International Institute of Social Studies

Weaving memories:

an ecosystem of initiatives that deal with the legacies of civil war in Lebanon

A Research Paper presented by:

Joaquín Fuentealba Muñoz
(Chile)

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of MASTER OF ARTS
IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:
Governance and Development Policies
(GDP)

Specializations:
Local Development Strategies
Conflict and Peace Studies

Members of Examining Committee:
Georgina Gómez
Shyamika Jayasundara-Smits

The Hague, The Netherlands
December 2023

I thank my parents.
I thank my family.
I thank the many people everywhere that have opened themselves, and with it, providing me with an opportunity to expand.

Abstract

The following study delves on the ways in which a wide array of promoters – whose work span from activism, awareness-making, policy reform, artistic and cultural productions, education, philanthropy to diplomacy – interact in the hopes of developing a broader understanding of the civil war that scarred Lebanon. To do so, the research builds on onsite observations carried out around members of the Forum for the Memory and the future, one of the many undertakings that comprised an entangled ecosystem of initiatives happening in a country that continues to ignore the whereabouts of thousands of compatriots and keeps being immersed in a profound institutional crisis.

The research argues that their daily activities are anchored in what YungSong Lee (2021) pointed as the three pillars upon which peace rests: plurality, subtlety, and connectivity. Further, it shows that these initiatives – sometimes knowingly, others spontaneously – make use of this theoretical tool. More interestingly it sheds light on how the way they interact resembles those present in the theory of complex systems and invites to consider such an approach when facing other pressing social challenges.

Lastly, this research identifies that members' main motivation for such efforts lies in their desire to overcome the fear that the civil war installed. And, in what appears to have theoretical implications, their interactions, rather than advocating an emancipatory peace, seem to be inclined towards a constant adaptation to the parameters set by an uplifted liberal peace-sustaining agenda.

Relevance for development studies

This research presents an opportunity to explore concepts that are less and less frequently encountered in ideating projects that seek to engage with social challenges. Today, the trend has shifted towards using research tools with the power to produce quantifiable data or to unpack the more personal experiences of the communities and individuals who co-create the research process. Amid these trends, it is not so common to study a phenomenon rather than the lived experiences of those who carry out socially relevant events on a day-to-day basis. This research is of interest, then, as it explores social activities in the country where today's answers continue to be insufficient by offering an a'fikra (عفكرة or 3afikra), which means "on second thought" or "come to think of it" in colloquial Levantine Arabic of the interactions that take place within a community and how they adapt to their surroundings. To do so, a first order of business is to review the array of theories that cover the way in which people behave when having been exposed to long-standing and simmering conflicts.

Keywords

Social interaction | peace | conflict | local initiatives | memory | complexity theory

Preface. Entering research

"As a child, Ephrem, the author of hymns had a dream: A branch of vine came out of his tongue. It grew bigger and bigger and filled everything under heaven. It was laden with beautiful fruit. All the birds of heaven came to eat the fruit of the vine, and the more they are, the more the fruit increased".
(Sayings of the Desert Fathers)

The focus of my research lies on public interaction. More specifically, on the role it plays in satisfying human needs. My preliminary hypothesis is based on the idea that civic interaction has the potential to foster a more robust and synergic development among its people. The concepts that motivate this research are four: 1) agency, 2) social cohesion, 3) sense of belonging, and 4) peace.

I had already considered a specific case when approaching the topic. It was a local example where one person with personal connections to their family village started an idea with the potential to bring people together. From my initial understanding, this case of Chateau Belle-Vue offered a tremendous opportunity that would allow me to observe the connection between people and land and the way in which they use the shared land as a space for interaction and community-building. To do this, I designed a project that involved visits to the selected location. More on this is discussed in the section on methodology. In practice, however, things rarely happen as they were intended. The human component and logistical elements play too much of a significant role and they can hardly be overlooked. Thus, after a short time, the setting where I originally wanted to observe interaction - inspired by the four concepts listed above – changed its shape.

The fact is that from the minute I landed in the country to conduct research, I was exposed to the legacies of the war in Lebanon. It was not solely an act of raising my awareness with regards the topic. Instead, I was somehow able to sense its legacies and the scars, both tangible and intangible, that the conflict left scattered throughout the country, to the violence that was inflicted on the city and its citizens. To the hundreds of thousands of displaced Syrians, to the news headlines and billboards referring to the rife with Israel. I saw it also in the bullet holes marking the facades of buildings, in the countless checkpoints and armoured vehicles deployed on the streets of Beirut, on the highways and at the entrances to villages, in the hundreds of photos adorned with flags and legends bidding farewell and honouring the martyrs whose lives have been taken by the various juxtaposed conflicts.

Thus, the focus of this research work also shifted onto the place that the civil society, i.e., social organisations, activists, artists, philanthropic and intellectual initiatives, research centres and audio-visual productions, has in dealing with the aftermath of war in Lebanon. Through this exercise, I intend to advance my understanding in the sense of improving my capabilities as an informant in contexts where I do not have such a close initial relationship. This will be useful for further developing interpersonal and naturally analytical capacities and will also allow me to further my personal and professional development.

