

5th Global Conference
War, Virtual War and Human Security
May 5-7 2008
Budapest

“Voices- Paths of Peace in Lebanon: Contributions of the 25-40 Age Group”

By PAMELA CHRABIEH BADINE¹

Your soul is oftentimes a battlefield, upon which your reason and your judgment wage war against your passion and your appetite.

Would that I could be the Peacemaker in your soul, that I might turn the discord and the rivalry of your elements into oneness and melody.

But how shall I, unless you yourselves be also the Peacemakers, nay, the lovers of all your elements?
 (Gibran 1974, 23)

Recent events in Lebanon and especially after the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri on February 14th 2005, have underlined the long-lasting relevance of Gibran Khalil Gibran's writings today. The need for a spiritual voice of Reconciliation, Peace and Forgiveness remains strong. The guidelines provided in Gibran's message are applied throughout the diverse individual, collective, national and transnational Peacebuilding projects, which are taking place in the Lebanese Civil Society and in its Diaspora, but rarely mediatized. Unfortunately, most current studies on the Arab World in Political Sciences, Social Sciences and even in Sciences of Religion focus on the relation between Religion and Violence. In some academic and most media quarters, the “Clash of Civilizations” world-view - especially between the ‘Islamic’ and ‘Western’ Civilizations - is gaining ground. Moreover, it is largely widespread in the media and public opinions that the Arab World is incapable of implementing Democracy and promoting Human Rights, due to religious totalitarianism and oppressive political regimes. This vision conceals the complex realities of its societies.

For the last three decades, Lebanon has witnessed several wars and periods of status quos, compiling new war memories onto others, reviving old wounds and shattering the dreams of reconstruction and stability. In this context of multilayered social and political crises and conflicted identities, we notice, since the nineties, the emergence of discourses and practices within the Lebanese Civil Society, the Lebanese Diaspora and the

¹ Pamela Chrabieh (Badine) holds a PhD in Sciences of Religions (University of Montreal). She is the Director of International Relations at the Canada Research Chair in Islam, Pluralism and Globalization (University of Montreal, QC, Canada). She is also a Research Scholar and a Teaching Fellow at the Institute of Islamic-Christian Studies (St-Josef University, Beirut, Lebanon). She published numerous scientific articles in Canada and Lebanon on the Interreligious Dialogue, the Politics-Religions-Society relations in the Near Eastern area, and on the role of the Lebanese Civil Society and Diaspora in building Peace. She also published the following books: *Icônes du Liban, au carrefour du dialogue des cultures*, Montréal, Carte Blanche, 2003; *À la rencontre de l'Islam, itinéraire d'une spiritualité composite et engagée*, Montréal, Médiaspaul, 2006; *Voix-es de paix au Liban. Contribution de jeunes de 25-40 ans à la reconstruction nationale*, Dar al-Machreq, Collection ‘Interactions islamo-chrétiennes’ (IEIC, USJ), Beyrouth, 2008 (distribution : La Librairie Orientale).

E-mail : pchrabieh@hotmail.com; Blogs : <http://pchrabieh.blogspot.com> and <http://eykouna.blogspot.com>

transnational Civil Society, revealing the existence of new political forces and an enriching diversity in the rethinking of the relation between Politics, Society and Religion; a diversity which is not confined to the voices of religious and political leaders and elites. The role of the Lebanese Civil Society, Diaspora and the transnational Civil Society - and especially the role of the 25-40 Age Group in spreading courage and hope despite constraining conditions, and in working towards breaking the cycle of war by building a culture of Peace and Conviviality -, is of utmost importance.

This paper presents a summary of a recent research conducted on the 25-40 Lebanese Age Group.² The research is based on participatory observation in Beirut and Montreal, on the collection and analysis of published and unpublished data (press releases, scientific articles, electronic and multimedia material, educational material, minutes of meetings and workshops, events reports and field notes), and qualitative interviews with forty Lebanese aged between 25 and 40, including journalists, poets, novelists, artists, bloggers, psychologists, movie and documentary producers, in addition to activists in NGOs, transnational organizations and groups of interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

To build a culture of Peace and Conviviality, individuals and collectivities within the 25-40 Age Group reveal that it is not sufficient that weapons be silenced, but that through their work, they emphasize the necessity of testifying about the personal war experiences, learning the lessons of history, sharing the grief, breaking the cycle of hatred and revenge, connecting divisions and embracing a “common” humanity. In doing so, they run against the grain of the political class and large segments of the Lebanese society. The paper examines how this implicit status of being a cross-sectarian “counter-culture” influences their campaigning and, conversely, its reception.

1- Defining basic concepts:

The concept of Civil Society is quite difficult to define and to understand in the context of a given society or state. In the Arab World, this concept is often used to describe the traditional religious, confessional and tribal structures of the society (Halabi). For example, Dawahare (2000) explores Ibn Khaldoun's notion of *'asabiyya* (tribalism) and its impact on the constitution of Civil Society and the public sphere in Lebanon, paying particular attention to the notions of power and authority within the context of this indigenous concept in particular, and Lebanese (and Arab) culture in general. In my researches, the concept of Civil Society is defined in a larger perspective, including all citizens who participate individually and collectively to the social and political dynamics of the country (except state employees), whether residing in Lebanon or abroad.

² This post-doctoral research is entitled “Voices-Paths of Peace in Lebanon. Contributions of the 25-40 Lebanese Age Group to the National Reconstruction”. The first phase took place in Montreal and in Beirut from September 2005 to May 2006. It was financed by the Canada Research Chair of Islam, Pluralism and Globalization (Université de Montréal). The second phase took place at the same Chair and at the Institute of Islamic-Christian Studies (Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth, Lebanon) from June 2006 to May 2008. This phase was financed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Government of Canada). The results of the research will be published in a book format by *Dar el-Machreq* (Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth, Lebanon) in 2008.

