Defying the Odds? Investigating the Role of Social Entrepreneurship in Community Resilience in the Aftermath of the Beirut Explosion

Dana Ramadan

London School of Economics and Political Science, d.ramadan@lse.ac.uk

Abstract

This study examines the role of social entrepreneurship (SE) in strengthening community resilience and the subsequent position of impact investors in the aftermath of the Beirut explosion. This research is motivated by two research questions: How did social entrepreneurs in Lebanon (members of Lebanon's local private sector) respond to the Beirut explosion of 2020? How can impact investing play a role in strengthening the social entrepreneurship ecosystem and, by extension, community resilience? Prior studies on community resilience offer roadmaps for how to achieve resilience through community action. The research contributes to knowledge through a novel framing, clarifying that SE in Lebanon, while contributing to community resilience, strives for the engagement of the state rather than its disengagement. My argument is developed based on existing literature supplanted with primary data collected via interviews. I opted for a thematic analysis as my data analysis technique. I argue that SE played a key role in strengthening community resilience in the aftermath of the explosion because of the shared characteristics of SE and community resilience. The findings also suggest that impact investing (II) is needed to boost the SE scene. I further argue that the state is a central stakeholder in allowing SE to increase community resilience and attract impact investments. Implications for policymakers and practitioners vis-à-vis SE and II, and avenues for future research, are discussed. The findings also prompt a rethinking of community resilience in Lebanon - the concept is more complex than previously thought.

Keywords: Beirut explosion; Social Entrepreneurship; Community Resilience; Impact Investing

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Relevance and aims

The Beirut Port explosion of August 4th, 2020, is the largest non-nuclear explosion in modern history (El Sayed 2021; Landry et al. 2020; Sukhn et al. 2021). It killed around 200 people, injured 6,500, made 300,000 homeless (Abouzeid et al. 2020; El Sayed 2021), and resulted in massive physical destruction and financial loss for Lebanon (Farha & Abi Jaoude 2020). With authorities' knowledge, 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate were stored in a warehouse for years (El Hajj 2021; El Sayed 2021). With the investigation ongoing, the government's responsibility is not removed (El Ali 2020, in El Hajj 2021; Rehman et al. 2021; Sukhn et al. 2021). Losses incurred by the explosion are estimated at USD eight billion (Abouzeid et al. 2020; Bastien 2020), while Lebanon continues to grapple with its worst financial crisis and unprecedented revolts calling for the end of corruption (Bastien 2021; Farha & Abi Jaoude 2020; Jabbour et al. 2021). The Lebanese Pound lost 90% of its value, banks collapsed and imposed capital controls, erasing people's life savings (El Hajj 2021; OLJ 2021). Essentials, including foodstuff and medicine prices, skyrocketed. More than half the population lives below the poverty line (Hankir & Shehayeb 2021). This research explores why SE played a role in the attempt to "Build Back Better" (Iskandar et al. 2021), a concept defined during the 2015 United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, referring to post-disaster scenarios aiming at building resilience.

Relief responses relied on civil initiatives rather than governmental ones (Abouzeid et al. 2020; Nuwayhid 2021). Headlines following the news hailed Lebanese bravery but emphasised the limits to their resilience. The population is exasperated with resilience used as a policy response. Resilience must be on their terms. This is where social enterprises come in, and how SE emerges on the ground and in my research. The Lebanese population has faced succeeding misfortunes (El Hayek & Birzri 2020; Iskandar et al. 2020; El Hajj 2021). The explosion became a turning point around resilience used as a safety valve to deal with abrupt changes.

The study contributes to the emerging literature on Lebanese SE by examining how community resilience is impacted by grassroots entrepreneurial initiatives. Through my conceptualisation of community resilience to explore SE post-Beirut blast, I highlight an issue

evidencing the state's significant omission. Based on existing framings of community resilience and SE initiatives post-disasters, I ask: *How did social entrepreneurs in Lebanon respond to the Beirut explosion of 2020? How can impact investing play a role in strengthening the SE ecosystem and, by extension, community resilience?*

I argue that SE played a role in fostering community resilience post-Beirut explosion because of these concepts' shared characteristics: adaptability, solidarity, and sustainability. Community resilience offers individuals the capacity to respond to challenges and the basis to create change (Robertson et al. 2021). Local communities can use their resources to make a change (Henderson 1993), especially in Lebanon, where frustration with governmental failures has not forced it to implement reforms, compelling communities to deal with problems. Social entrepreneurs can become social policy actors. Lebanon must recognise social enterprises and create policy and legal frameworks, as these businesses driven by purpose cannot scale their impact without state intervention. They are part of the solution as much as the government. II being crucial to sustaining SE's role, policymakers must look at initiatives aiming at socioeconomic and environmental progression, especially considering the local challenges and increasing prominence of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investing.

1.2 Outline

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Chapter 2 outlines the methodology. Chapter 3 provides a literature overview. Interview findings are presented in Chapter 4 and analysed to answer the research questions. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion and implications for policymakers and practitioners.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design

To investigate how SE contributes to community resilience post-Beirut explosion, I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews in July 2021. A qualitative approach is best suited for my research purposes, allowing me to explore and interpret local understandings (Denscombe 2017) of SE and community resilience following the blast.

2.2 Sampling techniques and sample size

Interviewees were selected based on preliminary stakeholder mapping. Individuals engaged in different ventures were selected, mainly those involved in rebuilding initiatives after the Beirut explosion. The selection criteria were also based on their role in advancing the SE scene and their social mission. I scheduled eight interviews with Lebanese social entrepreneurs and experts in SE and II. No database for Lebanese social enterprises exists; however, my familiarity with the ecosystem helped me build my contact list.

