Political Economy of Sectarianism and Coexistence in Lebanon

Eugene Richard Sensenig & Rouba El Helou

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Each sheet can be used/studied separately.

Suggested Citation:

About the Sheets

These five open access factsheets were created following a unique 'base-superstructure' dialectical approach. They are useful when working with participants both in training settings, as well as in self-taught learning programs. The goal is to establish the political economy of both sectarianism and coexistence as the foundation for studying Lebanon through following a systematically rigorous approach and analyzing social phenomena and practices.

These factsheets are open educational resources (OER) and are intended for awareness raising and as a foundation for further study. Therefore the research team in the Gender, Communications and Global Mobility (GCGM) studies unit at the Faculty of Law and Political Science (FLPS) at Notre Dame University (NDU) – Louaize worked closely with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) under the umbrella of an ongoing project titled "Dealing with the Past – Memories for the Future"

The GCGM research team would like to note that while a 'political economy of sectarianism' is still uncommon, a 'political economy of coexistence' is being developed by the unit for the first time. Thus, as much emphasis will be placed on explaining the methods as in presenting the results andproposals within each factsheet.

Module Approach

Each of the five factsheets is a stand-alone file based on a module approach in which the layout structure is built in a consistent way, as similar as possible. The factsheets are organized with a clear interlinked learning path. For this reason, users will expand their learning ability once the modules are completed; however, they should also be able to work on the factsheets as stand-alone documents which can be applied and understood separately.

When designing each individual factsheet, a similar approach is used. Within each module the juxtaposition of the respective 'vicious and virtuous cycles' is essential. The dialogue between the viscous (sectarianism) and virtuous (coexistence) is as important as that between the base (economic) and superstructure (socio-cultural). The resulting 'dialectical' presentations will illustrate the tension which is at the root of the current Lebanese crisis.

Factsheet / E-course Interface

Finally, the five open access factsheets are also linked to interactive explanation videos. These fact sheets are part of a course which is in the process of creation. The e-course will provide the foundation for learners to apply the 'base-superstructure dialectical approach' to their own studies.
Our research team wishes you a successful interactive learning experience with these fact sheets. Comments are welcomed and encouraged. You can write us here: gcgmlebanon@gmail.com

Learners can use the factsheets and e-course in school or university settings, in off-campus and civil society training programs, or online.

Mainstreaming History (MH) – A Gendered Approach to Reconstructing the Future

Project Background

MH is a project by the GCGM studies unit at FLPS at NDU – Louaize. MH is part of the larger project by the OHCHR office titled "Dealing with the Past – Memories for the Future". MH follows an innovative and gendered approach to sectarianism and coexistence in Lebanese society. It is rooted in the dialectical base-superstructure method. This means it searches for the roots of sectarianism/coexistence in the economy and technological development of Lebanon.

The base superstructure dialectic studies the concrete manifestations and symbolic expressions of sectarianism/coexistence (S/C) in the areas of energy, mobility, and agriculture – using these three economic areas on the societal "base" as examples. It looks for their impact on the superstructure, in the field of the mind, using three examples. They include communications, education, and the arts. In both cases, the fields chosen are merely exemplary. Other industries or socio-political activities and institutions could also be investigated. The fields of organized religion and partisan politics were left out of this study intentionally.

Despite the economic collapse, failed state, and the COVID-19 lockdown this project maintained its high level of productivity and ingenuity. MH is designed as an empirical and evidence-based approach locating the impact of the economy and technology on culture using concrete examples in industry, civil society and local government. through mapping a large number of civil society, business and government players in the base and superstructure which will help determine and describe their activities through:
1. Creating a set of indicators to assess the activity of the five sets of players empirically;
2. Assessing their impact the specific field, on each other, and on society in general;
3. Isolating, describing, and evaluating areas of overlap in which the players promote coexistence and combat sectarianism;
4. Building on the areas of overlap to propose a set of '**virtuous cycles**' in opposition to the current '**vicious cycles**' described below.

Introduction

The purpose of the fact sheets is to introduce this innovative approach to the public and encourage its use when debating and dealing with sectarianism and co-existence. For this reason, we deal with these two phenomena from a historical perspective as well as their current manifestation. The net result will be to move away from the current vicious cycle which is feeding sectarianism and destroying Lebanon. We will present several examples of virtuous cycles which promote coexistence and illustrate paths to save the country. The elements of this virtuous cycle will be applied in areas such governance, infrastructure development, education, commerce and the media, among many others. These fact sheets were developed and written with an intersectional approach in mind. They are gender mainstreamed and based on actual empirical research carried out by the GCGM studies unit surveying the world we study and work in.

Fact Sheet 1- What is the Base-Superstructure Dialectic?

In this fact sheet we explain the interaction or dialogue between the productive and commercial sector, on the one hand, and the world of ideas on the other, using concrete examples.

Fact Sheet 2- Intersectionality: Gender and Youth Activism

The intersection between gender and age is the key component of this project, showing how and gender equality activists work together to improve their country.

Fact Sheet 3- Political Economy of Sectarianism and Coexistence

This is the truly innovative part of the project and a unique contribution to the discussion on the future of Lebanon. It demonstrates how the economy (base) and politics (superstructure) interact and thereby influence both sectarianism and coexistence.

Fact Sheet 4- Examples of the Base: Energy, Mobility, and Agriculture

Here we deal with expressions of sectarianism and coexistence in areas such as the extractive industries, the distribution of fuel, the transportation networks, migration and food sovereignty and security.

