergence and reinforcement Neo-liberal principles after the war as the only possible future, reiterated by an amended constitution that inaugurates war-lords as the new oligarchy (each as the guarantor and protector of his sect (Traboulsi, 2012: 250-251))—hints to the capacity of capitalism to appropriate the connections deterritorialized by crisis.

In the next chapter I will look at crises in a capitalist context, in order to show that crises are part of the natural functioning of the capitalist machine. I will then position revolutions and uprisings, like the one that started on the seventeenth of October 2019 in Lebanon, within the larger context of the capitalist body, in order to argue that for a revolution to be effective—to reduce the oppression and exploitation of the people in revolt—it should be aware of its function within the capitalist machine, and accordingly aim to break out of the capitalist cycle of appropriation.

## Chapter 2: Crisis as Energy Source

To position crises within the capitalist body, I will start by pinpointing the role of socio-economic breakdowns in the capitalist machine first, theoretically by leaning on Deleuze and Guattari, and then track crisis within Lebanese capitalism based on Traboulsi's historical account and on Nasr's economic one. Thus, I will show that crises along with appropriated social uprisings and revolutions are essential to the functioning of the capitalist machine. From there, argue that social crises are not capitalist crises as such, for crisis is necessary to ensure the continuity of the capitalist body by expanding its limits and its power. Fundamentally, the following chapter challenges the idea that capitalism's product is development, advancement, and justice. I argue that capitalism's product—the essential product that allows the continuity of capitalism through self reproduction—is crisis, and material development is only a byproduct of this cycle. Accordingly, if the goal of a revolt is social justice then its focus should be aimed at the disentanglement from the capitalist cycle of continuous crises and resolutions.

Even though capitalism seems like a coherent world order that always tends towards progress, the different machines of this body, among which colonial expansion, post-colonial affect, national and international politics and the Neo-liberal market, are structurally hierarchical; which means that each machine within these systems function by the breakdown of another. The body of capitalism as a whole is the non-productive product of the historical accumulation of its productive constituents (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 8). This historical accumulation, accordingly, presupposes that the body of capitalism (what we commonly refer to as capitalism) records production on its surface. In other words, what we call capitalism is in reality only the accumulated recording of production in the form of capital. However, even though capital itself is not productive, production appears to be due to it and to the capitalist body. As Marx remarks:

“Capital (...) becomes a very mystic being since all of labour’s social productive forces appear to be due to capital, rather than labour as such, and seem to issue from the womb of capital itself” (Quoted by Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 11).

Capital as a body forms a surface upon which all of production is recorded, while the whole process “appears to emanate from this recording surface.” The surface of the capitalist body (its appearance) is thus the product of the process of recording of the production of the capitalist machines. In other words, the recording of production on the body of capitalism, or the attribution of production to the capitalist body as a mystical being, produces the illusion of historical continuity. However, the image of this coherent body is a representation of the continuous process of production (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 10) according to the hierarchy of desiring-machines, where the desire of bodies at the top of the hierarchy gets actualised through the subjugation of the desire of bodies at the base through the directional flow of desire in between the desiring-machines of the capitalist body. This system of relations underlies the mechanics of concentration of wealth, whether on the level of the individual, the institution, the country, or the continent —such mechanics can be social structures like patriarchy that reinforces the power of bodies already in power, or institutional structures that ensure the increase in the privileges of the already privileged, or global structures such as colonization that ensures the supremacy of a continent and its race. The capitalist machines inherently impose their hierarchy on the capitalist body because of the linear directional flow in between them as we have seen in the introduction to this thesis. Capitalism being the largest social body in our contemporary world means that the rights of its constituents are repressed and compromised in order to conserve capitalism as a whole. The progress that is observed at the level of the body of capitalism (the historical accumulation of production) is achieved at the expense of the exploitation and the oppression of the productive force—workers, immigrant workers, women, colonized peoples, indigenous peoples, people of colour and queer people, among other marginalized groups. That being so means that as long as the goal of social development is the conservation and the expansion of the capitalist market, the future will always reproduce the same hierarchical structures where the desire of one body will be actualised by the subjugation of the desire of another.