This definition leads to the appropriation of another concept, i.e. the “transnational Civil Society”, referring to the system/web of national NGOs, individuals and transnational groups-associations-organizations that interact at the transnational level with each other, with governments or with intergovernmental and semi-governmental organizations (e.g. United Nations, World Bank, etc.). As for the concept of Diaspora, its use refers to a diversity of definitions of exile and it moves between the specificity of an historical experience to an existential condition. It is even used as a metaphor for the existential condition of post modernity, referring as such to uncertainty, displacement, identity fragmentation, national disintegration, as well as to the destruction of social worlds.

“In thinking about the expression 'Lebanese Diaspora' we need to negotiate these very different historical and metaphoric uses. One problem with the expression 'Lebanese Diaspora' is that it is homogenizing. When used to refer to the resilience of tradition it conjures up a cultural essentialism, i.e., Lebanese 'cultural survival' across generations is an expression of their qualities as a people. Of course Diaspora as an 'imaginary transnational community' is necessarily homogenizing, as is the 'imagined community' of the nation-state. However while diasporic imagining might be homogenizing the Diaspora has not been formed by a singular process, are not culturally very similar. Nor do Lebanese Diaspora communities conceive of the 'imagined present' or 'past' in the same way. The Lebanese emigrants who constitute the present Diaspora are the product of quite different migrations with their own very distinct relationships to societies and to contemporary Lebanon. Some have been constituted through labor migration, others through trading activities, and others through flight as refugees from war and economic crisis in Lebanon. Moreover the societies in which they have become residents and/or citizens ranging from mass immigration societies, colonial societies, postcolonial societies and the former European colonial states now increasingly themselves countries of immigration, are very different” (Humphrey 2004).

2- Research Methodology

The research shows how young Lebanese understand, imagine and view the Reconstruction in the Lebanese context which is characterized by changing socio-political and cultural dynamics. Therefore, interdisciplinarity and qualitative methodologies were used. The former, applied through the conceptual approach of the research - at the crossroads of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies -, enables the researcher to study the cultural phenomenon of the Lebanese youth by integrating it in the complexity of its social, political and historical contexts. Furthermore, it allows the confrontation of a “fragmented knowledge” in order to constitute a configuration that complies with the particular cognitive expectations and interrogations of the research.

As for the use of qualitative methodologies, the first phase of the research took place in Montreal and in Beirut from September 2005 to May 2006. It consisted of content analysis and the participation to a number of events and meetings organized by young Lebanese. The method of the participant observation was used as a process of a dynamic immersion until the field research was finalized in 2007. This process required the researcher to become an insider and an outsider, using four types of immersion, depending on the group or the association whose discourses and practices were analyzed: (1) a complete participation with an active influence on the management of the group or the association; (2) a participation as an observer without influencing the management of the group or the association; (3) an observation with a punctual participation to the activities of the group or the association; (4) a complete observation without participating to the activities of the group or the association.

I particularly focused on five groups and associations:

- *Nahwa al-Muwatiniya* (Towards Citizenship), a non-profit organization founded by young individuals in 2005 in Lebanon - 15 permanent members and 70 supporters - seeking a progressive and forward-looking democratic society. This organization empowers and mobilizes citizens towards active participation in governance through research, publication, education and lobbying.
- *Art of Living Foundation*, the largest volunteer based Non-Governmental Organization in the world. The Foundation service projects, programs on yoga, meditation and stress elimination have benefited over 20 million people representing all walks of life, religions, cultures and traditions. In Lebanon, amongst its diverse initiatives, Art of Living organizes trauma relief and Peace building projects.
- *Tadamon* (Solidarity), a new Montreal-based collective of social justice organizers and media activists, working to build relationships of solidarity with grassroots political movements for social and economic justice between Montreal and Beirut. Amongst the diversity of their activities, the members of Tadamon produce Radio programs about the Lebanese war, organize Ciné-Clubs and events addressing issues such as war memory, immigration, racism, poverty, labour rights, human rights, Palestinian refugees...
- *Helem* (Dream), a group previously known as *Club Free*. Helem has been working on LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) issues in Lebanon for the past 4 years (as well as in Ottawa, Montreal, Sydney, Paris and San Francisco). Its activities have included social and cultural events to bring the gay community together, extensive work on HIV/AIDS related issues, advocacy for prosecuted LGBT individuals and lobbying with other human rights organizations for the advancement of human rights and personal freedoms in Lebanon (i.e. *Huriyyat Khassa - Private Liberties -*, *Rassemblement Canadien pour le Liban*, *Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme*, *Foundation for Human and Humanitarian Rights...*).
- *Le Cercle Interreligieux de Montréal*, a Montreal based group of Islamic-Christian Dialogue, founded in 2003 (Chrabieh 2003, 243-259). This group of 15-20 permanent members including Lebanese activists, organized in 2004 and 2005 Peace building projects and conferences about War and Reconciliation in Lebanon. Moreover, it produced and animated several Radio and TV programs (Radio Canada - "Les guerriers repentis", Second Regard, 2005 -, Radio Ville-Marie, Canal Vox).

Given the lack of academic data concerning the subject of the research³, it was necessary to interview forty Lebanese individuals (with diverse confessional or non-confessional, political and socio-economical identities), while using a qualitative semi-directive method. This method consists of letting the interviewee express himself - or herself - (telling the story from the viewpoint of the participant) and asking him or her

³ The majority of the academic researches focuses on the Lebanese political system, the political parties, and the discourses of the elites and the leaders (El-Khazen 1992, Perthes 2004).

predetermined questions which could sometimes change throughout the interview. These questions are summarized as follows:

How do you define the war in Lebanon?

How do you remember and memorialize the war (or how do you construct a personal memory of the war)?

How do you use this personal memory of the war to define your identity?

Do you find it significant to construct-reconstruct a national memory of the war as part of a national reconstruction process?

How do you link your personal memory to the construction-reconstruction of this national memory?

How do you link the construction-reconstruction of a national memory of the war to other pending issues such as the Religion-Politics-Society relations, and especially, the issue of Confessionalism?