Fact Sheet 5- Examples of the Superstructure: Communication, Education, and Art

The media, schools and universities, literature, painting and the performing art are all examples of "activities" of the mind. We use a long view starting in 1860 to discover how they promote and or combat S/C.
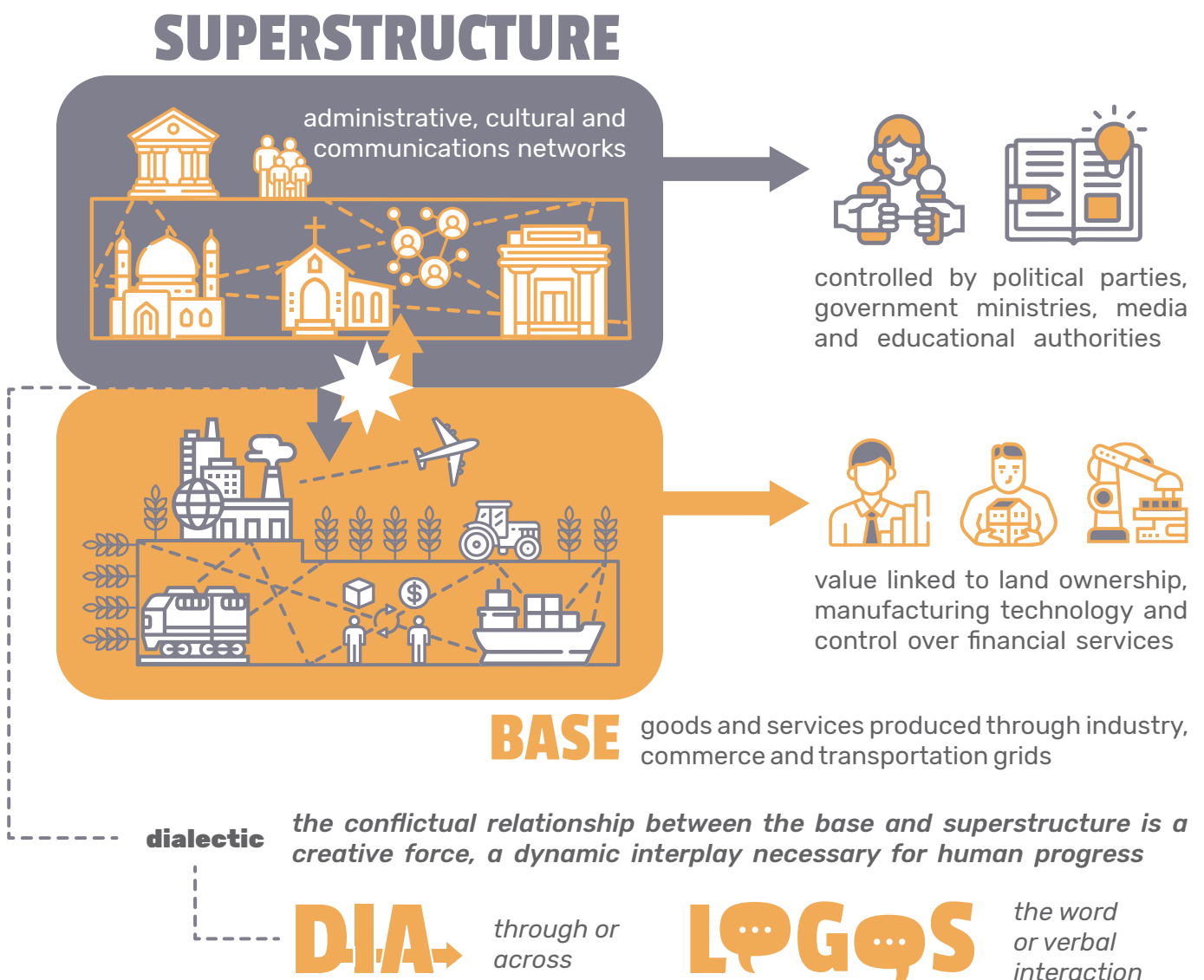
Political Economy of Sectarianism and Coexistence in Lebanon
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1- What is the Base-Superstructure Dialectic?

Are coexistence and conflict natural or the result of human agency? Is Lebanon's seemingly eternal state of crisis the result of its culture and traditions or the economy and infrastructural development? How do industry, commerce, & transportation (*base*) and culture, politics, & communication (*superstructure*) interact? Lebanese-American historian Ussama Makdisi coined the term 'Culture of Sectarianism' in 2000; Iraqi–British economist Bassam Yousif introduced the 'Political Economy of Sectarianism' in 2010. In these sheets we will look into possible solutions and we will define the 'Political Economy of Coexistence' through the dialogue between the base and superstructure. This synergy will allow us to understand the dynamic tension driving the proverbial 'situation' in Lebanon forward. The '**Political Economy of Sectarianism and Coexistence**' goes one step further by allowing us to harness this 'dynamo' and move towards sustainable development despite existing conflicts and seemingly insurmountable fault lines. In fact, political economy enables us to understand how the material world is linked to the world of images and illusions.

The 'Base-Superstructure Dialectic' is an approach which goes back through the German political economist and philosopher Karl Marx, French diplomat and political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville, Medieval Arab sociologist Ibn Khaldūn and Italian Dominican theologian Thomas Aquinas, the whole way to the classical Athenian philosopher Socrates.

SUPERSTRUCTURE

administrative, cultural and communications networks

controlled by political parties, government ministries, media and educational authorities

value linked to land ownership, manufacturing technology and control over financial services

BASE goods and services produced through industry, commerce and transportation grids

dialectic *the conflictual relationship between the base and superstructure is a creative force, a dynamic interplay necessary for human progress*

DIA *through or across*   **LOGOS** *the word or verbal interaction*

Where Does Sectarianism Come from?

Sectarianism is a toxic form of confessionalism, but does diversity always have to lead to aggression? 'Lebanonization' and 'Balkanization' are synonymous with the protracted confessional conflicts ongoing in those parts of the former Ottoman Empire characterized by extremely high levels of religious and linguistic diversity. The conflicts plaguing the Levant and the Balkans are often portrayed as being 'primordial', meaning they are part of the very nature of these societies, dating back centuries if not millennia. Accordingly, the cultures of Lebanon, Syria, Bosnia, or Serbia are rooted in the organic inability of these peoples to get along with each other. The systemic corruption of their economies is an expression of their 'culture of impunity'.

The Italian cultural theorist Antonio Gramsci, Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, and Jamaican-British sociologist Stuart Hall all agree that base and the superstructure are intertwined, dynamic, and conflictual. Their relationship is the result of power rooted in control of both the economy and the cultural sector.

Various recent studies now document the conflictual base-superstructure dialectic in West Asia and North Africa (WANA[1]), including Hannes Baumann's 2016 study on Lebanon and Justin Gengler's 2017 survey of the Arab Gulf regimes. Whereas the dialectical nature of sectarianism has been well researched, little has been done to explain the impact of the base and superstructure on coexistence.

Tips and Facts

• Traditional wisdom has it that sectarian strife in Lebanon is inevitable.
• In his book 'The Age of Coexistence' Makdisi makes the argument, as did many scholars before him, that sectarianism is actually the exception and the result of the integration of West Asia into the modern global economy after the end of the Napoleonic Wars.
• The 'dialogue' between a- 19th Century imperialist expansion into the collapsing Ottoman Empire, b- the shift to the production of cash crops (silk, apricot paste, wool, cotton lace) for the world market, and c- the rapid development of harbors, highways, and later railroads in the WANA region, first destabilized and then destroyed the confessional balance between religious and linguistic groups.
• The boom in extractive industries in the early 20th Century provided additional fuel to the fire of sectarianism.

Practical Applications

Paulo Freire is well known for his groundbreaking 1968 study on research and education in the Global South, "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed". In it he emphasizes how the power elite uses culture and communication to disguise the mechanisms upon which their authoritarian rule is built.
The base-superstructure dialect makes use of Freire, but also Stuart Hall and Gramsci, to focus on key industrial and commercial sectors such as energy, transportation, agriculture, mining, and infrastructure construction to search for the 'money trail' propping up sectarianism in Lebanon. As opposed to traditional materialist approaches, which saw the superstructure as being 'determined' – namely a mere product – of the base, the dialectical approach used here searches for the interaction between the economy and culture, between technological development and changes in communication. To sum it up, Lebanon's toxic sectarianism was constructed, it can be deconstructed and put back together again to serve coexistence.

1- Also Known as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The term WANA is used in this project (as established by the United Nations) in order to avoid eurocentrism.