Oppression and exploitation under capitalism are not centralized; they do not have one source nor one target. On the contrary, oppression and exploitation are reproduced along the lines of filiation among the fragments of society. As Braidotti puts it, “(advanced capitalism) functions through a proliferation of qualitative differences for the sake of commodification and profit.” She continues: late capitalism has mutated into a “difference engine” (Braidotti, 2011: 17), echoing Deleuze’s note on capitalism’s restoration or institution of all sorts of “residual and artificial, imaginary or symbolic territorialities” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 34). Deleuze remarks that capitalism produces or reproduces differences to reconnect the people it freed through the process of deterritorialization. These differences are then indexed in a hierarchy of values that equates

difference with inferiority (Braidotti, 2011: 17). This hierarchy itself is the result of the combination of equating the “other” with inferiority, fear, and degradation and the preoccupation of desire with survival. The outcome is thus a fragmented society where each group is in conflict with the other because the other is presented as a threat to the survival of the group and its individuals. In short, through lack, the dominant class manipulates the desire of the people and focuses it on survival (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 28) in order to maintain a threshold of crisis competition and tension, necessary for the efficient and frictionless exploitation of the marginalized bodies based on their own desire for survival.

### Capitalized Desire

Capitalism continuously deterritorializes established connections, destroys connections, decodes flows of capital and labour in order to free them, while at the same time attempts, as best as it can, to reterritorialize them, to recode these flows in artificial, imaginary or symbolic territorialities like the state, the nation, the family, etc. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 34). At the core of this strategy of self-destruction, lies lack. But lack does not precede desire, for lack is never primary (Rosset, 1970: 37). “Production is never organized on the basis of pre-existing need or lack” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 28). On the contrary, lack is produced by the people in positions of power as the result of the accumulation of wealth and the extraction of surplus value labour .

The deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of the dominant class. This involves deliberately organising wants and needs (manque) amid an abundance of production; making all of desire teeter and fall victim to the great fear of not having one’s needs satisfied...” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 28)

Based on the fear of one’s basic needs not being satisfied, desire becomes preoccupied with survival (Protevi, 2004: 51). The dominant class—or in colonized nations: the national bourgeoisie—uses this desire for survival to maintain an atmosphere suitable for the exploitation of labour and the extraction of capital from the people of the nation.

The national bourgeoisie uses the hierarchical structures inherited from feudalism and the ones imported from their colonizers to control their citizens, while simultaneously freeing labour more and more, diminishing its value and making workers more vulnerable (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984/1972: 225–228) and more dependent on their leaders. In short, the people in power deterritorialize relations of production, devaluing labour, increasing poverty, creating lack, focusing desire on survival, making the people desire their own oppression as a means for

protection and self-preservation, furthering the concentration of power in the hand of their oppressors. Further, increasing the ability of the people in power to exploit marginalized bodies.

### Cumulative Lack

During the mid-60s until the mid-70s, Lebanon reached the peak of a crisis that has been developing since its integration to the global market by the French mandate. In his study of *The Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism*, Salim Nasr observed that “the intermediary and regional headquarters role assigned to Beirut by the world capitalist system for decades, has produced very serious distortions and hypertrophy of a city, a sector and a small minority at the expense of the rest of Lebanese society” (Nasr, 1978: 12). In detail, the enlargement of the banking and tertiary sectors and the decomposition and decline of the agricultural sector and rural areas (Nasr, 1978: 8) has exaggerated a trend initiated with the preferential colonial treatment to areas with bourgeois influence (Fanon, 2004/1961: 106). “During the 1960s, nearly one-fifth of the rural population migrated to the towns, mostly to Beirut and its suburbs” (Nasr, 1978: 10). This concentration of labour in limited sectors and limited space, magnified the competition between workers, diminished the wages, and left thousands of people without work, living in poverty belts around the city (Traboulsi, 2012: 162).

The uprising that followed the crisis of the 1960s was effective in pressuring the bourgeois state to achieve the social movement’s demands for multiple reasons. For instance, Beirut at that time was considered a centre for Arab thought. A safe space for thinkers, writers, poets, intellectuals, and activists, from around the Arab World and especially Palestine, concerned with a new Arab World, and the resistance against Israel (Darwish, 2013/1987: 134)(Traboulsi 2012, 177). In addition to this intellectual potency, militarization was an easy task, giving the fact that Lebanon was used as the front of the Palestinian resistance (Traboulsi, 2012: 153).<sup>12</sup> However, these points of strength were used by the bourgeois parties to create and fortify a schism within the Lebanese society that shifts according to the benefits of bourgeois families and militia leaders. Accordingly, the purpose of the civil wars in Lebanon shifted from a challenge to the Neo-liberal governance of Lebanon with its political and social apparatus, to a confrontation between political groups representing both the spontaneous social uprising and the traditional political parties holding contrasting ideological inclinations (conflicts between the Lebanese versions of the political left and the right) to an elimination of the Palestinian presence, to territories of influence based on religion, to finally militia wars as an appendix to economic competition between militia ventures.

