

Mgr Natalia Bahlawan

New social movements and the political system in Lebanon after 1990

The topic of the dissertation are Lebanese new social movements and their contestation of the sectarian political system. The aim is to analyse which factors contributed to the rise of the popular discontent against the Lebanese sectarian system and to evaluate the movements' potential to mobilize. This thesis analyses the Lebanese movements in reference to theories of new social movements.

The main hypothesis is that neoliberal reforms undertaken in Lebanon after 1990 were the crucial factor that contributed to the growth of the new types of movements and their resistance to the system. Economic liberalization resulted in the consolidating the sectarian elite's hegemony while causing widespread social problems such as growing inequality and relative impoverishment. Also, this thesis analyses the development of Lebanese new social movements in relation to the growth of the civil society sector in Lebanon.

Dissertation presents the functioning of the civil society sector in Lebanon as well as it characterizes the Lebanese movements and its main organizations challenging the system: civil rights movements, antisectarian secular movement, women's movements, environmental movement and gay rights movement. This thesis attempts to analyse these movements and the dynamics of their interaction with the Lebanese political system, in order to conclude about the place of the Lebanese new social movements on the current political scene.