The Political Economy of Coexistence

The 'Political Economy (PE) of Coexistence' is a new concept in our region. It was coined specifically for this project. The PE of Coexistence searches for the material roots of cooperation and understanding – bringing people together despite their religious, linguistic, racial or other differences. It helps discover the origins of these positive relationships in places in which sectarianism is often located. These include farming, small and medium size manufacturing, commerce, and transportation. The following Fact Sheets will provide examples of how Coexistence on the economic and material base can overcome Sectarianism on all levels in the West Asia North Africa (WANA) region.
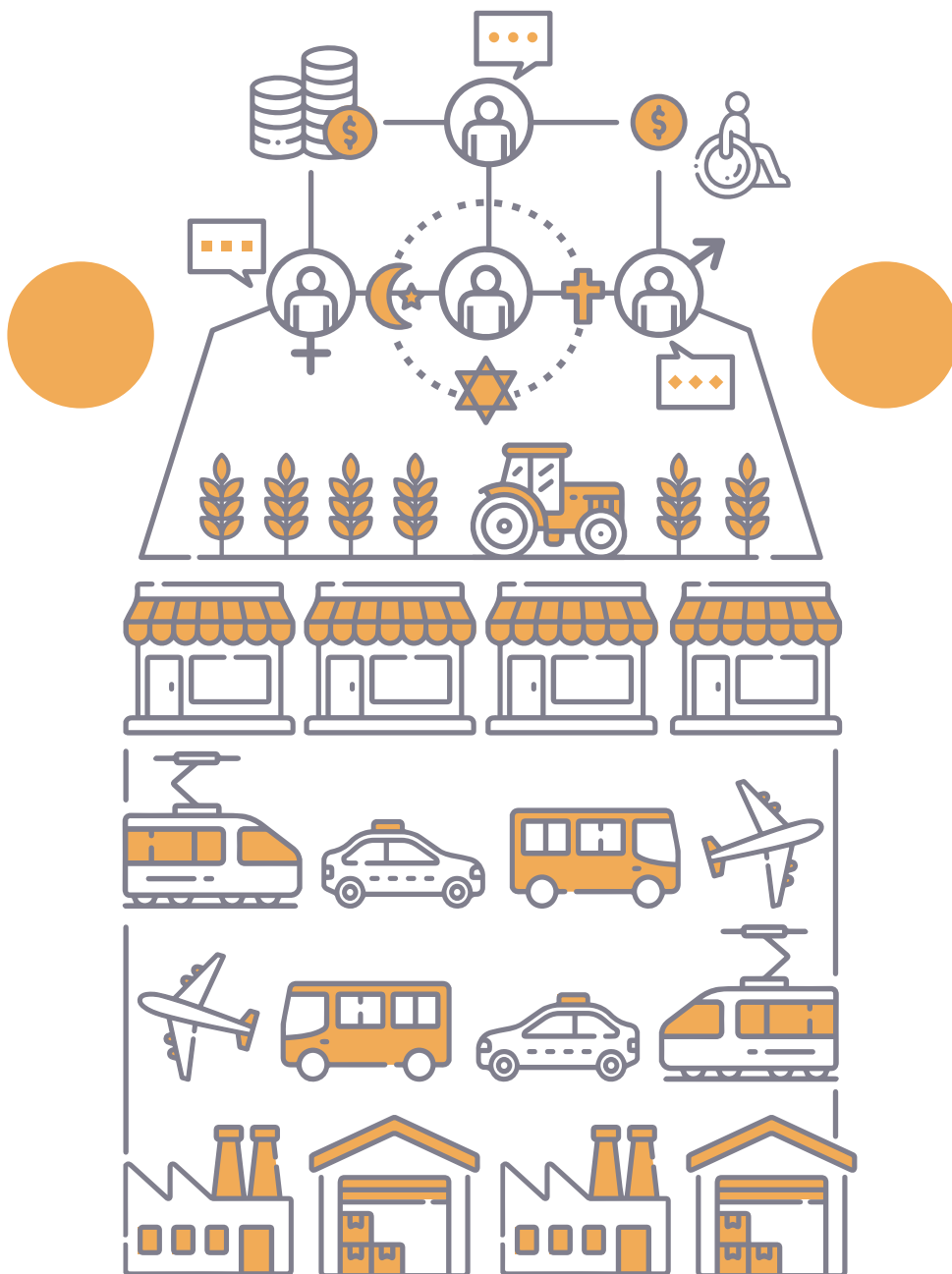
2– Intersectionality: Gender and Youth Activism

What goes into making up who we are? Is our identity part of our human nature or is it the result of socialization? How much of our character is internal, self-made? How much of it is external, based on peer pressure and conditioning? What is most important, our gender, social class, age, level of education, mother tongue, region of origin, religious belief system, or political party affiliation?

The term 'intersectionality' is rooted in the dialectical struggle along the lines of gender, race, and social class. Coined in the United States in 1989 by the leading scholar and civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw, the term is used to criticize those who consider one conflict more important than all others. At the time, white, middle class women's rights activists were accused of ignoring the needs of the poor, racial minorities, and all those who were not as socially privileged as they were.

Intersectionality is not new. Earlier researchers and social activists used the term 'Diversity Management.' Currently, both terms can be used in human resources development (HRD), within civil society coalitions, and when designing donor sponsored social justice and development programs. These terms are useful to grasp social complexity because in reality our identity is made up of many distinct pieces. None of them is more important than the other.

RACE

INTERSECTIONALITY

SOCIAL CLASS

GENDER
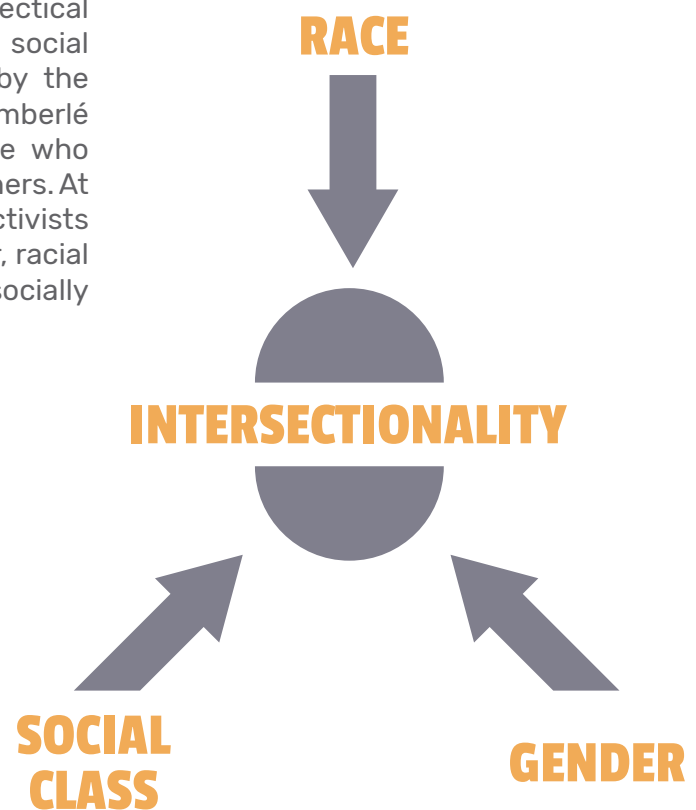
Tips and Facts

- Beginning in the turbulent 1960s, anti-racism activists began to join hands with feminists, labor unions, gays and lesbians, and the disabilities rights movement to fight all forms of discrimination.
- Key holidays of the worldwide intersectional struggle include International Women's Day (8 March), Labour Day (1 May), Gay Pride or Stonewall Day (28 June), and International Day of People with Disabilities (3 December).
- Starting in the 1980s, the 'business case for diversity' argued that equality in the workplace increased productivity and efficiency in the corporate sector, government, and civil society, and thus served the bottom line.
- Although the term intersectionality was first used in 1989, the concept dates back over 100 years, to the sociologist Georg Simmel (1908) and revolutionary Socialist August Bebel (1879).