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<sup>12</sup>Which means that the state was not the only party with access to military weapons. Weapons were continuously sent to Lebanon from various sources, as aids to the Palatenian resistance, or against it.

The breakdown of the capitalist machine in reality was actualised by the social uprising, in the sense that the main threat to Lebanese capitalism was not the intensifying economic crises but the efficient social organization against it. Lebanese capitalism reached its limit, a level of crisis where labour lost almost all its value. But the real *capitalist crisis* here was not the inequality and hyper-exploitation which led to a social crisis, but rather the organization of the labour force in face of that inequality and its effective mobilization. Marginalized bodies were mobilizing effectively, gaining bargaining power, threatening the high profit margins of business owners (Traboulsi, 2012: 147). Lack was not producing cheap labour any more but became the motivation for workers to mobilize for their rights. Accordingly, the loss of cheap labour necessary for the functioning of the capitalist machine entailed a shift in the management of lack and the strategies of extraction of labour.

As a response and as the body of Lebanese capitalism attempts to conserve itself, the social uprising that started because of unbearable lack was transformed into conflicts of identity where each group created their own image of Lebanon with its own reading of history and fought for its actualization at the expense of the annihilation of the other Lebanons. The characteristic division of the first period of the war was between the continuation of bourgeois Lebanon along with its Western identity, its Phoenician roots and its Christian values from one side and the production of a “New Lebanon” that embraces its Arab identity and supposedly built on leftist values from the other.<sup>13</sup> A conflict between “security” and “reforms,” where security represents a specific identity and reform another (Traboulsi, 2012: 193). Each of these terms became the title of a narrative of identity, a trigger for a populist discourse whose function is to deflect the attention from social and economic inequality to self-preservation, and turn the conflict between the poor and the rich to an existential struggle based on sectarian differences where the leaders of the sect became the provider and the protector of the poor of that sect. In this way, the enemy was transformed from the people in power to the people from different sects.

In order for lack to become productive again, it needed another form of regulation. A recoding of social relations; a recoding centring fear. Fear of imaginary differences that allow the reinforcement of vertical relations based on imaginary similarities. The establishment of fear of different sects associated with differences of identity that allows space for narratives of self-preservation that frames the people in power as the protectors of their sect, its territory, and the benefits of that sect from the “others.” In Traboulsi’s words on the first phase of the war:

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<sup>13</sup>While leftist views of Lebanon emerged out of the social movements of the mid sixties and the beginning of the seventies, these views were appropriated by political parties that preached leftist slogans while being led by elitist political figures. The most prominent figure of which is Kamal Jumlat, a member of one of the oldest feudal families and the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party and the Lebanese National Movement.

"(...) the Phalange resisted reforms by arms. When after four days of violent fighting they agreed to hand over two of their militiamen accused of the killing in 'Ayn al-Rummaneh, they launched a virulent attack against the Left, qualifying it as 'malicious, vicious and on the payroll of foreigners ... to destroy Lebanon and the Palestinian Resistance'; hence the urgency to 'eradicate that infectious source'. (...) The LNM's answer was on the same rhetorical level: it called for the 'isolation' of the party, an official ban on its activities and the expulsion of its ministers from the cabinet. (...) The rhetoric only increased the influence of the Phalange among the Christian public. (Traboulsi, 2012: 193-194)

In this way, both "the left" and "the right" channelled the revolutionary energy of the people which was originally targeted towards acquiring their social rights from the people in power, into protecting the imaginary identity that the political parties constructed. The organization of workers for social and political reforms of the mid-1960s and early 1970s were pacified to be replaced by organization in the name of identity that legitimizes existential conflicts. Instead of revolutionary anger being focused on emancipation the present state of injustice, it becomes occupied with the preservation and the protection of the present state from an "other" who is suffering from the same injustice. The labour power that escaped the capitalist machine is then plugged into a war machine that pacifies vertical differences and reinforces horizontal ones; the relations of alliance that were established in between the marginalized bodies after reaching the threshold of inequality is broken, to establish relations of filiation between sectarian groups and their leaders.

