



**HAL**  
open science

# Stigmatizing commoning: How neoliberal hegemony eroded collective ability to deal with scarcity in Lebanon

Dima Younès

## ► To cite this version:

Dima Younès. Stigmatizing commoning: How neoliberal hegemony eroded collective ability to deal with scarcity in Lebanon. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 2024, 31 (1), 245-263 p. 10.1111/gwao.13070 . hal-04325772

**HAL Id: hal-04325772**

**<https://hal.science/hal-04325772>**

Submitted on 13 Dec 2023

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Feminist Frontiers

WILEY

# Stigmatizing commoning: How neoliberal hegemony eroded collective ability to deal with scarcity in Lebanon

Dima Younes 

OCE Research Center, Emylon Business School, Ecully, France

**Correspondence**

Dima Younes.

Email: [younes@em-lyon.com](mailto:younes@em-lyon.com)**Funding information**

Emlyon Business School

**Abstract**

This paper examines how neoliberalism impedes the emergence of alternative organizations. Via a mix of (auto-)ethnography and memory work, it explains how neoliberal values replacing more traditional ones eroded the collective capacity to bring solutions to scarcity problems in today's Lebanon. It points to the stigmatization of the role of mothers, who once were the “guardians” of organizing around commons, and the alternative values necessary for that. It shows how neoliberal values undermined relationships and decisions based on affect, and promoted individualization and market-based expertise, thereby destroying the authority of traditional motherhood. Also, neoliberalism introduced the importance of branding and accumulation in a manner that made sharing very difficult. These changes in values prevented people who embraced neoliberal culture from benefiting from commoning practices in a context of scarcity. This happens at a time where scholars predict the end of the age of abundance and the importance of commoning as a social arrangement capable of ensuring overall well-being. The paper concludes with a discussion of the necessity of de-stigmatizing values that are not compatible with the neoliberal ideology for the sake of leaving open the possibility of organizing differently and adapting to a changing environment.

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2023 The Authors. *Gender, Work & Organization* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

## KEYWORDS

commons, motherhood, neoliberalism, scarcity, stigmatization

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

May you rest in peace my mother! She raised four children with nothing. She made sure that we ate, dressed, and went to school even under bombs, and told us to always be proud of who we are. Now I own a house, and orchard, and a car. My wife and myself work, but we don't know anymore how to manage with only two children!

(Akram, father of two children living in Beirut, 2021)

It has now been well documented in feminist studies that whenever a harsh economic crisis hits, some women organize collectively to sustain their capacity to survive and ensure the reproduction of their values (Daskalaki et al., 2021; Federici, 2010; Fotaki, 2022). This has been the case all around the world, from African to South American (Federici, 2010; Marti et al., 2013; Younes et al., 2019) to European countries (Daskalaki, 2018; Daskalaki et al., 2021). These commoning initiatives develop in rather marginalized groups (Federici, 2010). However, it is still unclear why more people do not revert to organizing around the commons or why even the marginalized don't sustain these initiatives when economic hardships relent. This is an important question to address if we are to understand our inability to sustain what many of us perceive as better-fit organizations to face a future that will be full of environmental, economic, and security hardships (Branicki, 2020; Federici, 2010; Harvey, 2000), or at least to maintain a plurality of modes of organizing that provide hope for changing arrangements that will not be sustainable at a point in the future (Harvey, 2000). In this paper, I will focus on how neoliberalism hinders, via stigmatization, the emergence of the alternative values necessary for the ability to imagine alternative organizing such as commoning.

Neoliberalism is an economic ideology with a value system that enables its own survival (Jessop, 2012). Its hegemonic ideology entails a perception of success based on individual accumulation and an individualization of consumption and choices required for the construction of a marketable entrepreneurial self (Courpasson et al., 2021; Ferguson, 2010; Harvey, 2007; Vallas & Cummins, 2015). Celebrating these dominant values and standards induces a feeling of guilt or punishment for those who adhere to them and fail to achieve them, as the ideology relies on the idea of deservedness (McCabe, 2016). This probably impedes the emergence of alternative values and forms of organizing (Harvey, 2000). This paper intends to examine how this value system operates by drawing on the concept of stigmatizing (Becker, 1997) and relying on the Lebanese case.

Lebanon—a country that is now undergoing a harsh economic crisis like others that have taken place in the past 100 years—can inform this question. Indeed, while commoning practices developed whenever a crisis hits, this time, many people had a hard time convincing themselves that organizing in such a way would be acceptable. Based on a mix of (auto)-ethnography (Mandalaki & Pérezts, 2022) and memory work (Haug, 2008) in my native country of Lebanon, I contribute to this debate by showing how hegemonic neoliberal values stigmatized organizing around the commons. I will focus on the transformation of the traditional role of mothers and its stigmatization to explain this transformation.

To further develop this argument, the paper begins by introducing the debate on the commons and neoliberalism with its implications on motherhood. The next section explains the context and my methodological choices. Then, I will explain the form and associated values that traditional commoning took in Lebanon, and explain how neoliberal values compromised the former and the possibility of reverting to such alternative arrangements. Ultimately, I contribute to the debate on commoning by showing how, progressively, the authority of mothers over the household has been compromised when decisions based on affect were stigmatized, and the jurisdiction of mothers has been invaded by market logics. This paper will also underline how neoliberal values are not only incompatible with organizing around the commons, they go one step further, making individuals feel ashamed about such modes of

organizing (McCabe, 2016; Randles, 2021). The paper opens on a reflection on the necessity of destigmatizing alternative values to allow for the emergence of social arrangements that better suit the changing human environment and the need to recognize our corporeal vulnerabilities (Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020).

## 2 | COMMONING IN CONTEXTS OF SCARCITY AND THE PROBLEM OF SUSTAINING COLLECTIVE ACTION

The concept of the commons was first introduced to capture the ability of individuals to organize in a way that allows them to share scarce resources in the absence of institutions regulating their behavior (Ostrom, 1990). For example, fishermen make agreements to avoid overfishing particular species in their shared area of activity. This work denounces the simplistic assumptions that economists and policymakers have been making about the nature of human relations—it shows how actors can find common ground without market intermediation or institutional intervention by drawing on social arrangements (Ostrom, 2000; Velicu & García-López, 2018). The concept was picked up in the feminist literature to introduce the relational, ethical (Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020), political (Daskalaki, 2018; Federici, 2010), and dynamic aspect of the activity of commoning (Fournier, 2013). This paper extends these theories.

Indeed, most feminist authors agree that it is necessary to go beyond the material aspect of the commons (of what is shared) to recognize that commoning (as an ongoing effort) induces the existence or the emergence of a community. This group emerges from the recognition of shared vulnerabilities (Butler, 2012; Velicu & García-López, 2018) and reciprocity (Fournier, 2013; Linebaugh, 2009; Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020). This literature recognizes that, beyond the material interdependence that individuals might face, if they are to act collectively, they must also link to each other (Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020), identify with a common set of values (Ostrom, 2000), and care about each other (Federici, 2018). Values and affect are important to tie individuals to each other.

The necessity of shared values (or beliefs) to “glue” a group of individuals together without the intervention of an outside party is now well documented, as it goes back to Durkheim’s work on societies (Durkheim, 2005a, 2005b, 2014), and it is shown to allow for the survival of values alternative to the dominant ones (Courpasson et al., 2021). As such, shared values appear as facilitators of the problem of governance in collective action. From here, it becomes clear that in a context with potentially different cultural norms, collective action can be difficult.

Values are acquired through education and are reflected in the way we feel and think about different situations, products, or interactions that we might encounter in our lives. They are acquired at an early age, but can change through the lives of individuals (Bourdieu, 1986a). For what matters to us here, values induce feelings about different ways of organizing life.

In what follows, I will argue that through the past decades, the culture of neoliberalism has imposed itself in all spheres of life by negatively portraying any alternative set of values in a way that made it very difficult and unacceptable to have alternative ways of seeing and feeling things.