Practical Applications

Diversity, human rights, and intersectional movements have championed the 'rights-based' approach to social justice for generations. As opposed to the 'charity-based' approach, terms such as 'human agency' and 'empowerment' are used to support the claim that individuals should decide for themselves who they are.

The right to determine our own identity is particularly important during the early stages of our lives.

For example, gender roles are often imposed externally and an intersectional approach helps counter this pressure.

For the first time, during the 1975-1990 War in Lebanon, disabilities activists established their claim to being "key national and social actors, equal to other groups in the country" by organizing demonstrations on the front lines against the violence of the warring militias.

Young environmentalists, working for sustainable development in Lebanon, have highlighted the fact that women feel uniquely vulnerable when using public transportation.

Women and youth activists are working with NGOs and the education sector to promote STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) for girls and young women to prepare for careers in the extractive industries.

Fair Trade farming cooperatives, towns, and universities promote food security and equal treatment for women, migrants, and refugees in the agricultural sector.

Gender and Youth Activism in an Intersectional Lebanese Perspective

Today, a new generation of Gender and Youth activists is growing up in the extreme agony of economic collapse and state failure in Lebanon. Building on the experience of the Civil War and the three decades of post-war corruption and impunity, they are forging coalitions across divisions of gender, religious sectarianism, age, sexual orientation, abilities, language, social class, region, and education. Intersectionality has become more than a political agenda. It is providing a platform to struggle for the country's very survival.

3- Political Economy of Sectarianism and Coexistence

Why do we look for the roots of sectarianism and coexistence in the fields of industry, commerce and infrastructural development? Ibn Khaldūn, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Karl Marx, and Antonio Gramsci all agree that the economic and commercial sector has a strong influence on politics, culture, and religion. But isn't this approach 'deterministic', meaning one-sided and simplistic? Aren't religious, linguistic, and class conflicts more an expression of people's organic value systems than the ownership of the 'means of production'?

POLITICAL ECONOMY

who owns industrial & commercial wealth?

how do they develop it?
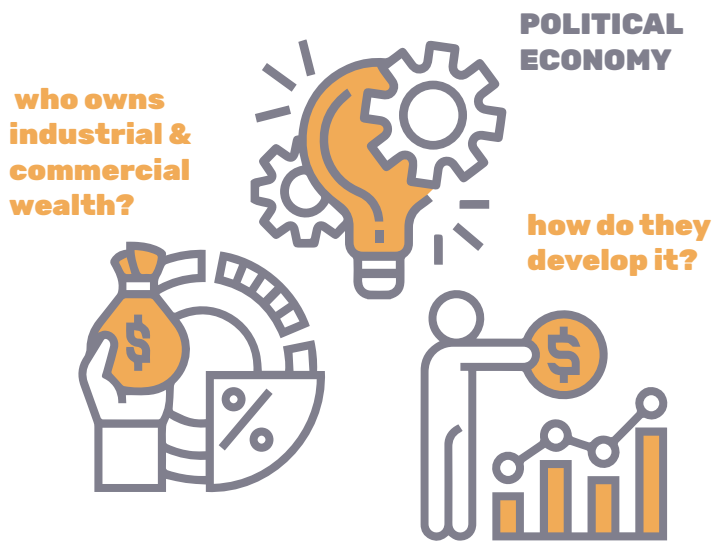
For example, in the late Middle Ages advances in mining and sailing led to the introduction of the 'Commercial Corporation'. This happened as early as 1347 in the Swedish copper industry – vital for manufacturing cannons – and 1600 with the establishment of Dutch and English chartered companies promoting colonial expansion. Thus the introduction of early corporate capitalism and European domination of the Global South, including West Asia and North Africa (WANA), go hand-in-hand.

private property ownership as a means of enhancing personal responsibility and freedom

Aristotle

state interference in the economy 'may cause the destruction of civilization'.

Ibn Khaldūn

private ownership of the means of production was essential for the very survival of a prosperous society

Wise leaders respond to gradual (quantitative) changes with political reforms. Radical, breakthrough technologies alter the very quality of a society and often lead to revolution, as was in the case of America in 1776 or France in 1789. The three Industrial Revolutions, as of 1760, 1850, and 1950 respectively, have radically transformed the global economy, our political systems, and the societies we live in.

The study of the link between politics and the economy is thousands of years old. Focusing on it helps understand that our crises are "man made" and not inevitable. If they can be constructed, they can be taken apart and put back together again.

Tips and Facts

- One of the main influences on traditional Lebanese society in the past was the opening up of its territory and economy to global markets in the early 19th Century. The expansion of the Beirut Port and the completion of the new highway across Mount Lebanon in 1863 reduced the travel time to Damascus, for goods and passengers, from three to four days down to 13 hours. This destabilized and transformed traditional social and confessional relations throughout the region.
- Beirut's dominant position in the Eastern Mediterranean was linked to its key role as a transportation hub, a center for financial services, advertising and marketing, education, and healthcare, as well as the significance of its two refineries, processing Saudi oil in Zahrani near Sidon and Iraqi oil in Tripoli.
- The current protracted crises throughout West Asia are rooted in economic and infrastructural transformations, including a) the impact of the digital 'Third Industrial Revolution', b) the linking of oil and natural gas exploitation grids throughout the WANA, and c) the globalization of social justice and intersectional demands and discourse within the most dynamic economic sectors, such as financial services, extractive industries, or media and advertising.

Practical Applications

The introduction of oil and natural gas extraction to West Asia has led to a vibrant debate on reforming sexist discriminatory laws in the workplace and promoting STEM for girls and young women in schools and universities.

The discussion on the charity-based versus rights-based approach to welfare services and social justice has been adversely influenced by the protracted economic crisis in the WANA. For example, people with disabilities are now experiencing an erosion of their rights to education, mobility, recreation, healthcare, and employment.

The digital revolution has linked diaspora communities to their countries of origin. Many feminist and youth activists are working from abroad to promote anti-sectarian movements and advance coexistence in areas as diverse as Fair Trade farming, electoral reform, freedom of expression, or sustainable tourism.

Political Economy (PE) – Explaining Coexistence and Sectarianism from the Ground Up!