What are the strategies-discourses-practices addressing these issues that you develop and promote on the individual and collective levels in Lebanon and-or Canada?

Each interview was preceded by the filling of a questionnaire in order to collect the basic information about the identity of the interviewee. As follows, the results reveal the plurality within this sample of the Lebanese Youth:

Age Group

Born between: 1967-1974	1975-1982
30%	70%

Gender

Female	Male
50%	50%

An equal number of men and women was chosen in order to allow the often marginalized discourses and practices of women in Lebanon on all levels (social, political, economical, religious) to be recognized (Cooke 1998, Nauphal 1997).

Citizenship

Lebanese	50%
Lebanese and Canadian	40%
Lebanese and other (French, Brazilian...)	10%

The research focuses on Lebanese living in Lebanon and in Canada (especially in Montreal, where more than 66% of the Lebanese in Canada are settled). Within the 40% of the Lebanese-Canadian interviewees, nearly 30% live in Lebanon and 70% in Montreal while visiting regularly Lebanon and working in local and transnational

organizations to help their country of origin. Studying local and transnational initiatives allowed me to discover and understand more experiences, ideas and resources.

Education

High School	100%
University (Bachelor Degree)	100%
University (Master Degree)	60%

Engineering - Architecture	15%
Medical Sciences	5%
Arts	30%
Human and Social Sciences	30%
Business Administration	20%

Profession

Students	5%
Employees - private sector	60%
Freelance workers	35%

Religious Affiliation :

Christians	25%
Musulims	20%
Atheists	15%
Agnostics	30%
Believers with no institutional affiliation	5%
'Private' religious beliefs and practices	5%

Confessional or Sectarian Affiliation (among the Christians and Muslims):

Confessional Affiliation (Maronite, Greek-Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, Druze, Sunni, Shia)	60%
No Confessional Affiliation	40%

Involvement in a group, association or a NGO

Local	80%
Transnational	75%
No involvement	20%

Human Rights	50%
Social Justice - Caritative	30%
Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue	10%

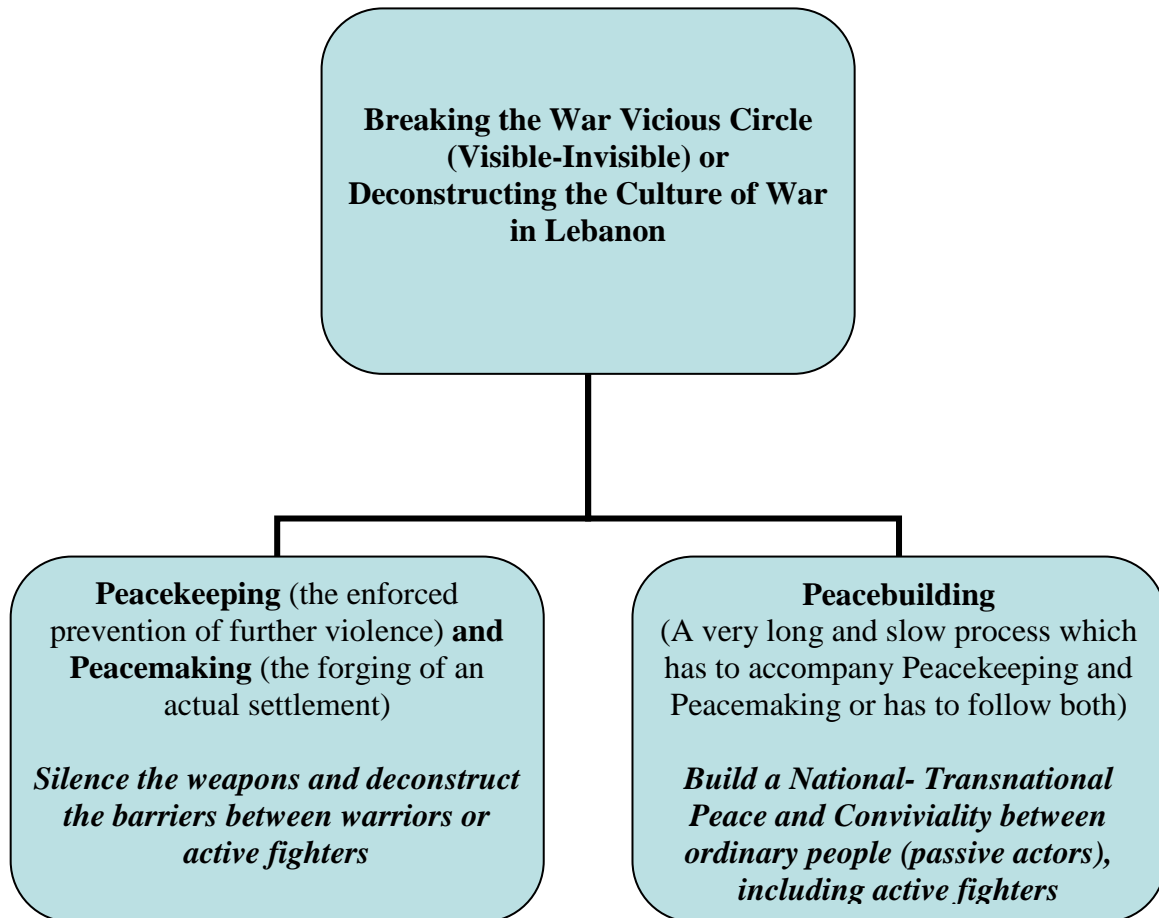
Peacebuilding	50%
---------------	-----

3- The war in Lebanon: a diversity of definitions

Building a Culture of Peace and Conviviality necessitates a rethinking of the causes and impacts of the Culture of War in Lebanon, and especially an analysis of the war representations-visions within the Lebanese Society, Diaspora and transnational Civil Society. These representations-visions appear to be diversified, whether in the academic field or the popular and media fields: “civil war”, “Islamic-Christian war”, “war of the others”, “war for the others”, “social and economical war”, etc. (Labaki, Abou Rjeily 1993; Tarazi 1994; Abul-Husn 1998; Corm 2003, 1005-1014). This diversity is found in the data collected within our research: less than 5% of the interviewees identify the war as a “civil war” or an “Islamic-Christian war”, joining the thesis of Lebanese analysts such as Carole Dagher (2002); and 5% of the interviewees identify the war as a “war of others” or a “war for others”, echoing the thesis of the prominent journalist Ghassan Tuéni (1985). For these two categories of interviewees, the war started in 1975 and ended in 1990.