## 3 | NEOLIBERALISM: AN IDEOLOGY THAT PRESCRIBES FEELINGS ABOUT DESIRABLE AND DEVIANT BEHAVIORS

Neoliberalism is an ideology that aims at transforming capitalism (a regime of accumulation) into an ideology that relies on the responsible and autonomous entrepreneurial adult (Courpasson et al., 2021; Ferguson, 2010; Jessop, 2012). This ideology has become hegemonic (Byrne, 2017). It shifted power from people—as citizens with agency—to the market, which assumes that all individuals are consumers (Harvey, 2007) who use the market to brand their entrepreneurial selves (Garrett, 2013; McGuigan, 2014). This market culture has infused and transformed practices in many spheres.

Neoliberalism progressively depoliticized the social sphere by transforming all other ideologies into commodities that can be traded on the market. It progressively merchandized the political and made it a commodity like any other, which individuals can buy to brand themselves and show their (fake) uniqueness (Thompson & Kumar, 2021). This, for example, manifests itself in practices such as those prescribed by the slow food movement (Thompson &

Kumar, 2021) or woke culture (Kanai & Gill, 2020), which are perceived as new labels that allow the entrepreneurial person to brand herself in a consumerist manner, while drawing on political values that attach feelings to such modes of consumption. As such, consumption became a way of expressing ideals in a rather “pacifistic” way, in the sense that it does not challenge the overall existing order that yet still shows engagement, a feature important to exhibit in a system that promotes the responsibility of the individual.

Moreover, neoliberalism has also transformed our relationship to health, the body, and the mind. While medical studies have shown the impact of the environment on the manifestation of certain illnesses, the practice has progressively shifted toward individualizing the responsibility of mental illness along with neoliberal ideology’s perception of individuals as self-contained agents (Esposito & Perez, 2014). Individuals are supposed to regulate their behavior and show self-discipline to avoid feeling not well. For instance, Guthman and Dupuis (2005) argue that keeping a thin body despite the abundance of food contributes to showing deservingness in such a system. This makes a feminist critique of such behaviors difficult as the “do-diet” ideology becomes associated with a feeling of being morally responsible and is considered personally empowering (Cairns & Johnston, 2015). As such, behaviors and ways of consuming are associated with positive and negative feelings that make the critique of the neoliberal ideology and the associated prescribed behaviors very difficult (Cairns & Johnston, 2015).

Similarly, neoliberal ideology associated a set of values and behaviors with “mothering”—which the ideology defines as giving birth and raising children while working. Mothers are expected to be perfect in all spheres (Rottenberg, 2014): have the perfect body, the perfect job, breastfeed their children on demand, and have good social relations (Güney-Frahm, 2020; McRobbie, 2015). From the day they give birth, women are expected to make the right consumption choices (Waggoner, 2015) by finding the “right experts” who can “empower” them by allowing them to understand the “valuable” (in the neoliberal system) consumption options (Mackendrick, 2014) that they have for themselves and their children (McCabe, 2016). As such, they appear as the sole managers of the household and the ones responsible for all consumption decisions made in it, thereby deviating from the traditional practice that “it takes a village to raise a child” (Güney-Frahm, 2020; Kilty & Dej, 2012). Feminist literature has been critical of this “intensive mothering” as it shows how it reproduces the privatization logic of the neoliberal system (Littler, 2020; Yopo Díaz, 2021). Also, it relies on its concepts of choice, control, and autonomy (Lupton, 2012; McCabe, 2016), which can become almost impossible to reach for deprived women who would feel that they are failing as mothers. Indeed, having no resources means that one has no choice and therefore neither “control” nor “autonomy,” nor “deservedness” in the neoliberal sense (Lupton, 2012; McCabe, 2016; Randles, 2021).

As such, the neoliberal culture, instead of explicitly prescribing a given set of behaviors, allows for choices that are supposed to reflect who we are, how engaged we are, and what we deserve. In that sense, it is an ideology with a mode of regulation of individual behavior (Byrne, 2017) that relies on the existence of the self-disciplined individual who acts alongside market logic. Deviating from the desired market-compatible behavior can be associated with illness (Esposito & Perez, 2014) and can provoke feelings of punishment (McCabe, 2016) or failure (Randles, 2021). It is the association of these negative feelings with behaviors that deviate from neoliberal ideology that I will refer to as stigmatizing, in reference to sociological work on deviant behavior (Becker, 1997).

In this paper, I will shed light on the mechanisms stigmatizing a set of values associated with a particular form of commoning—the one that developed in Lebanese society over the past decades—by showing how it makes individuals, of their own accord, divert from arrangements that can be beneficial in a particular context when these appear at odds with neoliberal values. It will focus on the traditional role of mothers in Lebanon.

## 4 | LEBANON'S VERY FAST DESCENT INTO HELL. OR, WHAT AN AGE OF SCARCITY LOOKS LIKE

Lebanon's crises are multiple, but ultimately, they translate today into a deep crisis of resources leading to extreme poverty conditions. Until 2019, Lebanon was considered a rather developed country, when its consumption trends

were accounted for. However, since October 2019, the country has witnessed a deep economic crisis (following years of political corruption) and this has led to large movements of contestation all over the country. A few months after the crisis began, banks blocked all deposits and refused all withdrawals. The Lebanese pound, previously pegged against the U.S. Dollar (USD) started losing value.<sup>1</sup> This was followed by successive COVID lockdowns starting in February 2020 that worsened the economic situation and the precarity of large proportions of the population (more than 80% of the population were believed to be living under the poverty line in 2021<sup>2</sup>). Then, in August 2020, a large explosion at the port in Beirut, the capital city, led to more than 200 deaths, 7000 injuries, and hundreds of thousands of homeless people; property damage was estimated by the World Bank at approximately 3.8–4.6 billion USD<sup>3</sup> while the GDP was 23.3 billion USD in 2020.<sup>4</sup> This induced more precarity, but also political tensions and a deepening of the economic crisis. In practical terms, this meant the salary of a middle-class family, which used to be equivalent to USD 4000 in autumn 2019, was worth less than USD 180 in autumn 2022 and around USD 60 in autumn 2023. This, in a country where most necessity goods are imported. Moreover, due to political tensions and economic realities, there were shortages of many necessity products, including baby formula and medications, but also fuel, gas, and electricity. Also, bank deposits were not released, causing the middle class to fall below the poverty line in the space of 2 years. To deal with this new reality, individuals had to adapt. *The paper addresses those who had a hard time adapting.* It attempts to understand why they refused to adopt commoning practices that others were developing.

However, first we need to put this crisis in perspective. The individuals I will talk about here do have some knowledge about living in crisis situations. Indeed, Lebanon has witnessed periods of impoverishment at different times in its history, the latest one being during the civil war that lasted from 1975 till 1990. Most people who are today more than 30 years old lived under such circumstances. However, the most recent one is probably one of the hardest crises because of how suddenly it came on. All savings of the citizens were totally blocked in banks in an unprecedented way almost overnight. This meant that people had to find money at a time where the job market was obliterated due to the exodus of many foreign companies from the country. All this happened in an insecure global context over a period with COVID, the war in Ukraine, hyper-inflation, and climate disasters, in addition to the existing regional instability in surrounding countries such as Syria, Israel, and Palestine.

To better understand the abrupt aspect of the crisis and the origins of the shift in ways of life away from what was adopted in previous crises, one must understand that Lebanon had a very globalized and occidentalized period between 2005 and 2019. Indeed, after the Syrian occupation army retreated from Lebanon in 2005, Beirut became a very hip place, labeled for many years as one of the best party cities in the world,<sup>5</sup> and the gay capital of the Arab world,<sup>6</sup> which moved the city toward being a globally attractive one, with all the businesses that go with such labels. This transformed the way people consumed. As local shops progressively went out of business, it left space for global brands such as Starbucks and Columbus Café, large malls, and imported TV shows (such as *The Voice*) on the cultural side. In 2020, after banks blocked deposits, all these imported shops suddenly disappeared. In the space of roughly 6 months, as the economy collapsed, most multinational firms quit the country. Hip places like nightclubs and restaurants closed, as did many hotels, including historical ones. Many Lebanese and foreigners with resources and connections to other places left the country. In that sense, if Lebanon's globalization began accelerating in 2005, the material aspect of "de-globalization" was very quick for locals.