2.3 Data collection procedure

Interviews were conducted online via Zoom. The interviews uncovered knowledge relating to SE growth in the aftermath of the Beirut explosion and confirmed or disputed existing data revealed during my secondary data collection on resilience, state pushback, and the potential for II in Lebanon. The interviews followed a semi-structured mode to facilitate discussions. A pre-written interview guide mitigated interviewer bias risk (Morrison et al. 2015) by establishing key questions but granting flexibility, allowing interviewees to address other issues they deem relevant (Patton 2002, in Morrison et al. 2015). Following data collection, I transcribed then inspected each interview.

2.4 Data analysis

I chose the thematic data analysis method for its flexibility and ability to provide a rigorous interpretation of the dataset (Braun & Clarke 2006) and its usefulness in revealing themes in textual data (Attride-Stirling 2001). Through the analysis of data collected from interviews, common themes were retained for further analysis and to aid my argument. The analysis' methodological soundness is guaranteed by the fact that it followed steps outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) of applying the method to data. I created codes to describe the data and clustered codes to identify patterns and develop themes. I compared the responses with the existing literature to aid the interpretation of themes and draw meaningful conclusions.

2.5 Ethics

This study adheres to ethical research requirements as interviewees signed a consent form ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, and deception avoidance, in line with the ethics codes for social research (Denscombe 2017).

2.6 Challenges and limitations

Contacting individuals online was challenging due to increasing power cuts (BBC News 2021) and unreliable internet connectivity in Lebanon, which was worsening during the time of research (Mroue 2021). In terms of limitations, views stemming from interviews are indicative of the researched subject and cannot be seen as generalisable because the sample was not representative. Beneficiaries may give a different account of how they view social enterprises' role in strengthening resilience and whether they believe civic initiatives replace the state.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Social entrepreneurship and impact investing

Social entrepreneurship

A social enterprise is understood as an innovative business arrangement using business profit-making models as its primary source for financing social missions (Nicolăescu 2011; Moskovskaya 2016; Wahidi & Lebègue, 2017; Apstolopoulos et al. 2019), thus balancing social and financial gains (Burchi et al. 2019; Kajiita & Kang'ethe 2021). Studies show SE creates jobs, reduces inequalities and poverty, and improves healthcare (Dhahri et al. 2017). The recurring argument is that social enterprises serve communities in partnership with governments given their embeddedness in lived realities (Hausser et al. 2019), their flexible operations, and ability to implement innovative programmes, and their attention to needs (Letona & Upshur 2001; Moskovskaya 2016; Vlasov et al. 2018). Jia and Desa (2020) are concerned with coalitions and solidarity for a thriving SE ecosystem.

Studies found that social enterprises' capacity to create impact depends on institutional contexts (Nicolăescu 2011; Youssef et al. 2018, in Dhahri et al. 2017; Alwakid et al. 2021). SE's understanding differs depending on local organisational structures, socioeconomic environments, and legal specificities (Kerlin 2009, in Nicolăescu 2011; Alwakid et al. 2021), which, combined, form the entrepreneurship ecosystem (Stam and Spigel 2016, in Tauber 2021). Social enterprises are part of a "new welfare mix" (Nicolăescu 2011: 19) requiring civil society and state support. SE is less about the "heroic efforts of a single actor" than the web of actors working collaboratively to achieve social impact (Jia & Desa 2020: 1232).

While scholars referenced above think SE is a favourable development, others disagree. Ganz et al. (2018) stipulate SE does not address root causes of issues it aims to tackle but worsens things by distracting from government inefficiency. They do not provide alternatives beyond collective political action and ignore path dependence making systemic change harder to achieve. They do not appreciate social enterprises aiming not to create radical change from the outset but come near its realisation by providing educational, technological, and environmental services, thus contributing to solving social challenges. Letona and Upshur (2001) also believe reliance on SE risks diluting governments' accountability. Still, they hold governments responsible for establishing policies and instituting mechanisms bringing necessary funding conforming with community needs (Letona & Upshur 2001). For Doumit (2017), social entrepreneurs contribute to a redefinition of politics as an arena for grassroots action and citizen-led change, contrasting what Ganz et al. (2018) say about SE encouraging citizen passivity. SE requires public policies (Jackson & Harrison 2011; Nicolăescu 2011), but Ganz et al. (2018) think it circumvents the public sphere.

Impact investing

II is an investment strategy used by socially-focused investors aiming at improving society while maintaining returns. A seminal study in II is Sherwood and Pollard's (2019) book introducing II as an ESG investing strategy alongside others, including sustainable and socially responsible investing. They trace its origin to faith-based ethical investing, including Jewish-, Christian- and Muslim-based investments. The concept was commanded by financial experts, NGOs, and lawyers and advanced by the UN, granting firms the possibility to align investments practices with ESG standards (Jia & Desa 2020).

The most agreed-upon definition of impact investments is by the Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN): "investments in companies, organizations and funds […] intended to generate social and environmental impacts and […] financial return" (in León et al. 2020; Sherwood & Pollard 2019). Similarly, León et al. (2020) assert that impact investments aspire to affect society positively and that the market for II is growing. II is an essential social sciences research area for conceptualising social welfare public funding (Chiapello & Knoll 2020). An adequate policy framework encouraging responsible investing is key for ESG investing growth (Sherwood & Pollard 2019). Chiapello and Knoll (2020) also highlight the government's role in supporting II.