Nevertheless, a third category of interviewees (90%) identifies the war as “continuous” and “plural” - in other terms, the war in Lebanon has no precise beginning, no ending and has multiple forms: civil, sectarian, social and economical, a war of clans, families and tribes, a war of generations, a war for the others, a war of others on Lebanese soil, etc. According to these interviewees, the war in Lebanon is a “blend” of an “invisible war” (symbolic, psychic, a war of representations-visions) run by “passive actors” who fail to understand the nature of their complex memories and identities, and its counterpart, the “visible war” (physical - combats, negotiations, treaties) run by “active fighters” (Houballah 1996).

Therefore, ending the war necessitates to break the vicious circle of the “visible-invisible”, or to work on both the “political” and the “human”, the “material” and what the NGOs identify as the “non-material dynamics” (traumas, suffering, marginalization). Ending the war compels all Lebanese to undertake Peacekeeping and Peacemaking processes (targeting the “active fighters”), as well as a Peacebuilding process (targeting both “active fighters” and “passive actors”) with the purpose to build Conviviality between the diverse identities and memories within the Lebanese Civil Society, Diaspora and Transnational Civil Society.



The term “Peacebuilding” came into widespread use after 1992 when Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then United Nations Secretary-General, announced his *Agenda for Peace* (Boutros-Ghali 1992). Since then, “Peacebuilding” has become a broadly used but often ill-defined term connoting activities that go beyond crisis intervention such as longer-term development, and building of governance structures and institutions. It includes building the capacity of non-governmental organizations (including religious institutions) for peacemaking and Peacebuilding. The emphasis of the United Nations has been on structural transformation, with a primary focus on institutional reform.

Peacebuilding involves a full range of approaches, processes, and stages needed for transformation toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships and governance modes and structures. Peacebuilding includes building legal and human rights institutions as well as fair and effective governance and dispute resolution processes and systems. To be effective, Peacebuilding activities requires careful and participatory planning, coordination among various efforts, and sustained commitments by both local and donor partners. To summarize a construction metaphor used by Lederach, *Peacebuilding* involves a long-term commitment to a *process* that includes investment, gathering of resources and materials, architecture and planning, coordination of resources and labor, laying solid foundations, construction of walls and roofs, finish work and ongoing maintenance. Lederach also emphasizes that Peacebuilding centrally involves the transformation of relationships. “Sustainable reconciliation” requires both structural and relational transformations (Lederach 1997, 20, 82-83).⁴

⁴ See: <http://www.peacemakers.ca/publications/peacebuildingdefinition.html>

According to most of my interviewees, the Peacebuilding process (or the construction of a Culture of Peace and Conviviality) in Lebanon requires three major steps:

- A first step is to recognize the plurality of the personal and collective memories of the war.
- A second step is to build a national-transnational memory of the war based on these personal and collective memories.
- A third step is to implement Peace and Conviviality between the Lebanese, based for the most part on this national-transnational memory of the war.

4- Constructing a Culture of Peace and Conviviality (The Peacebuilding Process)

3.1. Recognizing the personal and collective memories of the war

Individuals within the 25-40 Age Group who are part of the “Lost Lebanese Generation” of War - “la génération des perdus de la guerre”, a quote by Wadih al-Asmar from SOLIDA Movement -, survived while having been deeply marked by the 1975-1990 combat period. Most of them have started to construct memories of the war based on their personal perceptions and experiences since the mid or late nineties, but very few researches have been devoted to the study of these memories. My research presents examples of alternative discourses and counter-discourses that have become numerous the last few years, yet have been neglected by most of the scholars working on the Middle East in general and on Lebanon in particular. It is designed to fill some obvious gaps in the existing literature, mainly when it concerns a marginalized public - even if throughout my research, the discourses of elites and experts are not omitted.

To be more precise, various aspects of the history of the Lebanese war have been subject to studies. Having said that, several researches on the geo-political, military and economic aspects, as well as researches on traditional collective memories (political parties, confessions, militias) have been conducted but very little has been done to present a map of the discursive terrain of non-state actors or has been devoted to the way Lebanese from all backgrounds perceive the war. At least three factors lie behind this major neglect: the persistent Orientalisms which consider Peacebuilding as being more irrelevant than relevant to the Arab World - the same case can be applied to the problematic of Democracy; the “Policy Orientation” of area studies, funded by Western powers keen to learn about the behavior of traditional institutions, leaders and elites; and the scholarly obsession with the Arab-Israeli conflict - as well as other conflicts in the Middle East - to the detriment of the study of other important questions.

Elisabeth Suzanne Kassab writes:

The perceptions and personal experiences of people are relevant for the study of such conflicts for two reasons. First, because people themselves are relevant. Conflicts and wars are not carried out in abstract political, economic, or social systems, but in the concrete lives of people. They are their perpetrators and/or victims, and it is in their bodies and souls that the most devastating effects of armed strife are to be found. Second, the perceptions and lived experiences of people are also relevant because they play a major role in

shaping their socio-cultural and political attitudes, actions and reactions, and thereby influence the military and political course of events.⁵

Personal perceptions of the war have been depicted in fiction, memoirs, diaries, music productions, paintings, movies, novels throughout the eighties and nineties - and even after - by Lebanese from all backgrounds and identities, relating to all who are concerned with human survival, depicting the horrors of the war, the agony of individuals and families and their struggles to keep their souls alive (e.g. Labaki 1986; Accad 1988; Makdissi 1990; Bechara 2000). Nevertheless, most of the individuals and the collectivities I have contacted for my research, and most of the individuals I interviewed are more concerned with rethinking the past in order to build a better future than reducing their present to a quest of survival shrinking as such the self to its minimal dimensions. In their discourses, “living” and operating a self-criticism appears to be more important than “surviving” and being trapped in the “victim state of mind” - without marginalizing the status of the victims and the responsibilities for the violence that were overlooked by the Amnesty Law passed in 1991.