As the saying goes: "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions!" PE allows analysts and activists alike to go beyond mere declarations of intent; to deal with the material foundations of sectarianism and lay the groundwork for intersectional cooperation. To go beyond awareness-raising and coalition building to actually change the physical environments in which we work, build our communities, and invest in rebuilding the country.
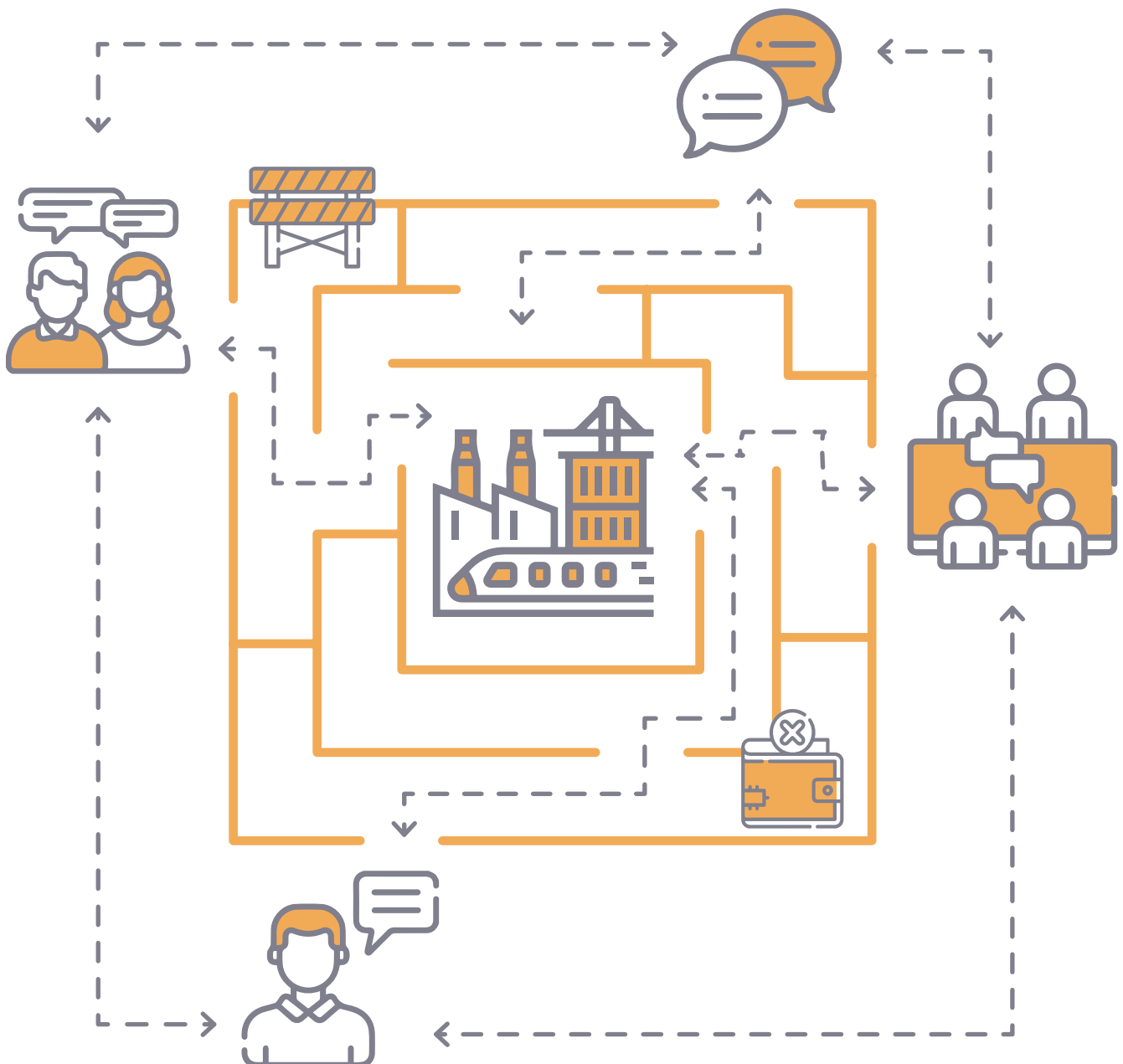
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4- Examples of the Base: Energy, Mobility, and Agriculture

"To rebuild the food system is to rebuild the country. Food sovereignty is about people gaining more control over their food systems whether through their ecological relationships with the land or by holding government officials accountable. Ultimately, food sovereignty rests on people's relationship with each other because they would have to work out amongst themselves how to share the ecological and economic resources necessary to live together in communion." Michael Fakhri, Special Rapporteur on the right to food.

Why are farming, transportation, and access to fuel essential for human development? How have so-called 'breakthrough technologies' transformed our world since the beginning of time? What is the relationship between gradual, slow moving change over centuries or millennia, and explosive, radical revolutions in the a) use of fuels and tools during the First Industrial Revolution (1760-1820);
b) engines, machines, and vehicles during the Second Industrial Revolution (1850-1910), and
c) information technology and space travel during the Third Industrial Revolution (1950-present)? How is this related to the dialectical concepts of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, as well as quantitative reform and qualitative revolution?

The Base Simplified

We are all aware of how the controlled use of fire, the invention of the wheel and stirrup, and the domestication of animals and introduction of farmed grains, fruits and vegetables changed humanity. Improved nutrition, the reduction of disease, the heating of homes and workplaces, and the perfection of advanced weaponry permitted us to inhabit most of the globe, create great empires, and develop the communication, administration, and education skills needed to govern ourselves effectively and profitably. Without understanding the base, our history and current world do not make sense. The attempt to explain culture and politics as expressions of industrial and commercial development dates back to the Middle Ages. In "The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History" Medieval Arab sociologist Ibn Khaldūn famously states in 1377: "Civilization and its well-being as well as business prosperity depend on productivity and people's efforts in all directions in their own interest and profit."