Impact investing in social entrepreneurship

II can boost SE if supported by a sustainable social venture ecosystem. Social enterprises "pursue people-centred investment" to improve social realities (Kajiita & Kang'ethe 2021: 1). Jia and Desa (2020) highlighted the relevance of non-traditional financing mechanisms for SE –including II– whilst Ahmed (2021) focuses on banking and financial organisations' need to adapt to new business forms without considering contexts where traditional finance forms are unfeasible. Guided by ethical values, impact investors are interested in ethical investments (Govinder, in Horoszowski 2018) and ethical markets created by social enterprises (Nicolăescu 2011). Investing in social enterprises offers investors a double return on investment - social and economic (Chiapello & Knoll 2020). In their empirical study of Korean social ventures, Kim et al.'s (2021) findings combine the role of II funds, governments, and networks with other ecosystem actors to share learning and resources as key for building sustainable social venture ecosystems.

A better understanding of social investment in ethical businesses producing social impact must be harnessed for social enterprises to reap their efforts' benefits. Understanding which social enterprises are "investable and poised for success is critical for being an effective investor" (León et al. 2020: 2466), which should incentivise policymakers to create the regulatory environment to attract investors. Social enterprises' ability to address social problems in "areas underserved by governments" attracts investments (GIIN, in The Middle East Exchange 2021). The development need present in Lebanon is considered a priority for impact investors.

3.2 Social entrepreneurship and impact investing in Lebanon

Social entrepreneurship

While research on SE in Lebanon is limited (Wahidi & Lebègue 2017), it is thought SE can alleviate social, environmental and political issues curbing development (Jamali & Kreidie 2014, in El Kallab & Salloum 2017). Although a niche sector (Harnik 2021), social enterprises are needed in Lebanon (Diab 2019). 1960s Lebanon had a "viable entrepreneurial force to whose resourcefulness, and even shrewdness, must be accredited Lebanon's development" (Sayigh 1962). An increasing number of social entrepreneurs aspire to move from traditional to new business forms (ibid). Nonetheless, Lebanese SE faces challenges. Having no policy or legal framework peculiar to their business model (Beyond Group, 2016), social enterprises run under non-profits or regular businesses (Wahidi & Lebègue 2017; Mouracade 2021). This

limits their incentives, hence restricting business growth and social impact. SE "manifests differently" around the globe (Jia & Desa 2020: 1225). A clear definition of social enterprises in Lebanon is key to enabling policy change, especially on the legal front, to attract necessary financing and establish entrepreneurship support entities (Doumit 2017). Some organisations provide support to entrepreneurs; however, it remains difficult to identify those who support social enterprises specifically, mainly because of standardised support to all kinds of enterprises or a lack of differentiation (Beyond Group, in Maroush et al. 2020).

Impact investing

Given its weak investment strategy and the lack of legal and policy structure for social enterprises, Lebanon, at first glance, does not seem ready for II. Countries are not equal in their levels of preparedness for impact investments (León et al. 2020), and the level of ESG integration in different markets varies (Sherwood & Pollard 2019). Studies suggest Lebanon does not offer a hospitable environment for II yet. For Farha and Abi Jaoude (2020), II is not a viable solution given Lebanon's inhospitable investment landscape and unpredictable socio-economic and governance conditions. Indeed, social risks resulting from weak institutions and governance risks resulting from corruption act as a barrier for investors (Sherwood & Pollard 2019). Similarly, Stel and Naudé (2015) assert that weak institutions lead to counterproductive entrepreneurship forms mired in bribery. Sherwood and Pollard (2019) also claim that emerging markets' volatile and non-transparent nature deters investors. Starting a business in Lebanon is challenging and costly for enterprises facing difficulties in accessing finance with the collapse of the banking sector (Nehme & Dagher 2021). Corruption, fiscal mismanagement and inefficient processes (Nehme & Dagher 2021) indicate an inhospitable environment.

Despite these challenges, attracting investment remains a priority for Lebanon (Mouracade 2021; Nehme & Dagher 2021). Much work remains to be done by governmental and non-governmental entities. Governments play a role in supporting the II market through access to credit, tax subsidies, and technical support to local investors (Apostolopoulos et al. 2018; León et al. 2020; Alwakid et al. 2021). As findings in Chapter 4 suggest, new policies and raising awareness about the concept may allow Lebanon to benefit from these investments. II can be harnessed as a tool for sustainable access to funds (León et al. 2020; Mouracade 2021), and the Lebanese government must contribute by initiating a SE investment program (El Kallab & Salloum 2017).

3.3 Post-disaster community resilience and social entrepreneurship

Defining community

"Community" refers to a group of people sharing a network, sense of belonging, or identity (Butcher 1993). Community practices, including community enterprises, lead to participative democracy and decision-making transcending traditional government epicentres (Butcher & Mullard 1993; Hausser et al. 2019). The blast-affected community members I refer to in this research are connected through the incident and its location and shared interests in sociopolitical change (Butcher 1993; Morrison et al. 2015), as communities are strong political forces (Smith 1993).