Moreover, these individuals and collectivities often use informal, alternative or even underground strategies of testifying, rather than traditional demand-making actions⁶: publishing articles and independent media reports on the Internet, launching alternative websites and blogs, producing alternative radio programs, short-movies, documentaries, trauma plays or dramas of survival, organizing home movie screening events⁷ as well as artistic experimental exhibitions (as at Zico House in Hamra Street in Beirut), round tables and debates using ‘new media’ resources (video, interactive installation, Internet, and virtual reality), and mixing literary and artistic genres. These strategies are mostly being promoted by decentralized, interactive and intercultural systems such as the Lebanese Blogosphere I am part of.⁸ A decentralized system has no clear leader, no hierarchy and no headquarters. It is an open system everyone is entitled to make her/his own decisions. In other terms, the power lay with each individual and is distributed among all the people and across geographic regions (Brafman, Beckstrom 2006).

In grafting a horizontal communication network onto the traditionally vertical one of the traditional media, the Internet technologies no doubt contribute to bypassing the older elite hierarchies to widen communications (...). In contrast to the *nahda* (“renaissance”) and the earlier print revolution in the Arab world during the second half of the nineteenth century, partially held in check because of difficulties in integrating the Muslim cultural and religious heritage, the experience of a country such as Lebanon offers hope that the entire region is on the verge of taking part in the new age of communication and information in a positive way (Gonzales-Quijano 2003, 76).

⁵ See: <http://www/lcps-lebanon.org/pub/breview/br4/kassabpt1.html>

⁶ For more details about traditional demand-making actions, see Dawahare 2000; Amin and Kenz 2003; Bayat 2002; Khalaf 2002; Karam 2000 and 2006.

⁷ Video Nights is a recent and interesting movement developing in Lebanon. It is about people frequently organizing video or experimental art evening gatherings in their own homes. They invite friends to attend. This way, a new audience for media works was recently introduced in Lebanon. Many of such events began with ALBA (*Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts*, Balamand University) students.

⁸ See: <http://pchrabieh.blogspot.com> (*Pamela Chrabieh Badine*).

A Blogosphere is the collective term encompassing all blogs - a blog is a type of website that often functions as a personal online diary - as a community or social network. Many blogs are densely interconnected; bloggers read others' blogs, link to them, reference them in their own writing, and post comments on each others' blogs. The latter allows the interconnected blogs to grow their own culture. The recent conflict with Israel has sent the Lebanese blogworld into hyperdrive, with a litany of personal experiences, explanations and exhortations crisscrossing the Internet along with disturbing pictures of violence. Images of war and its commemoration had become an everyday presence in this blogworld, created and managed by individuals from the embedded reporter in the field to the researcher and activist all around the globe.

Since July 2006, I have identified more than eighty blogs for young Lebanese in their twenties and thirties living in Lebanon and abroad, fighting war through the internet. Most of these bloggers illustrate old invasions and massacres through their personal 'souvenirs'. They also comment recent combats, using anecdotes, photographs, video footage and drawings, while showing that the construction-reconstruction of a national-transnational memory of the war begins with the representation of wartime events lived by 'ordinary people' and the promotion of social conditions that are conducive to creativity and innovation. These conditions are tied to what Toby E. Huff (2004, 150) called "the public sphere", "a completely open (and open-ended) sphere in which all individuals can express their thoughts and promote their ideas and interests unfettered by political or religious censors".

Moreover, if we follow Tengku Azzman Sheriffadeen's (1997, 10) view, the new constellation of Internet Technology constitutes a "shift from the traditional centralized power structure to the flatter distributed, web-like networks of communities [and] will require new forms of governance to evolve where the individual is empowered and government intervention is greatly reduced". In the case of the Lebanese Blogosphere, the "traditional centralized power" also designates the mainstream media - traditional television and radio channels, traditional press releases and websites - that usually represent the views and opinions of the elites, the political leaders and the religious institutions.

Hence, the rise of the Lebanese Blogosphere during the Summer 2006 combats does not only constitute a response-resistance to the Israeli Invasion, but also creates alternative localities ("*lieux alternatifs*") for a diversity of Voices-Paths to be communicated, expressed, debated and shared, thus redefining the political sphere while accelerating the crossing of all kinds of boundaries (national, religious, political, cultural), and the promotion of a unified, pluralistic and mediated society. These localities reveal that social and political spaces are never structured neutrally like a *tabula rasa*, but instead consist of individual and collective discourses and practices, visions and interpretations of discursive forces. They show that the structures of the Internet and new media offer a range of possibilities for subjective expressions and that in times of limited mobility, individuals excluded from the 'traditional spaces' have found a way to exercise their autonomy.

However, one may question the durability of such alternative electronic localities. According to Paige Austin, the Lebanese Blogosphere is “falling”, because many online writers “closed shop with the cessation of hostilities on August 14”.

To some, the trend foretold the creation of a new space in Lebanon for artistic expression, transnational debate, even friendships across enemy lines. Optimistic reports on the phenomenon cropped up on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Cable News Network (CNN), as well as in the pages of *Wired* magazine and *The Washington Post*. But two months later, directories of Lebanese blogs like those available on "Open Lebanon" read like a graveyard of once-lively sites. The sudden change left a lingering question: What became of Lebanon's war blogs? "Café Younes" stopped posting on August 18, "Beirut Update" on August 23. Scrolling down through "Siege of Lebanon," "Peace Blogger," "Live from Beirut," "Lebanon Updates" and "Bliss Street Journal," it is clear that by the second week of September, the postings had trickled to a halt" (Austin 2006).