New forms of production and trade change the way we govern ourselves, encourage global migration and trade, and lead to worldwide communication networks.
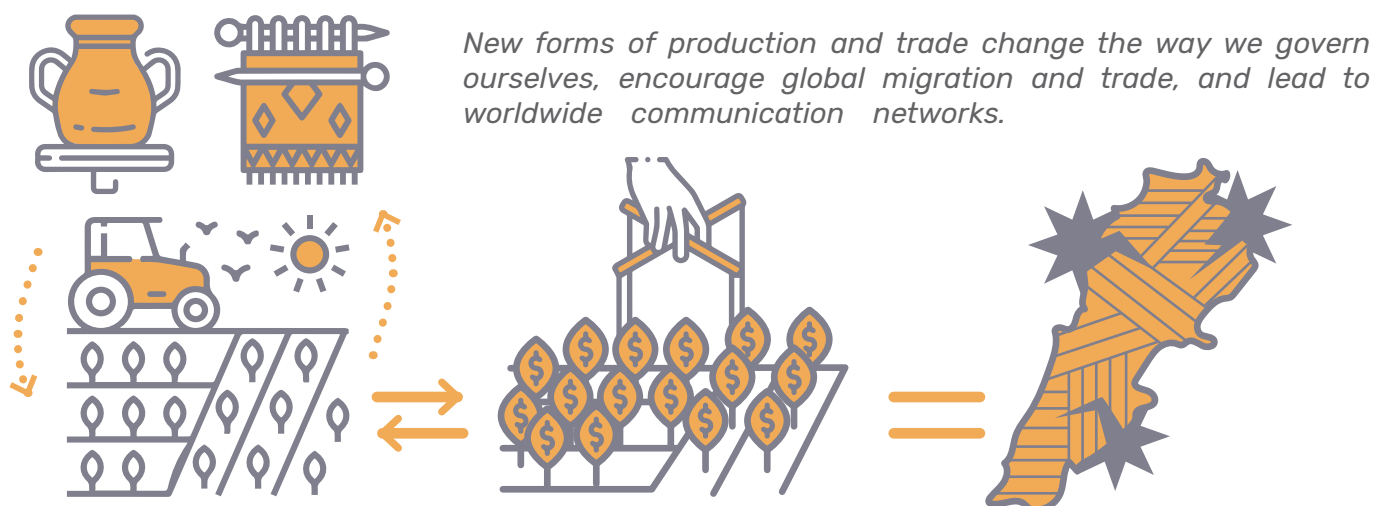
THESIS
existing, relatively harmonious situation

farming and handmade production for the local market

ANTITHESIS
gradually changing environment

European domination of the West Asian markets and the introduction of cash crops

SYNTHESIS
explosive and radical transformation

sectarian segmentation of the Lebanese economy and the collapse of the longstanding state of coexistence

Tips and Facts

- The foundation of liberal, constitutional democracy in the Global North is the result of the severe damage inflicted on European civilization after the fall of the Roman Empire. Gradually, as Medieval European towns began to recover, they were controlled by the manufacturing and merchant classes, with the landed aristocracy clinging to power outside the city walls. The relative independence of the European bourgeoisie allowed them to ultimately rebel against the nobility. Both the Protestant Reformation and secular Enlightenment are rooted in the gradual dominance of industrial and commercial wealth and the relative decline of the value of land ownership. As the saying goes: 'The air of the city will set you free!'
- The WANA region never saw the development of free, commercial cities, as was the case in Europe. With the beginning of the First Industrial Revolution in 1760, Turkish, Arab, Persian and Armenian societies began to lag far behind their European neighbors. Thus it comes as no surprise that Napoleon was able to easily occupy Egypt in 1798, after which European powers gradually took control of large swaths of the WANA based on their commercial and technological 'comparative advantage'.
- Attempts to replicate liberal, nationalist, and democratic systems of constitutional rule in the WANA often use a top-down, superstructure approach and ignore the need to take the economic and infrastructural base into consideration. All attempts to 'parachute' rule of law, sustainable development, and a social justice agenda into the region have failed to date. Around the world, real reform has always come from the bottom up.

Practical Applications

The exploitation of oil and natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean has created an environment that could transform the existing culture of impunity in the coming years. In many instances, the large amounts of wealth generated by extractive industries leads to a 'resource curse', meaning that countries that are already highly corrupt become even worse, sometimes leading to state failure. Various local and international NGOs are now pushing Lebanon to apply the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) standards. These will force the systemically dysfunctional power elite to adhere to international standards of governance during the exploration, extraction, and processing of petroleum products. This rule-of-law benchmark could then have a ripple effect within the entire country. EITI standards not only negate the logic of religious sectarianism, they also include strict intersectional norms promoting respect for women, people with disabilities, migrant workers and other minorities.

The construction of regional railroad networks is currently linking the Arab Gulf states to the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa and ultimately the extensive European railroad grid. Similar to the planning required for natural gas pipelines, trains require a high level of maintenance and reliability, which goes hand-in-hand with the extractive industries sector in promoting rule-of-law and combating the culture of impunity.

Can the Base Save Lebanon?

Food sovereignty, turning the resource curse into a resource blessing, or re-integrating the transportation network into a regional, sustainable transportation grid, are all part of potential, positive changes in the Base. Promoting rule of law and just governance in industry, commerce, transportation, and agriculture will ultimately transform the way we live our lives. According to the Base-Superstructure Dialectic this could provide opportunities for an intersectional transformation of the country at a time of severe crisis, offering a way out of the sectarian impasse Lebanon finds itself in.
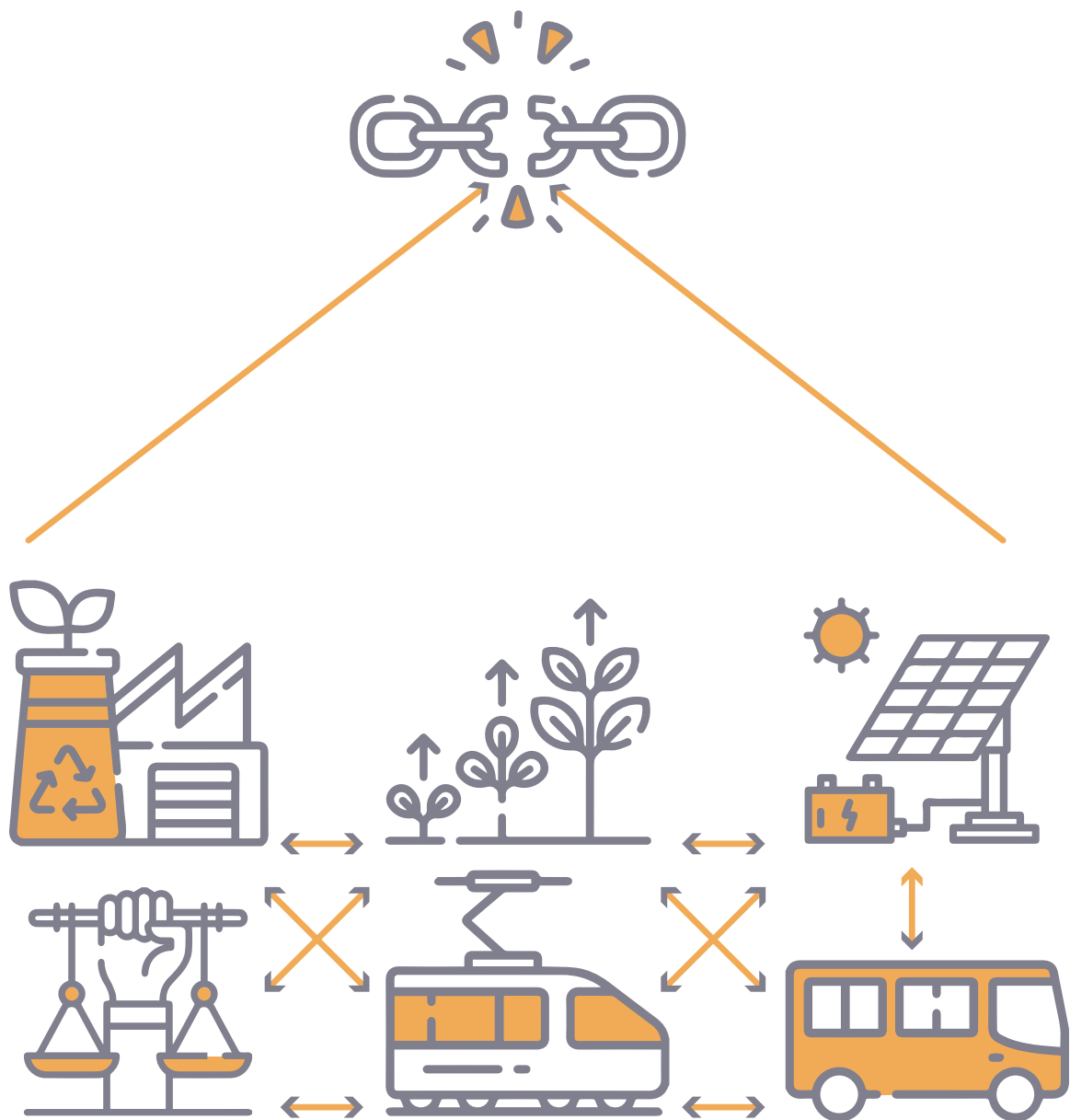
5- Examples of the Superstructure: Communication, Education, and Art