What is of interest to this paper is that most adults living with children today in Lebanon grew up in a country at war and had already experienced life organized around commons. I will show, though, that many of them were trying to avoid this way of organizing to adapt to the new crisis. This, I will argue, is because they had become convinced over the preceding years (2005–2019) that this was not a respectable way of life, a feeling that did not exist during the previous crises. To be sure, this paper is not a plea for the old model of commoning, but rather it aims to explain how the principles of this model helped survival in times of scarcity, and how these principles were challenged by neoliberal values. This in turn will help explain how neoliberalism erodes the possibility of alternative organizing that may better suit situations of scarcity.

## 5 | AN (AUTO-)ETHNOGRAPHY WITH FLASHBACKS TO ATTEST TO THE EVOLUTION OF FEELINGS RELATED TO COMMONING

My childhood friend, Nadine, reacts on a WhatsApp group of school friends. She writes: "I feel so sorry for the children who now have been locked-down with other children for such a long time". She was referring to the fact that some families were living together to share costs during the lockdown in Lebanon. Many of our friends reacted to her comment reminding her that she should not feel guilty about this since we lived in the same situation in collective shelters when Beirut was bombed back in the late 1980s; and we, as children, were very happy at that time. We were happy to play with our neighbors and be with our families without caring too much about what was happening in the outside world. One of our friends even shared pictures of drawings that she did with her neighbors on the walls of the shelter. Nadine tried to argue that the situation was different, but she agreed that we were happy and maybe that the children today are happy as well. However, she told us that parents do not like these ways of living anymore. "They want to and have the right to control what their children play with, eat, and when to sleep, while in shared places, no one controls things anymore", she said.

How did people feel about commoning during previous crises? At first blush, this is an easy question to ask. But when values change, people tend to re-interpret their past experiences in light of today's values (Bourdieu, 1986b). This is exactly what happened to my friend Nadine, while my other friends reminded her that this experience could also be seen positively, perhaps from a child's perspective instead of an adult one. A friend of mine living in France told me, "*maybe it is a good thing that this economic crisis hit so that people connect back with the Lebanon that we love, with what matters.*" I almost felt the same, despite the fact that we all felt sad that people were *forced* into these ways of organizing. In 2021, I was discovering that some people living in Lebanon felt bad about the commoning solutions that we used to enjoy as children (see, for instance, the World Happiness Report 2022<sup>7</sup>).

I went back to Lebanon during the summer of 2021 to get a better sense of what was happening and started interviewing people. For many, sharing meant a personal failure to keep up to the "*standards of our modern times.*" Also, these modes of organizing were referred to in very negative terms. For example, many reported feeling like they were "*living during the stone-ages,*" and that they were responsible for their "bad situation," for example, blaming themselves for not withdrawing their money from banks before they shut down. This reflects the penetration of the culture of individualization, as one might also think that no one expected banks to hold deposits indefinitely, and that the problem is clearly structural. Alongside these feelings runs the stereotype that Lebanese mothers are "*intrusive,*" "*over-protective,*" and do not let their children live the way they choose. So stigmatization—that is, the negative qualification of an attitude that is intrinsically neither positive nor negative (Becker, 1997)—hit both the traditional role of mothers and commoning that mothers traditionally promoted. This is not to say that some women or men in general do not promote them as well, but traditionally, this role was carried by mothers (understood in the indigenous language in the biological sense).

I was surprised by these answers because commoning was widespread 30–40 years ago, and most people did not complain about it at that time. This was the seed of the idea for this paper, to compare people's thoughts today—before the economy opens up again, and multinational firms reopen their stores in Lebanon—to how I, my family, and my friends felt about it before, with the aim of making the reader aware of how hegemonic narratives can make us feel negative about things that we used to enjoy at one point in time.

Indeed, I will use my memories as well as the ones shared by some of my interviewees to try to relate past and present feelings about commoning. Memory work is a collective process through which a group of individuals with a dominated culture try to give sense of everyday events in a language that is not the dominant one (Haug, 2008). More recently, it has been used at the individual level to try to account for lived experiences that can give an alternative interpretation to how some events are lived (Mitchell & Pithouse-Morgan, 2014). It allows decolonizing the self from dominant perceptions and interpretations of day-to-day life (Baikie, 2020). In that sense, it is a political project that

attempts to challenge the taken-for-granted interpretations of personal experiences (Giorgio, 2013). My childhood memories can therefore inform feelings about commoning solutions in a different language so that I can bring to the reader an understanding of how different values can provide a different way of seeing the same events.

I will also share the thoughts and feelings that others' narratives provoked in me while sharing what I was seeing and hearing in 2021 and 2022 as I conducted interviews. This will convey the contrasting feelings that we can have in different times and from different perspectives about the same experience. Autoethnography is a method that had been used mainly to give space to the feelings and impressions of the researcher on the field (Delamont, 2009; Mandalaki, 2021), as it came to be more and more acknowledged that this information is by itself valuable (Goodall, 2013). By doing this, I hope to "denaturalize" the dominant narratives about alternative organizing, and in particular, commoning.

## 6 | TO ORGANIZE OR NOT TO ORGANIZE AROUND THE COMMONS: A MATTER OF VALUES AND THE PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF MOTHERS

In this section, I will trace back events of my childhood and the feelings associated with the collective organizing that was dominant in the 1980s and 1990s, and show how people living in Lebanon today feel about having had to revert to these modes of organizing. Through these illustrations, I will show how the traditional figure of mothers enabled commoning by acting as a sort of arbitrator who helps to pool resources, downplays differentiation and the branding that goes with it, and limits accumulation. Mothers favored "investing" in what was referred to as "human gold," that is, good relationships with others attained through mutual care. I will contrast that with the existing situation, where the traditional role of mothers is stigmatized to leave more space for neoliberal values such as individualization, accumulation, and differentiation. This is done, I will argue, by undermining the importance of affective relations, the superstition of maintaining the sacred role of mothers, and the "expertise" of mothers in household matters, and replacing them with the importance of market relations.

### 6.1 | The erosion of the authority of mothers in the neoliberal age: From sacred beings to parasites

Tradition has conferred and maintained an image of mothers that favors their ability to decide for their families. What protected this traditional role for a long time is a shared perception of the mother as a sacred person devoted to her family. This perception, I argue, had been maintained by different cultural supports but was recently challenged.

#### 6.1.1 | The sacredness of mothers

During my entire childhood, radio stations played a song called "My Mother" by famous Lebanese singer Marcel Khalifeh, in which he sings the words of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish: "I get to love my life because if I die, I would be ashamed of my mother's tears." The song goes on to talk about all the sacrifices that mothers make, their devotion, and unconditional love for their children. Many other poems and songs also perpetuate this image of the devoted mother who thinks about everything to comfort and raise children properly. Similarly, when traveling on Lebanese highways, during my childhood it was quite common to read on taxis or other transportation vehicles, "Your grace, Mother!" reflecting the belief that something bad will happen to a person if her mother is angry at her. Of course this is superstition, but it was quite widespread. These few illustrations are among the many others that reflect the *sacred* place of mothers in the Lebanese tradition and the affect that is associated with them.