Still, other blogs are continuously active, especially those that gained some notoriety and those that did not start as a result of the Summer 2006 combats (*Les Niouzes, Beirut Springs, Beirut Live, Blogging Beirut, Pamela Chrabieh Badine...*). Even if some blogs were not updated or their traffic slowed down, one cannot agree with Austin's conclusion of a “fall”, at least, not for the time being. The performance or the impact of the Blog Movement and Culture cannot be measured on the short-run. Furthermore, the lack of scientific studies of this Movement and Culture since its beginnings and throughout its evolution makes it hazardous to accept hasty conclusions.⁹

The Lebanese Blogosphere Culture is a part of a Culture of Resistance that is not ephemeral as it has been evolving since the mid-nineties within the Lebanese Civil Society, Diaspora and transnational Civil Society. The resistance does not only focus on survival and is not driven by hatred or revenge. It is a multilevel process dealing with the regional conflicts and the national-transnational problems while targeting the implementation of a self-regulating Society with unlimited access to information, “where the wise rule and the people actively participate in determining their destiny” and with the creation of a “caring Society with the notion of Human dignity forming the cornerstone of the individuals inalienable right” (Sheriffadeen 1997, 10) of freedom of expression and civil and political liberties.

3.2. Constructing a National- Transnational Memory of the War

For some of the interviewees, there is no national memory of the war in Lebanon, but only individual and collective memories. It should then be constructed. For others, a national memory of the war exists, but it is the memory of the leaders (“the Warlords”),

⁹ Except a recent study worth being taken into account: « Une illustration de la guerre de l'information : le conflit entre Israël et le Hezbollah de l'été 2006 », 2007, www.ege.fr/download/liban2007.pdf. According to this study, the rise of the self-media phenomenon during the Summer 2006 combats expresses the increase of actors playing a considerable role in matters of perception and influence. A part of these actors contributed to what analysts and journalists called “the first world blogwar” (e.g.: *Loubnan Ya Loubnan, My Lebanon, Peace4Lebanon, Lebanon Under Attack*). An other part of these actors created a culture of Peace and Conviviality (e.g.: *Bloggingbeirut, Letters Apart, Pamela Chrabieh Badine, Chroniques Beyrouthines, Pour que le Liban vive*).

the militias, the traditional parties, the traditional religious institutions and the mainstream Media. In that sense, the Lebanese find themselves with this memory - the memory of “power”, *la mémoire du pouvoir* - as the only national-transnational memory of the war that is transmitted from generation to generation. This memory needs to be deconstructed and reconstructed on the basis of the diverse individual and collective memories - and especially the memories emerging from the “intimate spaces of culture” (Herzfeld 2005, 12) to be found locally and abroad. In other terms, it should be “an ongoing process of interactions between individual and collective readings of the diverse pasts and presents; a plural and dynamic process to which the constructions-representations-expressions of all actors of the Lebanese Civil Society, Diaspora and transnational Civil Society contribute” - “processus en devenir d’échanges-interactions entre des relectures individuelles et collectives des divers passés et présents; un processus pluriel et dynamique auquel contribuent les constructions-représentations-expressions de tous les acteurs de la société civile, de la Diaspora et de la société civile transnationale” (Chrabieh 2007, 12-13).

The main objective is to go beyond old and recent wounds, and concentrate on the most important duties-responsibilities as national, diasporic and transnational citizens: the exploration and understanding of similarities and differences, Dialogue, Reconciliation and Conviviality. These duties involve justice, recognition and healing. It is about helping each others move forward with a better understanding of the deep echoes of the past. It also provides a strong sense of how we define ourselves in our societies, and how we take responsibility for solving our own problems. Thus the example of the public apology of Assaad Chaftari and Muhieddine Mustapha Chehab (Initiatives of Change 2002) for their wrongdoings as militants during the war, demonstrates the existence of significant commitments towards public awareness of Reconciliation among the Lebanese Civil Society since the mid-nineties - even before, during the years of combats, individuals and groups kept alive the idea of Reconciliation and worked to rebuild relationships with people of other communities.

A direct consequence of rethinking the national-transnational memory of the war is to approach the concept of the Lebanese identity, both being tightly interconnected. According to most of the interviewees, the Lebanese identity:

The Lebanese Identity	
Should not	Should
- evacuate the national-transnational memory of the war	- be based on the national-transnational memory of the war among other memories
- only integrate sectarian or confessional identities	- integrate a diversity of identities, both individual and collective, national and transnational, local and diasporic, confessional and non-confessional
- be an inherited and fixed identity, used as an instrument of radical political mobilization or as supreme object to protect	- be a dynamic identity

- be a murderous identity or an identity as a frontier	- be an identity as a “channel” to other identities
--	---

3.3. Edifying a Conviviality Process

Constructing or reconstructing a national-transnational memory of the war - and therefore, renewing the Lebanese identity - calls for building up a long-term Conviviality between the diversity of memories and identities; a Conviviality that is not only interreligious or interconfessionnal as the mainstream media tended to portray the Relief Campaigns and social solidarity in July and August 2006, but is also between generations, nationalities, social classes and genders. An inter-human Conviviality in all its dimensions. For example, in the blogs that I have reviewed so far, we find many testimonies of solidarity and Conviviality between Lebanese notwithstanding their religious or non-religious affiliations.¹⁰ It is also the case of new NGOs and Social movements-networks run by young activists such as *Nahwa al-Muwatiniya*, *Amam 05*, *Haya Bina*, *Kafa*, *Sawa Group*, *Samidoun* and *Tadamon*.

This inter-human Conviviality can be generated through these individuals and collectivities, but it would be insufficient. That is why the idea of a national-transnational dialogue is being promoted; a dialogue that is not reduced to political and religious leaders. This dialogue should integrate private sector leaders, academics, technocrats and young activists, whose expertise would help balance the needs of all Lebanese citizens, and allow Lebanon tackle the significant challenges it faces in such fields like Confessionalism, environmental degradation, youth massive emigration, debt, unemployment, corruption, feudality, clanism, public sector inefficiency, Palestinian Refugees Camps, and shortcomings in urban and rural planning, naming only the most obvious.