The term 'superstructure' refers to an entity resting on something more fundamental. This would seem to indicate that the 'base' takes priority, or is at least more important, when studying sectarianism and coexistence. Are there cases in which culture can be considered as important as the economy? Do communication, education, and the arts sometimes determine the path of technological development? What comes first, the realm of ideas or the material world? Is it conceivable that sectarianism is so entrenched in the hearts and minds of the Lebanese population that changes in the way we do business are indeed impossible?

The Superstructure Simplified

The most obvious example of the dominant role of the cultural superstructure in influencing the material base is the Italian Renaissance. During this period, classical Greek thought, architecture, and art reentered the European mainstream after an absence of 1000 years. The most emblematic expression of this era is Raphael's "School of Athens", painted between 1509 and 1511 to decorate the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican. In it Plato is portrayed pointing up to indicate the primacy of the sphere of ideas and spiritual values. Aristotle's hand faces downward to emphasize the significance of the material world. Their relationship is uniquely dialectical.

Although the Renaissance began in Florence because of its dominance in industrial production and Mediterranean trade at the time, the greatest single achievement of this period was bringing a broad selection of classical Greek cultural works back to Western Europe. The impact of the Classics on Europe determined all aspects of public and private life. It had a lasting effect on the development of technology, industry, and commerce for many centuries to come.

A case can be made that a similar top-down process is possible in West Asia and North Africa (WANA). Just as the Italian peninsula was ready for a reintroduction of classical Greek norms of symmetry, civil responsibility, and rule-of-law, many leaders and activists in government service, business, and civil society in the WANA region today are keen to apply similarly rigorous norms to the workplace and society in general.

"School of Athens" in Vatican showing Plato & Aristotle

Tips and Facts

- One idea which has transformed the WANA region in the last 200 years is nationalism. A distinction is often made between the French and German models of national loyalty and identity. The original French model, which emerged at the time of the 1789 Revolution, was based on inclusion of all members of society, but against divisions based on social class, family, region of origin, or religion. The German model developed as a response to Napoleonic occupation and was decidedly aggressive towards foreigners seen as threatening the organic, ethnic community.
- Early Ottoman and Arab nationalism tended to follow the French role model. During the Tanzimat reform period within the empire between 1839 and 1876, much was done to level the playing field between Muslims, Christians, and Jews. In response, many Armenians, Albanians, Arabs, and Greeks considered equality within an 'Ottoman Nation' a unique opportunity. These hopes were dashed during the years leading up to World War I.
- A modern example of the inclusion-exclusion dichotomy, is the debate over Diversity Management in the workplace in the 21st Century. In particular in dynamic sectors such as financial services, communications, marketing, and education, gender mainstreaming and intersectionality standards adopted from the Global North are being introduced with the support of civil society and international donors.

Practical Applications

There are a variety of examples in which the world of ideas has a major impact on industry, commerce and infrastructure development. Many of these are not only top-down, but also imported from the Global North in an attempt to apply global, capitalist standards to local and regional transition within the WANA. The logic of efficiency and profitability is the key force behind this process.

The accreditation of schools, universities, and vocational training centers is booming in the WANA region. This is being primarily driven by local leaders in the field of education, with the support of accreditation bodies in the United States and the European Union, and here in France in particular.

Although the debate on diversity management and intersectionality originated in the Global North in the 1960s and 1970s, it has been embraced by civil society, businesses promoting 'Corporate Social Responsibility' (CSR), and in some cases government leaders as well. Today, 'South–South' initiatives are developing unique strategies and demands geared to the specific social and cultural needs of people with disabilities, youth, women, migrants, the LGBTQ community, and minorities in the WANA.

Finally, the institution of self-government and self-regulation enjoys long-standing support in the WANA within the academic professions, including law, medicine and pharmacy, or engineering and architecture. This concept is now being applied to the communications sector in an attempt to apply the ideals of rule-of-law and intersectionality to media and advertising.

On the down side, religious, linguistic, and regional sectarianism is on the rise in the WANA. The 'culture of impunity', which is arguably about the cultural superstructure as much as the economic base, seems to be immune to attempts to enforce global principles of rule-of-law and sustainable development.

Can the Superstructure Transform the Base? Be the Change You Want to See in the World!

The protracted, existential crisis in Lebanon would seem to indicate that the Superstructure dominates the country's future. The systemically corrupt, domestic power elite ('Sulta') is struggling to expand its control over the media, educational sector, religious institutions, the arts, scientific and technological research and development. Lebanon's cultural and intellectual elite has, however, never existed in a vacuum. It has always been linked to regional and international developments. The post-COVID world has accelerated Lebanon's exposure to the 'Global Superstructure'. A combination of international norms and values, universal technological standards and business practices, and popular pressure from the grassroots within the country just might prove to be the irrespirable force capable of overwhelming the 'Sulta' and turning the country around.

Suggested Activities

Trainers/Instructors can assign the below activities to be carried out during a training session or in a virtual or face-to-face classroom setting. **NB:** These activities require advance preparation. The "For the trainer" section is designed to provide the user with a set of tips and ideas to support the learning process of each fact sheet.

What is the Base-Superstructure Dialectic?

Try to think of situations in which stability seems to be the **norm**. Does this prove that preserving or conserving traditional values is '**normal**'?

Now think of situations in which constant change is '**normal**'.

Finally, try to discover what drives change. Is progress really a good thing?

What is more important in our changing world: The world of business and technology or the realm of culture and politics?