It is precisely this relationship that gives them authority. For example, although my father at many times in his life disagreed with his mother, he was also afraid of confronting her in case this made her sad. He felt that this would upset him and bring him bad luck in his life until she forgave him. Mothers sometimes used this affect to obtain

compliance with their decisions, threatening that they would be very sad if children did not listen to them. This may appear cruel to us, but this mechanism was important for their authority at home, defined as a form of influence that individuals consider legitimate. It is distinct from the classical definition (Weber, 1978) because the person in power here did not ask for or try to enforce obedience from others through rules. The family follows mothers' recommendations because mothers are believed to be devoted to their children and doing their best to help them. This is important to understand because later, I will argue that it is precisely this authority that neoliberalism eroded by substituting traditions for market logic, and stigmatizing practices that relate to their devotion.

### 6.1.2 | Home as the jurisdiction of traditional mothers

In villages (where traditions are best preserved), mothers have the right to decide everything in their children's lives. They can intervene in marriages, study choices, investment decisions, and in how family members are dressed, what the family eats, and what the family offers to others. It was therefore quite common to hear people say: "*Badriyeh [a mother] married her son to the daughter of Fatima, and built a house for them.*" Regardless of who really made the decision about the marriage (she may have merely agreed with her son's decision), who made the money used to construct the house, and who supervised the construction, the assumption was that the mother did all these things because *it was her jurisdiction* to do so. This role gave her the ability to organize collectively, at least at the scale of the family. This is what most mothers did spontaneously throughout successive crisis in Lebanon to ensure the survival of their children and their families.

At the heart of all the transformations that compromised the capacity of organizing differently is perhaps the erosion of the perception of the mother's role as an expert in family affairs. Indeed, the increase in individualization and the importance that the neoliberal ideology gives to the autonomy of children and choice for adult individuals meant that it was no longer conceivable that mothers made decisions for their families. Doing so, while previously perceived as devotion, was now considered parasiting or intruding into others' lives.

### 6.1.3 | Mothers as intruders in and parasites on of the neoliberal individual

Issues around marriage in villages illustrate this transformation well. My cousin, living in my grandmother's village, complained to me about her son, who refused to listen to her when she told him that he should not marry his girlfriend and should try to find someone from a family that they know. The girlfriend grew up in the U.S., and my cousin believed that she did not share their familial values. While telling the story she was very sad, almost crying, because he accused her of being archaic and intrusive, and asked her to leave his personal matters to himself. This same cousin did not intervene much in the marriage of her other children, but she felt that the current situation in the country required that her son revert to more traditional practices. She argued that the two families had very few interdependencies, and extrapolated that the two families may not find shared solutions in the case of conflict among the married couple or if economic needs arose.

This story demonstrates that what used to be taken for granted as an expertise of motherhood is no longer possible. Of course I am not defending arranged marriages or the intervention of mothers per se, but it should be noted that this practice had an important place in commoning practices in this area of the world. It has been shown to develop solidarity among families (Holý, 1989; Parkin, 2021), and this is precisely what my cousin was hoping for her son. This, however, conflicted with neoliberal values, which prescribes autonomous individuals who show deservingness by making their own decisions. Indeed, the son married his girlfriend and divorced a few months later. In the meantime, he spent all his savings on having a "dream wedding" and furnishing a "dream house" (in the consumerist sense) in a country in total economic collapse. The situation made his mother feel totally powerless. Here, mothers' expertise and devotion could not hold space.

Moreover, the superstition, which many believe, that a mother's sadness brings them bad luck eroded with the rise of the rationalistic and scientific way of thinking. Neither my cousin's son, nor many others, really cared about their mothers being sad or angry. Listening to mothers became itself "archaic," proof of an incapacity of reasoning for oneself, or a lack of deservingness and autonomy at an adult age. Everything that had been experienced before the rise of neoliberalism was now labeled archaic, even though it might be relevant at a time of total economic insecurity. In contrast, there was a lack of language to capture the anxiety generated by the precariousness, and the necessity of searching for new arrangements, or ways of living, eating, and getting married on a daily basis, as if doing this is a proof of failure or weakness. This is what I will further explain in the next sections to demonstrate how the erosion of mothers' ability to intervene in family matters brought with it the incapacity of families to act collectively.

## 6.2 | Pooling resources and the issues of privacy, branding, and differentiation

Pooling resources appears as the first material aspect of commoning, but for it to succeed, individuals must accept an entire set of specific values. To examine how these values became stigmatized, we must understand what those values are and the specifics of pooling. Tracing back how it used to be done and how I felt about it during my childhood will contrast with my more recent observations to help explain how new neoliberal values affected the ability to pool resources.

### 6.2.1 | Altruism and the importance of the survival of all at the expense of a measure of fairness

When thinking about commons, my memory takes me back to an episode in the 1980s where many of my family members—by that I mean uncles, aunts, and cousins in addition to my parents and brothers—had to go live at my grandparents' home in their village. To deal with scarcity, my grandmother pushed her children to pool resources by dividing her property so that she could accommodate all of her children's families when the economic and security situations worsened during this decade. Four of her children and their families lived in semi-detached homes on a parcel of land that my grandparents owned. They all had apartments elsewhere in large cities, but this arrangement allowed them to pool resources. Two other children had their own houses a few meters away, as they were already living in the same village. Thus, my grandparents shared their house and garden with four of their six children, putting aside any notion of giving equally to all six children, or of their own comfort.

### 6.2.2 | Pooling resources and redistributing benefits

To avoid food waste, my grandmother used to cook for four families in addition to her husband and herself. Meals were shared. They were not necessarily eaten in the same place, each family could "take away" their part of what she cooked. Also, she made everyone pay a "participation"—a payment she felt was proportionate to the revenue of the child's family. For example, my parents both worked, so they paid more than my uncle, whose wife could not work at that time, even though my uncle had four children and my father three. The principle was to bring resources together regardless of who was generating them to ensure everyone's wellbeing.

My grandmother managed water and electricity (neither of which was always available) by deciding who could shower when and for how long, so that some water was left for gardening. In the garden, she decided what fruits or vegetables to plant depending on what water she expected to have available. My father liked watermelon, but she would not plant it because she thought they needed too much water to grow.

She similarly managed food stocks. She harvested her garden, and before winter distributed to her children "mooneh," food that could be stocked for the winter such as jam, dry peas or beans, concentrated tomato, cereals, or pickles that she had prepared during the summer.

### 6.2.3 | Caring for the community

My grandmother also took care of many others. She was not educated and could not follow homework, but she ensured cousins helped each other study, that they all played together regardless of tastes and ages, or that children ate and slept if their parents were away. She encouraged adults to take care of each other's children, not just within the family, but more widely within the community. For example, my mother, a math professor, ensured that all my cousins, and also sometimes children of neighbors that my grandmother considered as close as family, understood their lessons. This arrangement allowed adults to work for longer hours, and not necessarily in a paid capacity. My mother's private math lessons for family or neighbors, sometimes continuing until late at night, were free. During these lessons my grandmother would tell us stories until we fell asleep. All this while my father was helping my grandfather fix problems in the house or garden. None of these activities were paid, but they were all necessary for the wellbeing of the family, and my grandmother made sure they were all done.

### 6.2.4 | Attempts to preserve values necessary for commoning

Of course, this model generated tensions at times, but my grandmother held the threat of her sadness over her children or stopped speaking to them to convince them to abide by her arbitrage and decisions. My mother was once unhappy with the distribution of water among families as she felt that we were making more efforts than others, and my father let my grandmother know that. My grandmother refused to intervene and asked my father not to raise the issue with his brothers as she felt it was minor. This did not please my mother, who indeed raised the issue and pushed the families into a form of accounting that intended to figure out whether the distribution of water was fair or not. My grandmother then intervened to stop the process and blamed everyone for making her so sad by adopting such a shameful attitude. She told her children that they should instead look for "sitra," that is, being unnoticed, and respecting each others' dignity by not claiming contributions.