The nature of the Lebanese economy up to 1975, its intermediary function and the swollen banking sector as we have seen in Nasr's study, played an essential role in making the strategies of manipulation of desire discussed above possible. The enlarged banking and trading sectors, ensured the continuation of flows of capital even in periods when paid labour and local production were virtually nonexistent in some areas. While flows of production—the labour of workers—was removed from the machine of capitalist production and plugged into the war machine, the flows of capital were sustained because of the intermediary function of Lebanon as a regional centre of trade and banking. Put in another way, the war, with all its devastation to the working class and to marginalized groups, the people in power and the people with money were either protected by militias or fled the country. And due to the intermediary nature of Lebanon's economy, and their cooperation with militias, the national bourgeoisie was able to conserve their wealth or even continue to expand it. At the same time, the militias which were accumulating capital by profiting from the flows of money of the bourgeoisie, created their own private companies in the later years of the war. Traboulsi sums the joint bourgeois militia economy during the war, as follows:

“Not only did militias ‘exchange services’ with sections of the bourgeoisie (protection money in return for import and export quotas or sheer profiteering), but they soon became large business enterprises in their own right and an integral part of that class, entering into close business partnerships with many of its members, especially in the flour and fuel trade. And as war neared its final phase, the warlords had ‘laundered’ a part of their capital into privately owned companies” (Traboulsi, 2012: 243).

The concentration of capital up to 1975, and the economic structure that led to it, resulted in an economy where labour becomes dissociated from capital. Labour becomes a disposable commodity for the bourgeoisie, the bank owners, and the traders since the source of the flows of their capital lie beyond the borders of the state. Lebanese capitalism fully embraces its function as a pipeline for global capital that instead of being activated by labour, is then activated by conflict, which stimulate the movement of capital in and out of the country. On the ground, the people that rose up in the time leading up to the war, the people in lack, the suffering bodies, found themselves forced to fight for, or collaborate with militias in return for protection and resources. By transforming paid labour to military service, the workers were transformed from people that sell their labour for capital to actors in a regional political performance that attracts capital from global spectators.

### Capitalist Re-Appropriation of Desire: Back to Normal

We have seen until now how capitalism, and the people benefiting from the concentration of capital, appropriate crisis and revolutionary energy to stimulate the slowing flow of in a failing post-colonial state. Until now, capitalism has only exploited one phase of the cycle: the crisis or the problem. In the second phase, capitalism echoes its initial machine of expansion, colonialism. Just like at the core of coloniality lies a belief that others are less developed and accordingly need to be saved, capitalism finds purpose in crisis; in the resolution of problems. By resolving crisis, capitalism thus ends its cycle of appropriation and starts it again with an amended social structure and new and improved channels of exploitation. In this way the second phase of the cycle always acts as the beginning of the first phase of another cycle. In the remainder of this thesis, I will briefly examine the second phase of the capitalist cycle that included the Lebanese civil war, which is also the first phase of the cycle that we are still living now as the current economic crisis in Lebanon intensifies. With that, I would have explained how capitalism produce crisis which leads to revolt, then use the resulting revolutionary energy to revitalize itself, and at the same time we would have traveled back from the past of Lebanon to the present.



The passage from war to peace was regulated by the Taef agreement signed on 22 October 1989. The terms of this agreement were transparently drafted to fit the benefits of the United States, Syria (which had a sizeable military presence that started during the war and continued until 2005), and Saudi Arabia. In broad terms, the interests of the United States was in providing security for Israel, Saudi Arabia's interests were in securing their share of investments in the rebuilding of Lebanon, while the Syria's Interests can be summed up by this quote from the security chief of the Syrian troops stationed in Lebanon:

“You Lebanese, you are shrewd, creative and successful merchants. Soon, you are to have 12 million neighbours coming towards you. Create light industries. Engage in trade and commerce. Indulge in light media, which does not affect security. Shine all over the world by your inventiveness, and leave politics to us. Each has his domain in Lebanon: yours in trade; ours, politics and security” (Quoted by Traboulsi, 2012: 252).