The inter-human Conviviality not only calls for Dialogue but also for a Reconciliation process that could be implemented by reinforcing the already existent initiatives undertaken by individuals and collectivities in Lebanon and abroad. It could also be implemented by applying the strategies listed below which were identified by the interviewees:

- The creation of online forums for Dialogue amongst individuals, collectivities and Lebanese state representatives. These forums should not only tackle the issues of Islamic-Christian Dialogue or the Dialogue between the traditional political parties and leaders, but it should extend to multiform Dialogues.
- The creation of spaces of Hospitality, Understanding and Reconciliation within schools, universities, municipalities, youth groups, religious communities, private and public firms, Media, etc. The example of *Nahwa al-Muwatiniya's* circles of Dialogue is relevant in this case, gathering every week twenty to sixty individuals from different backgrounds to share their experiences, visions and practices.

¹⁰ See: <http://pchrabieh.blogspot.com> for the list of Lebanese Blogs against War.

- The creation of a committee to rewrite the Lebanese Contemporary History books for schools and universities; a committee which would include experts, elites and other diverse actors of the Lebanese Civil Society, Diaspora and the transnational Civil Society - or to revive and reform the Civic Education and History Programs which were elaborated in 1997-2001 by the *Education Center for Research and Development* in Lebanon.
- The construction of commemorative spaces on the basis of partnerships between a diversity of individuals and collectivities (War museum, exhibitions on War and Peace in schools and universities in Lebanon and abroad amongst the Lebanese Diaspora...). These spaces should tackle the individual and collective memories of the war, and not only those of the leaders and elites.
- The establishment of a national and transnational Media campaign for Peace, involving both mainstream Media and alternative independent Media.
- The instauration of a national day to commemorate the victims of all wars in Lebanon.
- The creation of academic departments and research centers on War and Peacebuilding.
- The creation of a Truth and Reconciliation commission adapted to the Lebanese History and context.

Still, many obstacles need to be overcome:

- The weak application of the law (e.g. the right of return for the refugees). The Lebanese population has few means for pressuring the state.
- The contestability of Peacebuilding that is particularly difficult to deal with in the Lebanese political setting. One major difficulty lies in the absence of any kind of substantively systemic linkage with democratic, convivial and peaceful rule, for *Sultawiyah* (Hegemony) and *Ahadiyyah* (Homogeneity) have been the currency of rule.
- The latent state of violence (political assassinations and horrific blasts targeting civilians since 2005, massive attacks such as the Israeli offensive in July-August 2006) which prevents any Peacebuilding process on a large scale to be undertaken.
- The political and religious divisions which split the forces of the Lebanese population and the absence of cooperation and consensus which prevents the implementation of innovative projects.
- The non-visibility of the real power on account of the profusion of scattered powers and foreign interventions in national affairs.
- The despair that affects many individuals and collectivities within the Lebanese Civil Society, Diaspora and the transnational Civil Society. Also, the disillusionment punctuated by crises of government legitimacy.
- The marginalization of the study of Peacebuilding issues and implementation by the state, the traditional political parties, leaders and Media.
- The phenomenon of “Ivory Towers” (or the lack of long-term partnerships and cooperation) amongst most of the NGOs and the Youth groups-associations - except for few attempts such as the “Ou’a Campaign” in March 2007 which

- gathered twelve Civil Society groups (*Loubnani W Bass, Hellouwa, Pour que le Liban Vive, Kafa, Leb-Youth, Nahnou, Generation for Integrity of Lebanon, Intizaret al-Shabeb, Mada, Haraket al-Mustakilloun, Nahwa al-Muwatiniya* and *Peace Initiatives*) in a public demonstration at Beirut's Bechara Khoury intersection, leaving white handprints on a black wall as an expression of commitment to civil Peace and a rejection of political irresponsibility.
- Last but not least, as Larbi Sadiki (2004, 4-5) puts it: the “uncertainty (psychological), hunger and unemployment (economic marginalization), silence (cultural obscurantism), disenfranchisement (political), injustice (legal), and patronage clientelism (social)”.

When the collective assets within the Lebanese Civil Society, Diaspora and transnational Civil Society are more coordinated and mobilized as pluralistic national-transnational assets, their effectiveness and value as problem-solving tools grow exponentially. Expertise and resources can be specifically shared transnationally in order not to duplicate efforts where these can be scarce. As no single individual can act alone to meet the needs of the entire Lebanese population, no group-association acting alone can address today's national-transnational challenges. Therefore, there is a constant need for multilateralism through effective cooperation and partnerships, beginning with individual initiatives and extending from the most basic unit of socialization to the most expansive relationship between citizens, collectivities and the state. This national-transnational perspective can be useful in developing common standards that can later make joint action more efficient and effective.

With all the surrounding difficulties and obstacles, the culture of Peace and Conviviality in Lebanon in the decade ahead resides in the ongoing endeavor of individuals and collectivities to act for marginalized voices, to re-craft the relations among themselves and with others, to work on implementing a long-term “positive Peace” process, and thus not only to try living or surviving in the absence of criminal or political violence. Lebanon's Reconstruction will surely benefit from this vision and its application on a large scale, leading to the “bankruptcy” of the war ideologies and culture, and of the sentimental pathos accompanied by an “occultation” of the problems nurturing the war in Lebanon.

References

Latif ABUL-HUSN, *The Lebanese Conflict. Looking Inward*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, London, 1998.

Evelyne ACCAD, *Coquelicot du massacre*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1988.

Samir AMIN, Ali KENZ, *Le monde arabe. Enjeux sociaux, perspectives méditerranéennes*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2003.

Page AUSTIN, “The (swift) rise and (sudden) fall of the Lebanese war blog”, *The Daily Star*, Beirut, October 28, 2006 (electronic archives).