These values are essential for commoning and were central in the life of this village, where people tried to be alike, and downplayed identities. By doing so, she succeeded in interrupting the attempt to install an arrangement based on rationalistic measures. But this was only possible because she was respected and believed to be doing what was in the best interest of the collective, and because her children did not want to make her feel sad by not respecting the values that she cared about. Without her intervention, clearly, families individually would have borne considerable costs, and some of her children would have not managed to survive the crisis. Agreeing to pool without consideration of rationalistic equity, and instead exclusively in the name of caring about the survival of all and the good of the atmosphere, is therefore important here.

### 6.2.5 | An arrangement like another: My child's perspective

As a child, I never perceived my grandmother's rules to be more strict than my parents'. They were just different. Some were even "funnier." She allowed us to play in all our cousins' houses, negotiated for us the loan of other kids' toys, and she allowed us to play outside the house—even on the street, which was unacceptable for my mother. All these activities were fun from our perspective as children. As a child in this situation, I was genuinely happy, and I would not have known we were living in scarcity if my mother had not pointed out to us what we could have had if the economic situation were better. Even as a child, the difference in values in the village did not matter much. I did not care what I wore (fashion never really reached the village), I did not mind "pooling" my toys and books with others or giving away what I did not really need to make some space in our tiny place in the village. Other things seemed more important at that time: chatting with *older* cousins, learning new games, convincing others to play the games I preferred, *exploring* houses in the village (visiting others' places seemed like visiting new countries for me at that

time). In contrast, in our apartment in Beirut, I felt the space and ability to play limited because of all the privacy: I could only play or chat with my two brothers, who were clearly not the most interesting playmates. I valued things that are different from what we value today.

In summer 2021, with the economic situation comparable to that of the 1980s some considered a return to commoning. Some succeeded, others tried and discovered that they were no longer happy with such arrangements, and still others could not even imagine themselves doing it again.

### 6.2.6 | The issue of privacy

Sharing houses was the reflex of many households as the crisis hit Lebanon, but for some, these were painful experiences as they now valued privacy more than access to additional resources. For example, our neighbors in Beirut shared their apartment with the husband's parents for a while before they figured out that they could not live together (anymore). The idea of sharing apartments is simple: it allows a distribution of the subscription costs to a private generator (about half the income of a previously middle-class household) and other fixed costs. In other words, a light or a heater will benefit two families instead of one for the same price. This, however, means that private spaces will be limited for each individual. Living with parents-in-law often means that a person will have to be dressed in an appropriate way all the time. Grandparents may intervene in the education of children; they may add accessories to the existing space, thereby limiting previously used spaces. These are the "sacrifices" that many families now failed to make, even though 30 years prior they had lived with their parents. Privacy throughout the house, as compared to one's room previously, and the personalization of space therefore now appeared as something crucial for well-being, where that had not been a value in the past.

The reader may argue here that this is of course not pleasant, and I agree, but this is probably because our conception of what matters has also changed. When my neighbor shared her experience with me, I had mixed feelings. I feel very willing to exchange my privacy for having a family at home, with whom I share at least some values, to help care for my son. I wanted to tell her how hard it is to live away from family while raising children. I wanted to tell her how guilty I felt about leaving my son with total strangers who claim to be "nice" babysitters because they have good reviews on social platforms, which are filled with people I don't know and who believe that what is good for them is necessarily good for others. But I did not say all this because I felt that after all, if she was complaining to me, it was because she knows that I live in an occidental country, and I would understand her concern about privacy. It was as if our shared (neoliberal) culture normalizes complaints about privacy, but less feelings of guilt due to "externalizing" part of our traditional role of mothers to strangers. My point here is that there is no organizational arrangement that does not have inconveniences. It is only that *neoliberalism taught us to silence some concerns and gave us words to voice others*. Why should I care more about my privacy than about who takes care of my son when I am away from home?

### 6.2.7 | Branding

Also, pooling resources was problematic because of how we have been taught to construct our identities on the market over matters such as what to eat, which is a basic need that can be satisfied without much emotional engagement and theorizing around it. By sharing living spaces, individuals also share cooking costs (mainly the very expensive gas or electricity necessary to heat food) and meals. This raises the issue of choice. Indeed, a friend of mine living in France told me that her mother refused to invite her brothers and their families for a "fish lunch" because "*there is no one that likes it cooked in the same way as the other*" The result was that none of her family members could afford to eat fish, knowing that such meals are expensive (because fish is expensive to begin with), need long times of cooking, and quantities can rarely be well predicted for one person. The possibility to personalize eating under neoliberal

arrangements meant that people now felt it was impossible to align with one way of eating in a family without feeling that their persona is offended. Mothers cannot even decide how their children should eat fish, or another dish.

### 6.2.8 | Increased differentiation

This issue of personalizing consumption and associating identity matters to it had even more dramatic consequences where necessity goods were concerned, specifically infant formula, with which a friend of mine had access issues. In summer 2021, there was a formula shortage in Lebanon, and many families could not get any of it. Those who could breastfeed did so. Others knew people living abroad who could regularly send them boxes of formula. For the remaining, there was only one solution: getting milk donations from women who were breastfeeding. This is where issues arose. Among those who could donate, many referred to science-fiction movies like *Mad Max* or *The Handmaid's Tale*, accusing politicians of pushing women into the unacceptable role of “cows” by putting them in situations where they had no choice but to donate their milk lest they watch babies die from hunger. And I agree with all these negative feelings. However, among those who received donations, there were concerns about similarities in lifestyles: what did the person donating the milk eat or drink and is it appropriate for their babies? Does the donor know how to respect hygiene measures to ensure milk is not sterile? In the past people knew each other and shared ways of life, hygiene practices, and food recipes. But none of this persisted in Beirut, where my friend received milk donations from a woman she did not know while waiting for her friends abroad to ship boxes of formula.

The individualization of ways of life, but probably also the differences in practices and abilities among social classes, made it difficult to anticipate what you would receive. Receiving donations, even when in extreme need, became a source of anxiety. In the past, people would have believed it fine that their child got the same milk as the child of the donor, and they would have been grateful. Now people wonder if the milk they are receiving conforms with their values and food practices. Also, the increasing gap in inequalities (not only economic, but also in terms of access to information and other goods and services that homogenize practices among social groups) is becoming a real barrier to the ability to get out of isolation and establish links with others. This is precisely where we see the importance of what my grandmother pushed for her entire life—behaving like everyone else in the village, dressing like everyone else, sharing food, sharing practices, etc. This does not mean that practices should not change. In fact, they changed, but collectively. For example, my grandmother told me about how she learned to plant vegetables from other women who came from other villages, and how this diffused around other villages. In today's Lebanon, information diffuses easily through social networks, but practices remain quite “personalized” as individuals have their different trusted sources of information that mesh with the way *they like to brand themselves and differentiate from others*. Coordination and collective action, therefore, became very difficult.

### 6.3 | The issue of accumulation at the expense of “human gold”

The other set of values that eroded relates to people's “investment” in what my grandmother calls “human gold.” Instead of accumulating wealth and other material resources, people in the village used to share and give to others, thereby creating a feeling of collective well-being and a culture of helping each other. Accumulation was associated with greed. *Material accumulation as greed*. My grandmother had a friend that she often criticized. She said that the woman's home smelled of mold because instead of giving away food that she did not need, she accumulated it. My grandmother always met her outside on the terrace, because she thought that if the woman saw what my grandmother had inside, she would ask for it even if she did not need it. The problem was not with asking—everyone asked for things they needed—the problem was asking for things that were not needed just for the sake of accumulating it. That was very condemnable. My grandmother used to say that even this woman's children did not want to visit her anymore because they were ashamed of her behavior.