After the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, the political landscape in Lebanon got less and more complicated at the same time; In the period from 2005 onwards, foreign interests in Lebanon were reduced to the protection of Israel from the Iran backed Hezbollah through U.S. backed interventions usually through Saudi Arabia as an intermediary. While Hezbollah remains the only openly active militia in Lebanon, protected by their political monopoly on the resistance against Israel, and backed by Iran as an offshore branch of the Islamic republic.

Post-war Lebanon is part of the global capitalist body as an extension of the American body from one side and as an extension of the Iranian body from the other. These bodies affect Lebanon directly or through intermediaries and local representatives. Among these intermediaries are Saudi Arabia from the United States' side and Syria (mainly before the Syrian civil war) from the Iranian side. Locally what this means, is that the body of Lebanon is dependent on flows of power and capital from the Iranian body and the body of the United States. In better terms, New Lebanon is dependent on the flow of capital from western loans and grants for the development and reconstruction of the country from one side, from the other, the flows of capital from Iran to maintain the military resistance against Israel, the political monopoly over the Shiaa sect (in conjunction with Amal movement, an ex-militia—like most other current Lebanese political parties), and to conserve the balance of military power between Israel and Lebanon locally, and between the US and Iran regionally.<sup>14</sup> In terms of affect, the above translates to the United States, Iran and their intermediaries having more influence on the Lebanese body can influence itself. Namely, the affect of foreign powers on Lebanon is stronger than the affect of the constituents of

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<sup>14</sup>Another productive flow to the body of Lebanon is that of immigrant contributions.

Lebanon on their own state and its economy, since the flows of capital maintaining the state do not come for local labor but from politically charged loans and aids.

Internally, the local political landscape is reduced to a bureaucratic tug of war between different sectarian parties, that only stands as a front for the extraction of wealth and the enrichment of the leaders. The political landscape in Lebanon and its bureaucratic apparatus evolved for the efficient extraction of wealth from capital flowing in the form of national debt—from public loans through local banks (owned by the bourgeoisie and leaders themselves, their associates or their companies), or loans from the World Bank—or in form of aid from International donor conferences like Paris 1, 2, and 3.

When taking into consideration the fundamental function of crisis within the capitalist system, the crises of the 1960s and 2010s, are not the result of the failure of the Neo-liberal market in Lebanon. On the contrary, these crises are an example of the Neo-liberal market functioning the way it is supposed to. Neo-Liberal capitalism in Lebanon has been pushed to its limits, rid of all performances of equity and equality and simplified to its essence: the efficient extraction of capital. The social is fragmented into conflicting realities, where people in crisis fight each other for survival with limited means, while the people in positions of privilege overindulge in the flow of foreign capital.

Capitalism always tends towards the maximum concentration of wealth, and when the limit of this concentration is close, capitalism deterritorialize the established connections of production and capital, in order to expand this limit though recoding the flows of capital in a way more suitable for its continuity. Capitalism creates crisis intrinsically through the concentration of wealth and the resulting vacuum of lack. In this sense, social crises are not *capitalist crises*, for the natural product of capitalism is crisis. In Lebanon, even though the average national income decreased by 8% between 2014 and 2019, the total net wealth of Lebanese citizens has increased from \$159Bn to \$232Bn during the same period (Shorrocks, Davies & Lluberas, 2019: 88, 108). In such conditions the neoliberal ideology that Lebanon—the image of Lebanon and its constitution—is built upon, stop only being an approach to capital regulation and becomes the frame of reference from which the reality of individual Lebanese bodies is constructed in order to allow space for the acceptance and normalization of lack, making it the responsibility of the individual. The individual carries the responsibility of the failing economy; a truly liberal individual that only liberates governance from its responsibility. Society is fragmented to its core, essentially conserving and reinforcing only the filiative ties necessary for individual/leader connections. Lateral ties are weakened if not completely broken, placing workers in competition with their peers. This manipulation of social connections, along with enough lack, guarantees that the individual will

seek their personal benefit through the vertical channels of filiation rather than the lateral channels of alliance.