Resilience

Resilience is used as a conceptual framework to study communities' recovery after abrupt changes (Wilson 2012). It is defined as the capacity to recover from exogenous stressors stemming from political, social, or environmental changes and to grow from adversity by adapting, learning, or innovating (Monaghan 2012; Morrison et al. 2015; Vlasov et al. 2018; Robertson et al. 2021). Resilient communities' characteristics include social connections, collective memory, and adaptability (Morrison et al. 2015; Robertson et al. 2021). The generalisability of much-published research on resilience is problematic: strengthening resilience globally is unrealistic since community resilience takes different pathways in different countries (Wilson 2012). By employing transition theory, Wilson (2012: 138) argues that resilience is affected by societal changes– "transitional ruptures", associated with a decrease in resilience, versus "upward transitional ruptures". Human dynamics influence these downward or upward trajectories, with the latter involving communities' attempts to "break with established path dependencies of weak(er) resilience" (ibid: 142). While literature focuses on extreme weather events, Wilson (2012) and Albright and Crow (2021) recognise disasters can be man-made. This study focuses on "anthropogenic" disturbances (Wilson 2012: 10) since political negligence resulted in the explosion.

Community resilience literature investigates how resilience can be achieved as if it were an ideal stage for communities to reach. For Wilson (2012), the goal is to increase communities' resilience. Others argue that the concept has limits. It risks obscuring the root causes of vulnerabilities, shifting attention from oppression, and detaching unjust governments' responsibility, such as in Lebanon (El Hayek & Bizri 2020; Hankir & Shehayeb 2021;

Robertson et al. 2021). Resilience being a process rather than an outcome (Ntontis 2019, in Robertson et al. 2021), Gunderson and Holling (2002, in Wilson 2012: 4) underline "how much redundancy is required by human systems to sustain the capacity to adapt in flexible ways to unpredictable disturbances." Resilience is disputed as a marketing tool (Clarke 2003; Mourad, in Graham 2020) to distract victims from broken political and economic systems and reframe the narrative (Freudenbeurg et al. 1988, in Clarke 2003) to resilient people capable of overcoming challenges. This raises the danger of normalising catastrophes (El Hayek & Bizri 2020) and making the quest for justice more distant.

Investigating social capital's role in local philanthropy, Hwang and Joo (2020) found that internal dynamics, comprising community resilience, are critical for disaster recovery. Wilson (2012: 21) mentions "bonding and bridging" social capital forms, which constitute strengthening community links and broadening community stakeholder networks. He adds that "networked resilience" (ibid: 219), through stakeholder communication, is a social capital characteristic linked to entrepreneurial success (Lanteri 2015). Consistent with this, SE must seek state assistance to scale its operations (Nega & Schneider 2014). Smith (1993) agrees that communities are more effective when partnering with the public sector. It has inconclusively been shown that governments are crucial in helping communities recover and sustain resilience.

State pushback

Studies describe communities after extreme events by reporting that community resilience taps into citizens' responsibilities. Balch et al. (2015), Aldrich (2017), and Vlasov et al. (2018) refute the convention accentuating reliance on governments for post-disaster recovery, shifting their attention to community mobilisation and trust. Defining community resilience as communities' capability "to use their available resources to prepare for […] and recover from extreme events", Robertson et al. (2021: 1) promote state pushback. They argue that community resilience shifts states' protection responsibility towards their communities to communities themselves through civic capacity as a capacity-building strategy for recovery. Furthermore, for Nobel Laureate and social entrepreneur Muhammad Yunus (1998, in Nega & Schneider 2014: 214), governments must focus on security and juridical issues and allow "a social-consciousness-driven private sector [to] take over their other functions."

In contrast, other literature on community resilience suggests pertinent roles for governments. In their study of the 2013 Colorado floods, Albright and Crow (2021) find that disasters lead to

policy change and learning, and resources are vital to recovering from disasters, although not much is said about the extent to which governments seek resources to aid recovery. Wilson (2012) maintains that community resilience is dependent on community links and the policy environment in which they operate, with the latter affecting communities' "transitional pathways" (p. 196), as explained above. He finds that Hall's (1993) "second-order change" (p. 187), through the adoption of new policies, contributes to community resilience.

Resilience and social entrepreneurship

Post-disasters SE and community resilience are intertwined (Jackson & Harrison 2011). The little trust the Lebanese population has in the government means social enterprises were critical for post-Beirut blast resilience. In their book on entrepreneurship's contributions to recovery and relief efforts, Balch et al. (2015) argue that an enabling ecosystem for social entrepreneurs can build community resilience post-disaster. Apostolopoulos et al. (2018: 223) find that social enterprises execute "functions of resilience" through labour and social inclusion. Likewise, studying how community practices evolve into social policies, Butcher (1993) finds that one community policy characteristic is devolving decision-making to local communities, including "third sector enterprise" (Murgartoyd & Smith 1984: 7, in Butcher 1993), like social enterprises. Robertson et al. (2021) argue that trustworthy organisations play a role in communities and policies. In their research on the role of social enterprises in Greek social resilience, Apostolopoulos et al. (2018) do not find a positive correlation. Nonetheless, they use examples of social enterprises emerging because local authorities failed in promoting growth. Lebanese social enterprises are trusted organisations, as post-explosion international financial support was donated to them (Farha & Abi Jaoude 2020).

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this section, I reapply the concept of community resilience to the empirical setting of post-explosion Beirut. Evidence collected through interviews supports my position that while SE contributed to community resilience, actors including the state and impact investors play a role in sustaining that resilience. Community-led initiatives are found to be unsustainable in and of themselves. It is helpful to conceptualise community resilience as a socially constructed concept. Through thematic analysis, three themes emerged that answer the research questions.