Indeed, most people in the village had a vegetable garden and ate according to what they had in it, but they also gave away the surplus. People sometimes had to harvest herbs before they became too hard to eat, fruits before they

were too ripe, or vegetables before they became damaged. The temporality of nature is not always aligned with the one of family needs, and traditionally, in this village, people gave away what they would not use but had to harvest. This meant that people accepted giving, receiving, or eating imperfect fruits and vegetables collectively to avoid waste. It also meant that they did not accumulate what they believed they would not use, trusting that if they needed something, they could ask their neighbors, who would give them what they needed. My grandmother had a lot of mint and tomatoes, and she used to send us to ask the neighbors if they needed mint because she had to cut it before it bolted or became too hard. Sometimes she sent us to a neighbor's house to ask if they had a lemon or parsley, as she had started making a salad and noticed that she needed more ingredients. That happened often. Giving and taking was therefore very frequent, and waste morally condemnable, especially when it came to food.

### 6.3.1 | Caring about the collective wellbeing

This however did not mean that people did not anticipate future needs. Indeed, all families engaged in preparing food for the winter like dry fruits, jam, tomato sauce, or other goods that could be stocked. I remember my grandmother had a room for stocking jam and used to give all her children's families a jar as soon as theirs finished. When she suspected someone was taking more than they needed, she would investigate the matter by asking her grandchildren whether they still had apple jam at their house. Consuming too much of a thing was totally acceptable—she used to say “Sahtein,” the equivalent of “good appetite” and generally, she was proud that her cooking was appreciated. But she did ensure that no one was accumulating it because this was clearly condemnable.

This feeling of shame at large amounts of accumulation was also true for money. My grandmother explained to my father at one point that he was now perceived as managing his life well and that he should give money to an association that helps the poor at every appropriate occasion. My father did not trust charity organizations, and she knew that, but she argued that it was still important to give to them because they were helping the poor of the village. People are for one another, he should help whenever he can, she repeatedly told him. To be sure, my parents were not rich, but they were able to save some money at the end of each month. My grandmother used to challenge my father, asking whether he was going to take the money to his grave when he died. When he answered that he was saving the money for his children, she replied that his children are educated and well surrounded, and that he should not worry about them because many people would help them if they were in need. As such, she showed faith in people, and she was convinced that satisfying others' needs at one moment was more important than accumulating for a given family, as if the true investment for the future was in interpersonal relations and knowledge, not in material goods.

### 6.3.2 | Reverting to personal interests in 2021

Even though most Lebanese lost all their savings as they got stuck in banks, accumulation in the neoliberal sense seemed to prevail in summer 2021. As such, we saw many videos of people rushing to buy bread, rice, or wheat to stock them, for fear of prices rising. While some of these products could be stored, others caused the emergence of rats in cities. Some people even tried to accumulate fruit and vegetables, thinking that they might need them in the coming days or weeks, but ended up throwing them out. Before the electricity crisis hit, some had bought a lot of meat and stocked it in freezers. They had to throw it away too as electricity was interrupted most of the time. Despite all these experiences that should have served as lessons to stop accumulating beyond immediate needs, and having faith in the help of others, people seemed to stop believing that “people are for one another.”

## 7 | STIGMATIZING MOTHERHOOD AND THE COMMONS

Overall, I have argued that in Lebanon there is a mix of traditional and neoliberal values, with the latter increasingly becoming dominant and preventing people from reverting to traditional commoning arrangements. In what follows, I will examine the contributions of these cases to the literature on commoning, neoliberalism, and motherhood.

## 7.1 | An operational motherhood without any affective ties

In this paper, I have tried to show how neoliberalism prescribes a form of motherhood that changes depending on the age of the child without consideration of affective ties. The critical feminist literature on motherhood and neoliberalism focuses on the alienating prescription of the neoliberal system (Rottenberg, 2014) by addressing mothering in early childhood but rarely examining its implications for mothers of adults, as if mothering stops when a child reaches 18 years old. Critical scholars rightfully underline the constraints behind breastfeeding on demand (Gatrell, 2019; Ryan et al., 2010), being the perfect mother through seeking the right expertise (McCabe, 2016), and aiming for the right choices (Güney-Frahm, 2020; Littler, 2020; Yopo Díaz, 2021), along with personalized engagement that materializes in the market. My work extends these studies by underlining that after this total “privatization” of children, *neoliberalism also pushes mothers toward doing completely the opposite: making sure that their children are totally autonomous, and that they can make their own choices to brand themselves in the market.* By doing this, it puts them in situations where they feel not only guilty about intervening, but desperately powerless when watching their children make mistakes. I insist that the affective ties that link mothers to their children do not stop at adulthood. Of course, it takes a different form, but from a human perspective it is difficult to imagine how mothers and children can become totally autonomous from one another in the way the market would ideally want them to be, especially after experiencing a very close relationship during early childhood. This prescription totally silences the affective relationships that individuals develop when living together. It is this element that allows reconfiguring social relationships away from the family and alongside market principles.

## 7.2 | Commoning, a stigmatized arrangement

While the literature has shown that commoning relies on values that are not aligned with neoliberal ideology (Federici, 2018), the exclusionary aspect of the ideology has been less emphasized. This paper expanded this argument by pointing to the micromechanisms through which the latter stigmatizes the former, and makes individuals themselves reject such arrangements. While commoning in the Lebanese tradition relied on values such as going unnoticed and behaving like everyone else (or downplaying identities), and caring for overall wellbeing, neoliberalism promotes the opposite: branding oneself and accumulating to claim individual success.

Also, regulation mechanisms for both models are not the same. While the first set of values were mainly promoted by mothers and enforced on the basis of affect, neoliberalism undermined this mechanism by denigrating mothers' relationships to their adult children in the name of autonomy, all alongside other commoning behaviors, associating such an arrangement with negative feelings. This stigmatization passes through negative language associated with practices such as receiving a mother's advice, which becomes an intrusion in another's private life, and also by silencing other concerns related to affect such as the feeling of guilt over reverting to institutions and the market to raise children when this had traditionally been a family or community task (Güney-Frahm, 2020).

Moreover, commoning, at least in the Lebanese way, appears open to other cultures by nature while neoliberalism stigmatizes alternative values. As long as individuals value “behaving like others,” they would not mind adopting alternative cultures when these become dominant. As such, I have shown how accounting in the neoliberal sense did not automatically appear awkward to my family. If my grandmother did not intervene to make them revert from such practices at this specific moment, when she felt that failing to common would jeopardize some of her children's well-being, they could have reverted to such practices. In fact, even my grandmother ended up accepting that her children adopted some neoliberal practices when others in the village normalized such behavior progressively, and loosened her “work of preservation of values” (Farias, 2017) necessary for the conservation of alternative organizations. Also, the enforcement of traditional values was based on affective ties to her children. In contrast, neoliberalism is punitive in the sense that it excludes individuals from access to basic needs and institutions such as those providing literacy, water, and electricity. These institutions themselves adopt neoliberal logic and push everyone in this direction to secure access to them.

This paper also provides yet another explanation for why people revert from commons when the economy improves. Indeed, Judith Butler suggests that people try to go “back to normal” (i.e., to previous arrangements) after a crisis because they refuse to take the time to think about alternative arrangements (Butler, 2012), even when they are aware of their shared vulnerabilities. I suggest that this is also the case because the values associated with commoning are being open to accepting cultural change, while neoliberalism is not. Moreover, *the hegemony of neoliberalism is such that we now feel ashamed, regressing, failing, and guilty if we do things differently*. The self-regulatory aspect (Byrne, 2017) of neoliberalism is so powerful that it is difficult for many to imagine themselves as better off when living under a different arrangement. This, in turn, facilitates the conservation and actualization of neoliberal values (Daskalaki, 2018; Federici, 2018).

Also, neoliberalism by nature undermines collective action. In addition to “pacifying” the political sphere by putting on the market the political (Kanai & Gill, 2020; Thompson & Kumar, 2021), it undermines the possible organization of alternative voices in a confrontational manner. In fact, it is not just neoliberalism that overexploited nature, as many authors have shown (Federici, 2004; Saleh, 1997), or generates inequalities that can be contested as we have witnessed during the COVID crisis when “necessity jobs” turned out to be the underpaid ones, but too, it pushes for sacrificing what people always invested in, the “human gold,” as my grandmother says, at the expense of material goods that are perishable, thereby making its contestation more difficult because it is individualized.