As I have argued, crisis and their results from social instability to revolts and then the resolution of crisis and the reintegration of revolt back into the status quo are the true engine of the capitalist machine when considered from a long enough temporal frame. However, collective social organization, such as an uprising, still offer an opportunity for change. While the potency of revolutionary energy offers a chance for capitalism to reinvent itself in its own ruins, it also offers an opportunity for restructuring social relations that escape the hierarchy of neoliberal governance and its social structures. In the conclusion, I will argue that this favourable type of reterritorialization, the strengthening of alliance and the destabilization of filiation, the establishment of debt without credit, debt in between people that should not and cannot be repaid, should be at the centre of revolutionary thought and action so as to produce sustainable results and avoid being re-appropriated by the capitalist machine. In short, I will argue for a strategy inspired by Braidotti's *Nomadic Theory* and Motten and Harney's *The Undercommons*. A strategy whose goal is not the flattening of the differences of the Lebanese society, but the acknowledgement of difference, the expansion of the subject beyond the middle-class male, and the development of strategies whose goal is the conception of practical actions based on the conditions of the present while learning from the past and acknowledging the inaccessibility of the future.

### Conclusion: Up We Rose! Now What?

Before venturing to end this text, let's spend some time re-examining the main points that I have structured my arguments around, so we can draw an appropriate conclusion. I have started this thesis by describing the theoretical tools that I will be using to explore the significance and potential of energetic collective social movements, such as uprisings and revolts. To understand how these forms of social organization work and what functions do they serve, I had to look at how an uprising comes to be, in what context, and what effect does it have on that context afterwards. I have considered the social mobilization in Lebanon in response to the economic crisis of the 1960s, 1970s which preceded the war of 1975, as a useful point of analysis that allows us to observe the uprising within the context of the state of Lebanon as a colonial product that serves colonial desire as a political unit that fulfils a specific role in the global capitalist machine. I have showed how the uprising that started as a call for social justice was transformed into a political representation and channeled into conflicts of identity, and how these conflicts and identities served as a stimulator of the flow of capital during the war as aids and weapons and after the war as loans and help for reconstruction. I have argued that the engine of capitalism, the core that ensures its reproduction, is this cycle of crisis and resolution were the resolution of a given crisis is the beginning of another. Because of this cyclical structure which is made possible by the appropriative qualities of capitalist systems, uprisings, revolts, and revolutions should be aware of

their essential role in reinstating the same social structures that has produced crisis in the first place. Accordingly, in the conclusion I will argue that we are living the peak of intensification of a crisis that started with the end of the Lebanese civil war (as the solution of the previous crisis that led to the war), a point where there is potential for disentanglement from the cycle of capitalist appropriation.

Nietzsche argued in *The Genealogy Of Morals* that memory, the recording of debt is one of the fundamental aspects that led to the emergence of society. Hierarchical social structures are built on the creation of debt, and the induction of credit in the promise for repayment through violence or fear. The people are in debt to their state, to their leaders; they exchange their sovereignty for stability, for work and for protection; services that the individual has to pay for through labour and compliance. In a post-colonial late capitalist environment debt is reproduced in between the fragments of society. Children are in debt to their parents, women are in debt to men, queer people are in debt to notions of normatively, workers to business owners and corporations, citizens to their state, new nations to colonial powers, and the list is always expanding. Instead of the static hierarchies of previous social arrangements, capitalism continuously creates and reinstates, imaginary differences which are then incorporated in a system of hierarchization of difference. In this way, there is no one line of filiation through which debt is enforced and credit is extracted, but all the fragments of society gets ordered in a network of circular hierarchies where one group is in debt to another “different” group.

“Like a historical process of sedimentation, or a progressive accumulation of toxins, the concept of difference has been poisoned and has become the equivalent of inferiority: to be different from means to be worth less than.” (Braidotti, 2011: 17)

As Braidotti explains, capitalism is not a hierarchy the way feudalism was a hierarchy, capitalism is a “difference engine.” Capitalism creates and orders difference with the presupposition of the inferiority of difference: What is different from me is worth less than me. Here, within our perception of difference, lies the opportunity for sustainable resistance.