Asef BAYAT, *Social Movements, Activism and Social Development in the Middle East*, United Nations Institute for Social Development, 2002.

<http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005C2802/postSearch?CreateDocument>

Souha BECHARA, *Résistante*, Jean-Claude Lattès, Paris, 2000.

Ori BRAFMAN, Rod A. BECKSTROM, *The Starfish and the Spider. The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*, Portfolio, New York, 2006.

Pamela CHRABIEH, *Pour une gestion médiatrice des diversités au Liban : une théorie du plurilogue, au-delà du Confessionnalisme*, Bibliothèque et Archives Canada (Bibliothèque Nationale du Canada), Collection Thèses Canadiennes (Thèse Ph.D. Université de Montréal), Ottawa, 2007.

-----, “Dialogues islamo-chrétiens contemporains dans les sociétés proche-orientales : Enjeux actuels et perspectives d’avenir”, *Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses*, Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion/Corporation Canadienne des Sciences Religieuses, vol.32, no.3, 2003, p.243-259.

Miriam COOKE, *War’s Other Voices: Women Writers on the Lebanese Civil War*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Georges CORM, *Le Proche-Orient éclaté 1956-2003*, Folio Histoire, Paris, 2003.

Carole DAGHER, *Le défi du Liban d’après-guerre. Faites tomber les murs*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2002.

Michael DAWAHARE, *Civil Society and Lebanon: Toward Hermeneutic Theory of the Public Sphere in Comparative Studies*, Universal Publishers, Macquarie Park NSW, 2000.

Farid EL-KHAZEN, “Lebanon's Communal Elite-Mass Politics: The Institutionalization of Disintegration”, *The Beirut Review*, no. 3, Beirut, The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, Spring 1992, <http://www.lcps-lebanon.org/pub/breview/br3/index.html>

Samar FARAH, “Beirut’s artists confront legacy of civil war”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 26 2004, <http://www.csmonitor.com>

Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping* Document A/47/277 - S/241111, 17 June 1992, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, 1992, <http://www.un.org/Docs/SG/agpeace.html>

Gibran Khalil GIBRAN, *The Prophet*, Heinemann & Co., London, 1974.

Yves GONZALES-QUIJANO, "The Birth of a Media Ecosystem", in *New Media in the Muslim World. The Emerging Public Sphere*, Edited by Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2003, p.59-79.

Zeina HALABI, "Arab Civil Society - Assessing Interpretations and Determining Challenges", Heinrich Böll Foundation, <http://www.boell-meo.org/en/web/197.htm>).

Michael HERZFELD, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*, revised edition, Routledge, New York, 2005 (1st edition, 1997).

Adnan HOUBALLAH, *Le virus de la violence*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1996.

Toby E. HUFF, "Globalization and the Internet", in *Globalization and the Muslim World. Culture, Religion and Modernity*. Edited by Birgit Schaebler and Leif Stenberg, Syracuse University Press, New York, 2004, p.138-152.

Michael HUMPHREY, "Lebanese Identities: between Cities, Nations and Trans-nations", *Association of Arab-American University Graduates and Institute of Arab Studies*, 2004,
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2501/is_1_26/ai_n6145318/print

INITIATIVES OF CHANGE, *Breaking the Chain of Hate*, Agenda for Reconciliation, London, 2002.

Karam KARAM, *Le mouvement civil au Liban : Revendications, protestations et mobilisations associatives dans l'après-guerre*, Karthala, Paris, 2006.

-----, "Associations civiles, mouvements sociaux et participation politique au Liban dans les années 90", Colloque international *ONG et Gouvernance dans les Pays Arabes*, UNESCO, IRD, CEDEJ et CEPS *al-Ahram*, Le Caire, 29-31 mars 2000,
http://www.google.ca/search?q=cache:i_8ntqiDPtUJ:www.unesco.org/most/karam.doc+%C3%A9confessionnalisation+liban&hl=fr&lr=lang_fr&ie=UTF-8

Samir KHALAF, Philip S. KHOURY, *Recovering Beirut: urban design and post-war reconstruction*, Brill, Leiden, 1993.

Samir KHALAF, *Cultural Resistance: Global and Local Encounters in the Middle East*, Saqi Books, London, 2002.

-----, *Heart of Beirut: Reclaiming the Burj*, Saqi Books, London, 2005.

Boutros LABAKI, Khalil ABOU RJEILY, *Bilan des guerres du Liban, 1975-1990*, l'Harmattan, Paris, 1993.

Mansour LABAKI, *L'enfant du Liban. Les chemins de nulle part*, Fayard, Paris, 1986.

John Paul LEDERACH, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC, 1997.

Jean Saïd Makdissi, *Beirut Fragments. A War Memory*, Persea Books, New York, 1990.

Naila NAUPHAL, "Post-War Lebanon : Women and other War-affected groups", *ILO Action Programme on Skills and Entrepreneurship Training for Countries Emerging from Armed Conflict*, 1997, <http://www.ilo.org>

Volker PERTHES (ed.), *Arab Elites. Negotiating the Politics of Change*, Rienner Publishers, Boulder, London, 2004.

Peter G. ROWE, Sarkis HACHIM, Rowe, Peter G. and Hashim, *Projecting Beirut: episodes in the construction and reconstruction of a modern city*, Prestel, Munich, 1998.

Larbi SADIKI, *The Search for Arab Democracy. Discourses and Counter-Discourses*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004.

Tengku Azzman SHERIFFADEEN, "Beyond Information Literary: A Malaysian Experiment". Paper presented at APEC "Conference Information Literary'97", Tokyo, November 4, 1997, <http://www.umassd.edu/cfpa/docs/global.pdf>.

Leila Fawaz TARAZI, *An Occasion for War. Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus*, The Center for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris Publishers, London, 1994.

Ghassan TUENI, *Une guerre pour les autres*, Jean-Claude Lattès, Paris, 1985.