This is important to consider in the feminist literature because as long as it is the case, our debates about the importance of care (Branicki, 2020) or a different way of dealing with a crisis will remain merely utopian. This paper advocates for pluralism, destigmatizing *the other*, their values, and arrangements, as goals to achieve to enable alternatives.

### 7.3 | Toward a more pluralistic world

This paper adopted an approach based on memorywork (Baikie, 2020; Haug, 2008; Mitchell & Pithouse-Morgan, 2014) to de-naturalize the dominant discourse about a set of practices that I suggest we reconsider as potentially beneficial in certain situations (I hope that I also showed their disadvantages, as they have, like any other arrangement, advantages and disadvantages). Memory has mainly been used in feminist and postcolonial studies to un-silence the experience of the dominated. Here, I have used it to have different interpretations of the same organizational arrangement at different moments in time. As we try to think about new arrangements to rebuild a better future, I believe that considering different interpretations and feelings about arrangements can be interesting in future research. This will show the complexity of arrangements when we try to examine who they benefit in terms of agency, satisfaction, and well-being. Indeed, we can consider that traditions are just arrangements like any other (and give them another name if this one has a negative connotation) and try to understand their implications for different categories of society.

This will of course raise challenges to the feminist literature. As Haug (n.d.) argues in her work on memory, we can try to reconstruct a different world by disentangling what comes from the dominant culture from what matters to individuals in a subordinate position. The problem is to know what matters: as everything can be considered socially constructed, my aim is also to initiate a discussion of what matters from a feminist point of view. Is it women's autonomy in the neoliberal sense, that is, the ability to choose or is it about agency that should be understood in an empirical way depending on contexts (Sehlikoglu, 2018)? Neoliberalism is prescriptive of what women should aim for, while an empirical approach to agency accepts that different views of feminism around the world can co-exist (Sehlikoglu, 2018), and with them different forms of organizing. It is the second solution that better allows for freedom, in my opinion, if we want to avoid stigmatizing each other's cultures and allow individuals to freely navigate among communities.

To conclude, I wanted to write this paper because I wanted to share with readers—who might also feel that commoning is the worst thing that could happen to them—my experiences as a child who enjoyed many aspects of such forms of organizing (I hope that I also made it clear that it is not always perfect). I also wanted to share these

experiences to make readers aware that we might be judging some arrangements today with a neoliberal lens that we have been integrating and invite them to reconsider different cultures and their organizational arrangements in terms of options with advantages and disadvantages that might be suitable for different situations when rebuilding a sustainable and inclusive future for everyone.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am truly grateful for the editor's comments, Emmanuela Mandalaki, as well as the reviewers. They really helped me improve my paper. I am indebted to my friends and family in Lebanon who pointed to me the everyday practices people were developing and who recommended individuals to interview. I am also grateful to my institution, Emlyon Business School, for funding this project.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

I have no conflict of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that supports the findings is not publicly available in its raw form because it contains personal data relating to individuals; intimate lives that the interviewee does not wish to make public.

## ORCID

Dima Younes  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3373-0566>

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> While originally pegged at a rate of 1 USD for 1507 Lebanese Pounds, in summer 2021, the rate was fluctuating around 1 USD for 22,000 LBP, 38,000 LBP in autumn 2022, and reached 100,000 LBP in fall 2023.
- <sup>2</sup> According to a study conducted by the United Nations, the poverty rate doubled in the latest 2 years, reaching 82% of the population in 2021. This rate has probably worsened since then as the report pointed to the lack of prospects to reverse the trend. [https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/news/docs/21-00634-\\_multidimensional\\_poverty\\_in\\_lebanon\\_policy\\_brief\\_-\\_en.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/news/docs/21-00634-_multidimensional_poverty_in_lebanon_policy_brief_-_en.pdf). Last accessed in July 2023.
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/03/they-killed-us-inside/investigation-august-4-beirut-blast>. Last accessed in July 2023.
- <sup>4</sup> According to the World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=LB>. Last accessed in July 2023.
- <sup>5</sup> See for instance CNN's 2020 ranking of best nightlife cities in the world that ranks Beirut third.
- <sup>6</sup> See for instance an article in the New York Times in 2009 on the topic <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/02/travel/02gaybeirut.html> or in the Guardian later in 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/17/beautiful-dream-the-beirut-lgbt-centre-offering-an-oasis-of-tolerance>.
- <sup>7</sup> According the World Happiness Report, Lebanon ranks as the second most unhappy country in the world in 2022, after Afghanistan <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2022/>.

## REFERENCES

- Baikie, Gail. 2020. "Indigenist and Decolonizing Memory Work Research Method." *Journal of Indigenous Social Development* 9(1): 41–59.
- Becker, Howard S. 1997. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New edition. New York: Free Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986a. *Distinction*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986b. "L'illusion Biographique." *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 62(1): 69–72. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arss.1986.2317>.
- Branicki, Layla J. 2020. "COVID-19, Ethics of Care and Feminist Crisis Management." *Gender, Work and Organization* 27(5): 872–883. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12491>.
- Butler, Judith. 2012. "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation." *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26(2): 134–151. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.26.2.0134>.

- Byrne, Christopher. 2017. "Neoliberalism as an Object of Political Analysis: An Ideology, a Mode of Regulation or a Governmentality?" *Policy & Politics* 45(3): 343–360. <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557316x14800750043260>.
- Cairns, Kate, and Josée Johnston. 2015. "Choosing Health: Embodied Neoliberalism, Postfeminism, and the "Do-diet." *Theory and Society* 44(2): 153–175. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-015-9242-y>.
- Courpasson, David, Dima Younes, and Michael Reed. 2021. "Durkheim in the Neoliberal Organization: Taking Resistance and Solidarity Seriously?" *Organization Theory* 2(1): 2631787720982619. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2631787720982619>.
- Daskalaki, Maria. 2018. "Alternative Organizing in Times of Crisis: Resistance Assemblages and Socio-Spatial Solidarity." *European Urban and Regional Studies* 25(2): 155–170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776416683001>.
- Daskalaki, Maria, Marianna Fotaki, and Maria Simosi. 2021. "The Gendered Impact of the Financial Crisis: Struggles over Social Reproduction in Greece." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 53(4): 741–762. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518x20922857>.
- Delamont, Sara. 2009. "The Only Honest Thing: Autoethnography, Reflexivity and Small Crises in Fieldwork." *Ethnography and Education* 4(1): 51–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457820802703507>.
- Durkheim, Émile. 2014 [1893/1902]. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Durkheim, Émile. 2005a. Communauté et société selon Tönnies [Text]. <http://irevues.inist.fr/cahierspsychologiepolitique>. <http://lodel.irevues.inist.fr/cahierspsychologiepolitique/index.php?id=1188>.
- Durkheim, Émile. 2005b. [1897/1952]. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Esposito, Luigi, and Fernando M. Perez. 2014. "Neoliberalism and the Commodification of Mental Health." *Humanity & Society* 38(4): 414–442. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597614544958>.
- Farias, Carine. 2017. "Money is the Root of All Evil – Or is it? Recreating Culture through Everyday Neutralizing Practices." *Organization Studies* 38(6): 775–793. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840616685356>.
- Federici, Silvia. 2004. *Caliban and the Witch*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia.
- Federici, Silvia. 2010. "Feminism and the Politics of the Commons in an Era of Primitive Accumulation." In *Uses of a Whirlwind: Movement, Movements, and Contemporary Radical Currents in the US*, edited by Kevin Van Meter, Craig Hughes and Stevie Peace, 283–294. Edinburgh and Oakland, CA: AK Press.
- Federici, Silvia. 2018. *Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*. Oakland, California: PM Press.
- Ferguson, James. 2010. "The Uses of Neoliberalism." *Antipode* 41(s1): 166–184. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00721.x>.
- Fotaki, Marianna. 2022. "Solidarity in Crisis? Community Responses to Refugees and Forced Migrants in the Greek Islands." *Organization* 29(2): 295–323. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505084211051048>.
- Fournier, Valérie. 2013. "Commoning: On the Social Organisation of the Commons." *M@nagement* 16(4): 433–453. <https://doi.org/10.3917/mana.164.0433>.
- Garrett, Sarah. 2013. "The Personalized Market and the Marketized Self: And Other Essays." In *So How's the Family? And Other Essays*, 93–110.
- Gatrell, Caroline. 2019. "Boundary Creatures? Employed, Breastfeeding Mothers and 'Abjection as Practice.'" *Organization Studies* 40(3): 421–442. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840617736932>.
- Giorgio, Grace A. 2013. *Reflections on Writing through Memory in Autoethnography*. Routledge Handbooks Online. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315427812.ch20>.
- Goodall, H. L. (Bud), Jr. 2013. "Introduction: Cool Kids on the Quad." In *Handbook of Autoethnography*. Routledge.
- Güney-Frahm, Irem. 2020. "Neoliberal Motherhood during the Pandemic: Some Reflections." *Gender, Work and Organization* 27(5): 847–856. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12485>.
- Guthman, Julie, and Melanie Dupuis. 2005. "Embodying Neoliberalism: Economy, Culture, and the Politics of Fat?" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24(3): 427–448. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d3904>.
- Harvey, David. 2000. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Harvey, David. 2007. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Haug, Frigga. n.d. Memory-Work as a Method of Social Science Research. <http://www.friggahaug.inkrit.de/documents/memorywork-researchguidei7.pdf>.
- Haug, Frigga. 2008. "Memory Work." *Australian Feminist Studies* 23(58): 537–541. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164640802433498>.
- Holy, Ladislav. 1989. *Kinship, Honour, and Solidarity: Cousin Marriage in the Middle East*. Manchester University Press.
- Jessop, Bob. 2012. "Neoliberalism." In *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog422>.
- Kanai, Akane, and Rosalind Gill. 2020. "Woke? Affect, Neoliberalism, Marginalised Identities and Consumer Culture." *New Formations* 102(102): 10–27. <https://doi.org/10.3898/newf:102.01.2020>.
- Kilty, Jennifer M., and Erin Dej. 2012. "Anchoring Amongst the Waves: Discursive Constructions of Motherhood and Addiction." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 8(3): 6–23. <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.8.3.01>.
- Linebaugh, Peter. 2009. *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All*.