The potential of the ongoing uprising that started in October 2019 (or of any social movement towards social justice) lies in challenging the capitalist fragmentation of the social with all its colonial strategies. In establishing alliances between workers, immigrant workers, women and queer people. In establishing common debt, and breaking the hierarchical structures established along the lines of filiation, wherever there is a discrepancy of power. Most importantly, the potential of such movements lie in understanding their historical, social, and economic significance, in knowing how to the crisis of the present in order to understand how we can construct a future away from it, in being aware of the function of revolutionary energy within the

capitalist machine, and acknowledging the capitalist body's power of appropriation. An uprising—like in the case of the demonstrations of 1968, 1973, 2015 and 2019 in Lebanon—is a challenge to this systematic fragmentation of the social. An uprising is the collective realization that what has been tolerated should not be tolerated, which in turn mobilizes a voluntary collective movement. A collective movement of individual bodies, following the realization that the benefit of the individual is the same as the benefit of the collective. An uprising is the abandonment of illusory differences and the reality that is built upon them, in order to produce a collective reality based on the collective desire for a decent life, rather than the individual's desire for survival. This collective reality is the reason why revolutionary times are the most potent time in the capitalist cycle to break from the cycle. But if this potential, this momentum is not channeled into social organization that undermines the established fragmentary social structures and their system of governance, this momentum will quickly become a political slogan, then a political party, then a political ideology that serves only as the extension of the established system of oppression and exploitation.

In order for an uprising to fulfil its aspirations, to achieve its goals of social equity and the abolishment of exploitation and oppression, and for these goals to be sustainable, a revolution should not attempt to resolve the crisis, solve the problem, reform the system, and produce a new social hierarchy. "(...) Not abolition as the elimination of anything but abolition as the founding of a new society" (Harney & Moten, 2013: 42). "(...) It's not a question of asking whether the old or new systems is harsher or more bearable because there is a conflict in each between the way they free and enslave us... It's not a question of worrying or of hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons" (Deleuze, 1995: 178). All forms of organization produce subjugation. A revolution should not aim for a system of organization and hope that it will not enslave the people that created it. Rather, the focus should be on engaging with the present through "the production of pragmatic and localized tools of analysis for the power relations at work in society" (Braidotti, 2011: 6). The development of tools that allows us to engage and understand our reality, to acknowledge difference without trying to eliminate it, to observe invisible hierarchies wherever they emerge in order to dismantle them. In short, the result of an uprising should not be a static social structure, but one that is fluid, constantly changing, evolving, becoming, to insure the continuous dissolution of hierarchies and the constant diffusion of power.

At the heart of such an approach to resistance, lies a shift in the perception of difference, and accordingly a shift in the subject who is resisting. To be different is not to be inferior, and the subject should account for this shift. A disruptive, dispersed, and multiple subject inspired by Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subject. A subject that acknowledges its particularity, and by doing so allowing space for difference. A subject that does not condemn the other for their difference, ignorance, or poorness, since such categorical judgements are reinforced in reference to an individual liberal subject. It is important for a revolutionary subject to realize that the standards that allow the judgement and categorization of others are constructed and subjective. The

categorization of people as inferior is directly related to our subjective experience of reality and the accumulation of these experiences through time as moderated by the capitalist machine. For this reason, what is judged to be different and inferior is dependent on the subject and the hierarchical role of the subject within the hierarchies of the capitalist body.

Finally and in short, the strategies of resistance discussed in the conclusion are automatically dysfunctional if they are not understood outside of the abstract theoretical environment of this thesis. Establishing debt without credit, relations of alliance, allowing space for difference are not only topics of theoretical investigation, but a field of experimentation or recommended actions. If this thesis has one direct aim, it is to motivate the reader to respect others, to uplift people around them, especially and essentially people with less power and less privilege whether that is a person you casually know, your partner, your child, your friend, your student or your neighbour... In a few words, if there is something worth remembering in times of social mutation it is the following: don't be a fascist, not towards yourself, not towards your immediate surrounding (the micro-politic), nor towards society as a whole (the macro-politic).

In this thesis, I have tried to excavate the relations of power and the invisible hierarchies in effect in Lebanon. However, the form and length of this thesis did not allow for the depth and detail that such endeavour entails. With all the research being done on post-colonial affect and the fragmentation of society under late-capitalism, Lebanon remains a point of interest—where capitalism has been pushed to its limits, made to function as efficiently as it can, exploiting people and extracting surplus value from a population along decades—that is rarely being tapped into. This thesis, rather than being a finalized work, will act as a reinforcement of a research project in a state of becoming. A research project that started with my life in a small village in Lebanon, that will continue through my post-graduate research work and hopefully beyond.

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