VS
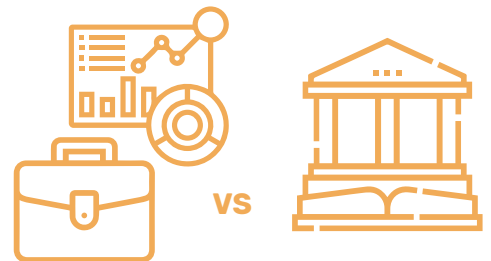
For the trainer:
- Find examples of stability being the **norm**. These could be village life or the core values of faith and religion. But were the 'good old days' really that good? What happens to people who aren't '**normal**' in traditional settings?
- Discover examples of constant change being '**normal**' are the communications sector and travel. We all know how we expect a new model phone or automobile to come out every year.
- Discuss what comes first, business or politics? This is the old 'The Chicken and the Egg' dilemma. Traditionally we tend to think that sectarianism and coexistence are located primarily in the 'Superstructure'. But what about Farming? Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)? The Travel Industry? Don't these business sectors bring us together by default?)

Intersectionality: Gender and Youth Activism

Try to find examples in which the traditional factors determining our identity are cut or 'intersected' by less common issues. Take the four main issues impacting us, i.e. social class, gender, religious confession, & race, and think of how other aspects of our identity play a role, e.g. language, abilities/disabilities, age, region of origin, sexual orientation, or level of education.

How do laws and social norms influence these 'cross-cutting cleavages' or social and cultural intersections?

How is intersectionality portrayed in the media, in schools, in religion, in the arts?

Does focusing on the various parts of our identity strengthen us or divide us and make us weaker and more isolated?

For the trainer:
- Identify how the male 'gender' used to be the norm, and historically being female was the 'deviation'. Today being male or female are both considered to be 'normal', even in top leadership.
- Pinpoint how we stereotype or 'Other' each other in various ways; along the lines of e.g. abilities vs. disabilities; straight vs. gay; affluent or middle class vs. poor and marginalized.
- Discover how these 'Othering' processes overlap, e.g. female, working class, minority language, non-white, 'wrong' skin color, and disabled.
- Show how being female in leadership positions has become 'normal' and how the same 'normalization' is occurring with other religions, skin colors, languages, etc.

Political Economy of Sectarianism and Coexistence

Try to figure out why we often assume that disagreements and open conflicts between religious confessions, language groups, or different regions in a country are mainly about culture, politics and religion.

Why do we always look for answers in the media, education, or government? Now debate whether it is better to look for answers in business, technology or infrastructure development.
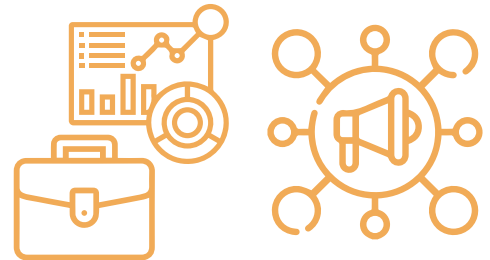
Consider the following quote by Mahatma Gandhi: "Be the change you want to see in the world!" Now let us discuss in groups: 'To change ourselves and the world around us, do we need to focus primarily on the economic and technological base or the cultural and political superstructure?'. Proposed activity, you can divide your class or trainees into two groups. One argues that individual and social change comes from culture, education and religion. The second argues that this change comes from business and technology.

For the trainer:
- Show conflicts all over the world, for example go online and check the following: Northern Ireland, former Yugoslavia, West Asia North Africa (WANA), or India/Pakistan/Bangladesh. These conflicts were as much about control over transportation routes and natural resources as they were about language and religion.
- Consider the Suez Canal and Panama Canal, or study the pipelines and railroads in the WANA including Lebanon. Show how these technological innovations were at the root of many conflicts.
- Now look at the opposite example, i.e. how the Renaissance period allowed art to change industry. Discuss how it changed our approach to science, research, and technology.

Examples of the Base: Energy, Mobility, and Agriculture

Find a variety of examples of 'new technologies' in ancient China, India, Mesopotamia, and the Aztec/Inca empires. Examples of this could be papermaking, road construction, or standardized vehicle production. Did these technologies change people's culture and politics?

Look at the three (or four) industrial revolutions and compare them to the three (or four) waves of feminism. Are they linked?
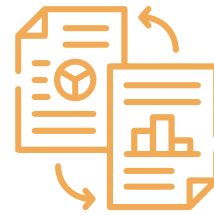
How did changes in agriculture and transportation in the 19th and early 20th century lead to mass migration within regions (e.g. the Ottoman, Russian, Austro-Hungarian Empires) and then to other continents (Africa, Americas)? Did this impact our thinking?

For the trainer:
- Prepare material on the role of emigration in the WANA (for example people leaving the levant for Latin America or Australia). Allow participants to talk about how travel in their own families was impacted by new technologies.
- Examine how internet technology has changed the way the diaspora communicates with friends and family back home?
- Consider the impact of technology in dealing with the communication challenges of COVID-19. How has the new online world of communication inversely impacted technological advancements? What is the feedback loop between technology and culture?

Examples of the Superstructure: Communication, Education, and Art

Look for ways in which culture, politics and religion play a role in altering the business world and technological development.

Consider whether ideology and religion have a positive impact on technology and business? Are religion and science compatible?
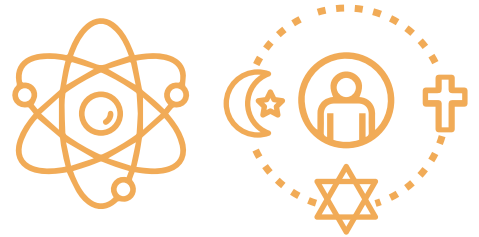
Find out how culture (e.g. media, schools and universities, literature, the graphic and performing arts) played a role in promoting sectarianism and coexistence?

For the trainer:
- Find examples of how a novel, movie, painting or sport has increased conflicts between groups. Alternatively, find examples of culture promoting coexistence.
- Go back in history to Galileo Galilei and Giordano Bruno and discuss how religion, science, and technology have interacted throughout time.
- Many critics claim that superstructure ideologies like Liberalism, Feminism, Ecologism, and Socialism are imported from the Global North and not organically rooted in the WANA base. Discuss whether this criticism is justified.

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About GCGM

The Gender, Communications and Global Mobility (GCGM) studies unit is comprised of a group of scholars, social science researchers, activists, and students at Notre Dame University (NDU) - Louaize. in the Faculty of Law and Political Science (FLPS). Its primary goal has been to create a bridge between the critical social sciences and the general public, thus linking civil society, the socially responsible business community, and reform-minded governmental leaders.

The GCGM has carried out training sessions, consultancy and research in fields such as the resource curse and the extractive industries; the impact of the global COVID-19 lockdown on communication and education; gender based-violence, diversity management and intersectionality in the workplace, cyber-safety for women and girls, political feminism, digital economy, mobility and migration, good governance; the impact of the ongoing collapse of the Lebanese economy and failed state on marginalize groups in society; and the human rights crisis in the West Asia North Africa (WANA) region. We are partnering with likeminded colleagues and initiatives in the WANA, Scandinavia and the Baltic region, Central Europe, Southern Africa, and North America. Currently we are developing research partnerships in the fields of protracted conflicts and intergenerational trauma in the WANA and Eastern Europe; media self-regulation and just governance; and the long-term impact of violence and state failure on human rights protection.

Gender, Communications
and Global Mobility

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