4.1 Reinventing resilience

Social enterprises contributing to community resilience post-explosion

Being adaptable is a resilience characteristic seen in the literature (Gunderson & Holling 2002). Most interviewees recognised social enterprises' importance in the Beirut disaster recovery, and their adaptability in creating initiatives and adjusting their programming depending on needs that emerged after the blast. Many expanded their missions to provide the needed services, including shelter rehabilitation, food, and medicine distribution. Some individuals had ideas before the explosion, and when it occurred, they established a social enterprise (Interviewee 1). Likewise, interviewee 7, an NGO founder aspiring to grow her organisation into a social enterprise, had programmes for job creation and demand creation for local products before the explosion, then channelled experience and knowledge to that context. Similarly, social enterprises with programmes designed to respond to humanitarian needs before the explosion reacted quickly and efficiently after it, thus attending to emergency needs followed by more chronic financial and economic needs exacerbated after the explosion (Interviewee 4). As he puts it, social enterprises "were ready to handle things on the ground" when disaster hit, as they were preparing for years beforehand. This was also mentioned by interviewee 5, who talked about social enterprises' work in health, education, and environmental protection before the explosion.

Part of being resilient is sustainable disaster preparedness. More than NGOs, social enterprises have a crucial role in helping Lebanon recover from its humanitarian and economic catastrophe (Interviewees 2, 4, & 7). Social enterprises have a significant claim on sustainability given that they do not rely on grants like NGOs (Interviewee 4). Like many Lebanese NGOs, the NGO which interviewee 7 founded relies on volunteers. This explains her desire to evolve into a social enterprise type of business and generate self-sustaining communities through job creation.

Community resilience as community solidarity

I now turn to community resilience as a form of community solidarity. In their accounts of events surrounding the aftermath of the Beirut explosion, interviewees acknowledged the strong solidarity shown by the Lebanese. Interviewee 8 thought "it was either this or nothing. The people were making the change on the ground […]." Citizens of all ages, classes, and religious sects rushed to the explosion area to help, as the incarnation of the Lebanese

population's instinctive nature to help (Interviewee 1). They cleared the rubble and volunteered with civil initiatives to deliver basic needs and rehabilitate people's shattered homes. "It was emotional for everyone" (Interviewee 5); everyone wanted to contribute and put their skills to use. Another account of solidarity is exemplified by the fact that Lebanese diaspora members gave free online workshops to entrepreneurs working on the post-blast recovery on the ground (Interviewee 8). Community solidarity is illustrated by the fact that almost one year after the explosion, most of the impacted area was rehabilitated and reconstructed by the private realm, including social enterprises. For example, interviewees 2 and 3 reflect on one social enterprise called BEDCO, a construction firm that employed underprivileged youth to build their skills while reconstructing the city. It helped create jobs and train the community, which goes back to the sustainability aspect of social enterprises, which, as mentioned under sub-theme 1 (p. 11), is one of the main characteristics of resilience. Community solidarity was also evident because the usual competition characterising NGOs was absent in the explosion aftermath, as international funds were pouring in, and local actors were attempting to collaborate (Interviewee 6). This goes back to sub-theme 1, which showed NGOs are not sustainable and contribute to community resilience in the short term, as funds dropped with time.

Stretching resilience too far?

Interviewees are not unanimous on the resilience trait to describe the Lebanese population after the blast. While interviewee 7 thinks resilience is a strength derived from adaptability, interviewees 1 and 4 oppose that attribute, expressing lost hope and citing high emigration figures. Many interviewees do not want to deal with the word.

> "Resilience is a word I stopped using for a long time. Resilience is what got us to where we are. Because the Lebanese can find alternative ways to find a solution, [it makes them] forget this is not something citizens should handle, and then you get used to it. This is how we lived resiliently for the past 30 years" (Interviewee 2).

The latter refers to the past three decades of political inefficiency leading to the financial, economic, social, and humanitarian crises Lebanon finds itself in. She argues that this ability to innovate and find solutions on their own, given government inefficiency, lack of quality public services, and recurring disaster situations, is the resilience leading to today's social explosion. The concept has been stretched and abused (Interviewees 4 & 5). Because the Lebanese population has shown resilience time and again, they find themselves abused and neglected

by the political class: "Resilience is not just accepting what is happening and [adapting] ourselves to it. This is not resilience, but submission" (Interviewee 4).

Interviewee 4 prefers the concept of community solidarity rather than community resilience to describe the Lebanese following the blast, in line with interviewees 1 and 2, who mentioned the population's innate sense of community and desire to help, as witnessed after the explosion. The term resilience must be redefined. Interviewee 4 refers to the concepts of correction and corrective action, whereby correction means providing food for those in need after the blast, and corrective action refers to the idea of tackling the problem's root cause – the corrupt political class, according to him. He considers resilience as both correction and corrective action. This contradicts the literature (Wilson 2012), which uses community resilience as a correction tool rather than solving the source of the problem to avoid its reoccurrence.

Interviewees 5 and 6 offer a distinct understanding of how SE contributes to community resilience. In line with interviewee 4's notion of corrective action, with SE, resilience becomes "a form of resistance", allowing citizen-led initiatives and social enterprises to flourish while pushing for adequate policies instead of remaining submissive by not "transforming challenges into opportunities" (Interviewee 5). Through this strategy, social enterprises can build community resilience and break the dependency cycle, as communities slowly become independent from the existing political system for their basic needs. In this manner, SE "if pushing for community-building and community support" creates "elements helping communities become more capable of resisting the traditional political system, [thus creating] a way to break the cycle of forced resilience" (Interviewee 5).