- Littler, Jo. 2020. "Mothers Behaving Badly: Chaotic Hedonism and the Crisis of Neoliberal Social Reproduction." *Cultural Studies* 34(4): 499–520. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2019.1633371>.
- Lupton, Deborah. 2012. "'Precious Cargo': Foetal Subjects, Risk and Reproductive Citizenship." *Critical Public Health* 22(3): 329–340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2012.657612>.
- Mackendrick, Norah. 2014. "More Work for Mother: Chemical Body Burdens as a Maternal Responsibility." *Gender & Society* 28(5): 705–728. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243214529842>.
- Mandalaki, Emmanouela. 2021. "Searching for 'Home,' Writing to Find it: A Reflective Account on Experiences of Othering in Life and Academia in Times of Generalized Crises." *Gender, Work and Organization* 28(2): 835–848. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12570>.
- Mandalaki, Emmanouela, and Marianna Fotaki. 2020. "The Bodies of the Commons: Towards a Relational Embodied Ethics of the Commons." *Journal of Business Ethics* 166(4): 745–760. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04581-7>.
- Mandalaki, Emmanouela, and Mar Pérezts. 2022. "It Takes Two to Tango: Theorizing Inter-Corporeality through Nakedness and Eros in Researching and Writing Organizations." *Organization* 29(4): 596–618. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508420956321>.
- Marti, Ignasi, David Courpasson, Saulo Dubard Barbosa. 2013. "'Living in the Fishbowl'. Generating an Entrepreneurial Culture in a Local Community in Argentina." *Journal of Business Venturing* 28(1): 10–29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2011.09.001>.
- McCabe, Katharine. 2016. "Mothercraft: Birth Work and the Making of Neoliberal Mothers." *Social Science & Medicine* 162: 177–184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.06.021>.
- McGuigan, Jim. 2014. "The Neoliberal Self." *Culture Unbound* 6(1): 223–240. <https://doi.org/10.3384/cu.2000.1525.146223>.
- McRobbie, Angela. 2015. "Notes on the Perfect." *Australian Feminist Studies* 30(83): 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2015.1011485>.
- Mitchell, Claudia, and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan. 2014. "Expanding the Memory Catalogue: Southern African Women's Contributions to Memory-Work Writing as a Feminist Research Methodology." *Agenda* 28(1): 92–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2014.883704>.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 2000. "Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14(3): 137–158. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.14.3.137>.
- Parkin, Robert. 2021. "Arranged Marriages: Whose Choice and Why? Reflections on the Principles Underlying Spouse Selection Worldwide." *History and Anthropology* 32(2): 271–287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2021.1905255>.
- Randles, Jennifer. 2021. "'Willing to Do Anything for My Kids': Inventive Mothering, Diapers, and the Inequalities of Carework." *American Sociological Review* 86(1): 35–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122420977480>.
- Rottenberg, Catherine. 2014. "The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism." *Cultural Studies* 28(3): 418–437. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2013.857361>.
- Ryan, Kath, Paul Bissell, and Jo Alexander. 2010. "Moral Work in Women's Narratives of Breastfeeding." *Social Science & Medicine* 70(6): 951–958. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2009.11.023>.
- Salleh, Ariel. 1997. *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern*. London; New York: Zed Books Ltd.
- Sehlikoglu, Sertaç. 2018. "Revisited: Muslim Women's Agency and Feminist Anthropology of the Middle East." *Contemporary Islam* 12(1): 73–92. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-017-0404-8>.
- Thompson, Craig J., and Ankita Kumar. 2021. "Beyond Consumer Responsibilization: Slow Food's Actually Existing Neoliberalism." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 21(2): 317–336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540518818632>.
- Vallas, Steven P., and Emily R. Cummins. 2015. "Personal Branding and Identity Norms in the Popular Business Press: Enterprise Culture in an Age of Precarity." *Organization Studies* 36(3): 293–319. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840614563741>.
- Velicu, Irina, and Gustavo García-López. 2018. "Thinking the Commons through Ostrom and Butler: Boundedness and Vulnerability." *Theory, Culture & Society* 35(6): 55–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276418757315>.
- Waggoner, Miranda R. 2015. "Cultivating the Maternal Future: Public Health and the Prepregnant Self." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 40(4): 939–962. <https://doi.org/10.1086/680404>.
- Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. University of California Press.
- Yopo Díaz, Martina. 2021. "It's Hard to Become Mothers": The Moral Economy of Postponing Motherhood in Neoliberal Chile." *British Journal of Sociology* 72(5): 1214–1228. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12901>.
- Younes, Dima, Marie-Rachel Jacob, and Ignasi Marti. 2019. "L'innovation sociale sur les territoires - Comment passer de l'intervention exogène à la communauté innovante?" *Revue Française de Gestion* 45(280): 75–90. <https://doi.org/10.3166/rfg.2019.00325>.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Dima Younes:** I am an associate professor in organization theory and a critical management scholar. I work on the transformations of capitalism and work, power and resistance, gender, creativity, and ethics. My recent work focuses on day-to-day life in post-economic collapse in Lebanon. I have previously published in journals such as *Organization Studies*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, and *Organization Theory*.

**How to cite this article:** Younes, Dima. 2023. "Stigmatizing Commoning: How Neoliberal Hegemony Eroded Collective Ability to Deal with Scarcity in Lebanon." *Gender, Work & Organization*: 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13070>.