Through SE, resilience constitutes "a backbone of possible ways to resist" (Interviewee 5). Community resilience refers to "people coming together to solve problems the government is unable to solve" (Interviewee 8), and interviewee 6 perceives renewal as a synonym for resilience, equating recovery with renewal. Instead of feeling defeated by the political system, SE and resilience post-explosion allow the transformation of challenges into energising and resourceful tools. For her, SE contributes to community resilience in the following manner, as she puts it: "SE, if truthfully done, is when we're igniting the heart of things, connecting to the pain, to the need, to each other, and to ourselves."

In terms of SE and community resilience deterring citizens from political activism and demands for reform, resilience and revolution are not mutually exclusive (Interviewees 5, 6, & 7). Citizen-led initiatives that emerged during the 2019 uprisings, providing food for those in need - and

which could grow into social enterprises - are examples of social solidarity amid revolution (Interviewee 5). Strengthening community resilience through social enterprises can reinforce community networks and break the chains of dependence and enforced resilience (Interviewees 5 & 7), as Doumit (2017) argued. This process is a way to fight against the system (Interviewee 6). One critique of the 2019 social uprising was the lack of leadership and unified agenda. As shown below, by creating a solid network of social enterprises, these actors have greater bargaining power and potential to have political weight and drive change (Interviewees 4 & 5).

A second theme emerging across interviews is the notion of shifting mindset; being open to community entrepreneurship and engaging the state.

4.2 Engaging the state

Partnering with the state

A striking result emerging from the data is that the Lebanese government is a desirable actor despite its inefficiency and corruption, as alluded to in the need to "shift mindset" by one interviewee. A recurring theme in the interviews is partnering with the state, which most interviewees advocated for, in contrast to what Ganz et al. (2018) argue, that social enterprises avoid engaging the government. For a few interviewees, partnering with the state is not feasible. Some challenges mentioned include lack of trust, absence of a Cabinet of Ministers, parliamentarians' unwillingness to pass necessary laws, and politicians' intervention in the third sector. Nonetheless, all other interviewees contend that the state must be engaged in SE growth, emphasising the importance of partnership between businesses, public authorities, and community groups, echoing Monaghan (2012).

Some interviewees stressed there are things the government is unable to do. While it is responsible for providing security (Interviewee 2), echoing Yunus (1998, in Nega & Schneider 2014), social enterprises concern themselves with social problems. Instead of contracting private businesses with profits as their end goal, contracting social enterprises with impact should be prioritised. The government must create an environment where businesses prosper (Interviewee 3), and social enterprises must be given preferential treatment when contracting out public services (Interviewee 5). Indeed, governments will continue outsourcing to businesses to provide services (Sampson 2011; Monaghan 2012). If these businesses are social enterprises, with their financial sustainability, adaptability, and learning ability, as seen in the previous theme, they are crucial for community resilience. Monaghan (2012) presents

successful cases of public services transfers to community enterprises with government-procured credit and technical help. This model is desirable in Lebanon (Interviewees 5 & 6). Devolving responsibilities from the public to the private sector is a sustainable way of providing services (Monaghan 2012). Interviewees 4 and 7 accentuate the importance of social enterprises' sustainability. These findings suggest governments play a role in community resilience, although they are behind man-made disasters, including the Beirut explosion.

Early in my inductive analysis, it became clear that the state is needed and that social enterprises are not aiming to replace it. "The private sector is not out there to replace the government, nor can it, nor should it" (Interviewee 2).

State substitution is regarded as NGOs' problem rather than social enterprises', as citizens increasingly rely on NGOs for basic needs. As interviewee 3 said, "NGOs create parallel services to the government, giving it a laisser-passer to [be idle]", alluding to Lebanon's NGOisation. Social enterprises are a solution to this issue by providing sustainable solutions, such as job creation. Certainly, one of the characteristics of community resilience is resilience sustainability.

These results indicate that social enterprises help with disaster recovery and advance communities' resilience. For this, the government is needed. As mentioned previously, whilst a minority said the Lebanese government is an unsuitable partner, all agreed SE needs the public sector. "We need more social entrepreneurs working in or with the public sector" (Interviewee 4).

Concerning the question of communities becoming used to adversity due to social enterprises' work, results suggest civil society, social entrepreneurs, and local SE consultants are key actors that should sit at the table alongside policymakers to ensure the ecosystem grows. In turn, community resilience is enhanced without being submissive to government failures. As seen in these findings, engaging the government is crucial for ensuring SE ecosystem enhancement and passivity avoidance. The systematic review of how to build a sustainable social venture ecosystem, undertaken by Kim et al. (2021), recognises governments' chief role in supporting social ventures. The comment below illustrates this:

> "It is not a citizen's responsibility to find solutions on their own. Yes, you have the responsibility to think of alternative ways to deal with your problem. At the same time, the more socially driven you are, the more you can push for the government to

[generalise solutions]. It is not only the citizens' responsibility, it's also, if not more, the government's" (Interviewee 5).

Stakeholder-driven entrepreneurship

Consistent with Jia and Desa (2020), who studied Chinese SE, interviewees did not consider Lebanese SE to be narrow. Social enterprises encompass cooperatives, NGOs, and commercial businesses; any grassroots initiative emerging from community needs, renouncing "Bill Gates" and "saviour-like" entrepreneurship (Interviewee 3). Interviewees favour bottom-up entrepreneurship rather than Western individualistic, top-down models contributing to community resilience artificially, without acknowledging community-led interventions.

Some interviewees argued stakeholder-driven entrepreneurship is occurring in Lebanon, while others said this was not possible yet since social enterprises are incapable of scaling. Several interviewees used the example of the Lebanese Social Enterprises Association (LSE), a network trying to represent and make the voices of all social enterprises heard. Most interviewees agree that creating a network allows them to be organised, be heard, receive the support they need, and generate more impact. This participatory, systems-wide approach resonates with interviewee 6, advocating for an "integrative, rather than fragmented solution". As argued by Wilson (2012), community resilience can be achieved once actors form a stakeholder network, in line with Monaghan (2012: 112)'s concept of "infused resilience", that decision-making power and resilience must be dispersed throughout the system, through public and private collaboration. As found by Wilson (2012), stakeholder groups must influence policy formation for community resilience, here by adopting SE-friendly policies augmenting resilience.

These results show that social enterprises act as mediators between communities and government and as political changemakers trying to shape policymaking. Interviewees' accounts showed it is unreasonable for social enterprises to replace the government. Together, these results provide important insights into SE's role in community resilience. SE is not simply a transitory measure to alleviate temporary needs following the blast. It can be leveraged to boost public expenditure for social policies (Moskovskaya et al. 2016) rather than minimising the state's role. For SE to concretise, government, civil society, and businesses must join forces (Moskovskaya et al. 2016) by enhancing understanding and increasing support (Interviewees 3, 5, & 6). Many interviewees called for a coordinated solution between

different stakeholders. Given the challenges of Lebanese SE, "a systems solution" (Interviewee 6) is needed for Lebanon's socioeconomic recovery, and thus for community resilience reinforcement. The ideal model is social enterprises and the government cooperating to achieve sustainable solutions to social problems.

Challenges for social enterprises from a public policy perspective

One question during the interview was concerned with challenges for Lebanese social enterprises from a policy perspective. Given its nascent nature (Interviewees 3 & 5), the SE ecosystem faces challenges. Concerns were widespread: legal challenges, lack of tax incentives, and lack of awareness concerning this business type are common challenges mentioned across interviews. Interviewees overall demonstrated that if legislation recognises these social enterprises through a specific legal status and incentives are established to support them, that will make their work easier, and they would be better able to contribute to community resilience. Some argued the legal framework was not an obstacle, while others considered registering as social enterprises is more convenient. Most interviewees agreed that government recognition is vital for issues including social procurement and incentives. These findings suggest that, since policy and legal reforms are needed to reinforce the ecosystem and community resilience, the government is a central stakeholder.

4.3 Opportunity for social enterprises and impact investors

One characteristic of community resilience identified in the literature is financial resilience (Sampson 2011). In the final part of the interviews, I asked respondents about II and social enterprises' financial viability. My analysis revealed that the Lebanese crisis, exacerbated after the blast, represents an opportunity for impact investors.

Window of opportunity

When asked whether Lebanon offers a hospitable environment for II, contrary to scholarly literature, most interviewees acknowledged the strong potential for II in social enterprises, especially given that many of them are stuck at the critical start-up phase (Sampson 2011), which could be investors' target (Mouracade 2021). The economic crisis incentivises them to work on their market principles and social impact, as impact investors target these enterprises (Nicolăescu 2011). After the explosion, as interviewees recognised, civic initiatives reacted

quickly. One year after the explosion, in October 2021, with increasing needs and lower funds, social enterprises could leverage their self-sustainable model in opposition to NGOs. The economic crisis widened the opportunity for government, social enterprises, and impact investors to tap into the SE ecosystem's potential. One interviewee stated that the pool of impact investors worldwide is sizeable, as Sherwood and Pollard (2019) and Mouracade (2021) presented. With the banking sector collapse and lack of social enterprise-specific financial tools (Interviewees 3 & 5), Lebanon has an opportunity to attract impact investment.

Another opportunity impact investors can benefit from is the LSE-facilitated social enterprises network, helping them connect with credible enterprises who can access funds collectively, as also suggested by Greek social enterprises in Apostolopoulos et al.'s study (2018). Still, findings suggest this is only possible once reforms are undertaken. Most interviewees agreed that if the legal status for social enterprises is available, it allows them to recognise themselves as social enterprises and be recognised as such, making it easier for impact investors to target them. Again, the government's role is crucial to adopt the necessary reforms to support SE. Prospects for II in Lebanon depend on how ecosystem actors push for policy change.

Sound and viable companies with private sector principles

Since financial viability is part of community resilience, the private sector is essential (Chiapello & Knoll 2020). Lebanese social enterprises must adopt market principles and private sector management (Jackson & Harrison 2011) to be sustainable and attract II to sustain their impact. Social enterprises are as successful as their private-sector principles and social impact are. Evidence shows that measuring and communicating impact is crucial for social enterprises' success, as this "paves the way for impact investors" (Interviewee 2). Going back to the state, interviewees proposed it must support social enterprises at the start-up stage by providing grants and social procurement to facilitate scaling and subsequent investment attraction. This is because most social enterprises, due to the nascent ecosystem and the currency crisis, are donor-driven, relying on external funding, limiting their sustainability. Lebanese social enterprises "follow the dependent funding model, in which they use external funds and resources and depend on their renewal or acquisition of funds from other sources" (Tauber 2021: 62). This creates vulnerabilities as social enterprises become sensitive to global changes, destabilising community resilience (Sonnino & Griggs-Trevarthen 2013, in Vlasov et al. 2018). These results suggest that impact investments are imperative for strengthening SE in Lebanon and, subsequently, sustaining community resilience. As seen in previous sections, the funds following the Beirut blast were short-term, covering immediate

needs. As the crisis exacerbated and needs increased (Iskandar et al. 2021), interviewees see the potential for II to create sustainable impact.

Raising ecosystem actors' awareness

Comparing results, one challenge concerning II in Lebanon is the lack of awareness of the concept and the need to develop local impact investors' familiarity and competencies around II (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 3 encouraged the creation of local angel investor groups targeted at social enterprises and hailed the work of venture philanthropies, urging this model's multiplication nationwide. Commenting on II, and contradicting Ahmed (2021), interviewee 5 reflects:

> "Typical financing mechanisms went through banks, now out of the picture. The question for Lebanon is: How do you create mechanisms outside financial institutions?"

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the roles of SE and II in community resilience following the August 4 Beirut explosion. Although resilience has a bad connotation for Lebanese people, social enterprises were key actors in post-disaster resilience and recovery. While many say they do not want to be resilient, some scholars provide a roadmap for building community resilience, creating a clash between how it is understood by the Lebanese and conceptualised academically. Data shows community resilience is rooted in social and contextual norms, challenging conventional thinking. Prior research on SE and community resilience after the blast is non-existent. I argued that social enterprises as trusted organisations played a role in building resilience by aiding recovery through community-led entrepreneurship and citizen-led initiatives. Financing access being one of SE's challenges, I further argued that II enhances the ecosystem and, by extension, community resilience, if supported by relevant legislation.

This study will interest ambitious civil society actors, policymakers, and academics, galvanising them to support innovative initiatives to alleviate Lebanon's challenges. Appreciating new businesses like social enterprises is crucial for sustainable solutions (Kajiita & Kang'ethe 2021), especially in post-disaster scenarios. This study also offers some insight

into organically grown social enterprises. In Lebanon, community entrepreneurship has greater sustainability, inclusion, and response to needs.

5.1 Policy implications

The questions posed at the beginning of this study are significant for social policy. My findings' implications are useful for founding a participatory policymaking process in Lebanon to enable SE to flourish. Given the efficient nature of SE after the explosion, legal and policy frameworks must be developed to enhance their potential in social impact and community resilience.

Another important implication is that, while authors questioned impact investment universality and applicability to Lebanon because of political, social, and legal investment risks, Lebanon has the potential to attract impact investment for social development. The context in which social enterprises have thrived in Lebanon is post-catastrophe, where resilience was stretched to its limits. While SE provides a solution to Lebanon's woes, it is only complementary and cannot thrive without state support and impact investment. Government support for SE and II allows for an environment where community resilience does not obfuscate the state's essential role. The Lebanese government must consider these businesses and promote such policies. The purpose of these recommendations is to showcase how social entrepreneurs can be fruitful government partners, hence the necessity to support social enterprises that support community resilience in the long term.

5.2 Practical implications

The findings of this study have implications for future practice. First, by guiding scholars studying Lebanon to help social entrepreneurs become aware of II. The study also moves academic literature forward regarding how community resilience is conceptualised after disasters by looking at local social enterprises' capacity to respond to needs. I argued that community resilience is socially and contextually constructed. Since the term 'resilience' is disputed (Monaghan 2012; Wilson 2012), I acknowledge it characterising Lebanese society in the sense of the ability to grow from adversity rather than the absence of suffering. Finally, the study encourages social entrepreneurs to reflect on their role and the limits to what they can achieve without state policies, lest they fall into the NGO donor-dependent trap. It encourages social entrepreneurs and ecosystem actors to collaborate and engage the government rather than allowing disaster normalisation and nurturing acceptance of governmental failures.

5.3 Limitations and further research

The study was limited in terms of findings generalisation because it examined SE and community resilience after the Beirut explosion and is not long-term in its outlook, especially in a volatile country where socio-political instability is ubiquitous. Another source of weakness that could have affected the evaluation of SE's role in community resilience was that community members, those affected by the explosion and those supported by social enterprises, were not included in the sample.

Given that SE is a novel research field, this study lays the groundwork for future exploration into social entrepreneurial activity to foster community resilience in Beirut. As the field in Lebanon is not widely understood, further research will be needed as the need for II becomes acknowledged. Additionally, as a result of my findings and given limitations identified in Chapter 2, researchers must continue looking into the emerging domain of impact investment into SE. Moreover, scholars can enrich existing conceptions of resilient communities in the aftermath of human-induced catastrophes by incorporating the state into the analysis of SE and resilience. I encourage researchers to engage with these propositions and carry longer-term studies in different post-disaster contexts by investigating evidence from beneficiaries.

Notwithstanding limitations, the study advances knowledge in the field through a case study, confirming SE's role in community resilience. The study will be of interest to ambitious civil society actors, policymakers, and academics, galvanising them to support innovative initiatives to alleviate Lebanon's challenges. Appreciating new businesses like social enterprises is crucial for sustainable solutions (Kajiita & Kang'ethe 2021), especially in post-disaster scenarios. This study also offers some insight into organically grown social enterprises. In Lebanon, community entrepreneurship has greater sustainability, inclusion, and response to needs. Despite the paper's previously mentioned limitations on generalisability, these should not discredit its value in showcasing that SE provides an opportunity to create change and strengthen resilience.

The central contribution is the contribution to academic literature addressing the Beirut explosion, which occurred almost one year prior to writing this study. Therefore, published research on the experiences of the blast-affected community is limited. If this research does not reach its targeted audience, including social entrepreneurs, policymakers, and impact investors, it would have contributed to all the works; academic, artistic, and others, which emerged following the explosion, contributing to the remembrance of the tragedy and its

socioeconomic and mental toll on the Lebanese people. While the political system responsible for one of the largest man-made disasters continues to escape justice, this work allows the conversation to keep going.

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