Table of contents

Chapter one. Entering the country, arriving to the gap

By the moment I started putting ink on paper for this research – converting a research interest into an actual research effort – the commemoration of the Beirut blast was about to start. It was an oddly quiet Friday in a city that is famous for its lively scene, busy streets, and out-of-this-world intriguing people. According to a recount conducted by Human Rights Watch in 2021, over 77,000 apartments, thousands of other buildings, some hosting public services, half of the hospitals and 163 schools in Beirut became useless overnight. 56 per cent of the private businesses in the capital city were affected, whose economic losses are still being determined, while figures on material damage move between 3,8 and 4,6 billion USD. However, what is even more serious is the outrageous official tally of over 300,000 displaced people and 218 fatalities, several of whom died while working.

An event as devastating as the one of 2020, however, only adds another scar to a city – and a society – marked by these sort of calamitous events. A year before, COVID was pretty much present in the country, as it was also the world over, and it felt like something topping up the dire situation that was already leading many Lebanese onto the streets. *Thawra*, the name given to the most significant demonstrations of recent times in the Cedar country, brought together young and old who were disillusioned that the political class – which, in the eyes of the demonstrators, has remained largely unchanged for almost 50 years now – had not done enough to stop the country from being dragged to the political, economic, and social edge.

Dating back in time, before the blast, before COVID, before *Thawra,* there is a deeper scar. The Green Line – the name given to it due to the foliage that grew along the demarcation drawn by checkpoints and guard posts kept under surveillance by armoured vehicles and snipers – was the way to set aside areas that gradually became exclusive living spaces for Christian and Muslim communities during 1975 and 1990. Muslims, to the West. Christians, to the East. Both, separated by a fence that became no-one's land. And the thing is that scars, as this one did, not just marked the capital; they srpouted throughout the country, each of them with distinctive traits and intensities. To the South, another line – the Blue Line – demarcates the UN-monitored territory that separates Lebanon from Israel, one of its neighbouring country, with whom they continue to be officially at war to this day. To the Eastern edge, its almost eighteen times larger neighbour, Syria, occupied Lebanese territory and maintained its military presence and political influence for nearly three decades. These two show their consequences in the form of the largest ratio of displaced to local inhabitants in the world.

Economic-wise, the situation is equally dire. Over the past few years, the Lebanese lira, which at one time was on par with the US dollar, has seen its price plummeting. For many Lebanese, wages continue to be paid in lira, which made essential goods and services prohibitively expensive for much of the population in a matter of months, in what the World Bank refers to as one of the top three most severe crises since the mid 19th century (World Bank, 2021). Lebanon's GDP fell from around 55 billion USD in 2018 to an estimated 33 billion in 2020. This meant that GDP per capita sunk by about 40 per cent. For the World Bank, this type of rapid contraction is usually associated with conflicts or wars. In one of the many attempts to address the ever-increasing withdrawal requests from

account holders, local banks unilaterally decided to clamp down and restrict access to depositors' bank accounts and savings. To date, nearly 7 billion USD are injected into the economy via remittances from abroad (World Bank, 2020).

1.1 Features of the conflict in Lebanon

Lebanon has been independent since 1943 after being under French colonial occupation after the implosion of the Ottoman Empire. It is made up of 18 sects legally recognised by the government. These are grouped into four umbrella groups: Christians (mostly Maronites – a *sui generis* church within the Catholic faith with historical and cultural traits specific to the Levantine region), Druze (an ethno-religious group that brings together elements of Christianity, Islam and Esoterism) and Muslims (further divided into the two main branches of Islam: Shiites and Sunnis). These main groups have coexisted in the region since ancient times, and with the establishment of the Lebanese state (commonly referred to as the National Pact), they adopted an agreement in which the most important political positions are allocated in an attempt to ensure a balance between the different social/sectarian forces existing in the country. The 30 years following the Declaration of Independence saw a series of landmark events whose consequences would have an impact for decades to come; these can be grouped into two types of events: economic and geopolitical. An explanation covering events of the first type was provided three years ago (Vox, 2020). The following paragraphs deal with the latter and their consequences for Lebanon today.

Five years after the formation of the state of Lebanon, in 1948, the country joined the Arab League's advance into the regions of Samaria and Judea. This military intervention was part of the events known to the Muslim community in the region as the Nakba and to the Jewish community as Israel's War of Independence. Its purpose, according to Arab League spokespersons at the time, was to safeguard stability in the Middle East; however, the measure has its most direct precedent in the League's rejection of how the end of the British colonial occupation of the Palestinian region was to be carried out. Consequences relevant for the purposes of this paper are the following: the first, the relocation of some 100,000 Muslim Arabs from Palestine to other countries; the second, the unfolding of an intra-state conflict in 1958 following the attempt of ousting the President and integrating Lebanon into the United Arab Republic – in a quest to shift the government from a Christian-Western leaning position to a Pan-Arab project) (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, n.d.); and, lastly, the arrival of the Palestine Liberation Organisation on Lebanese soil starting the decade of 1970. As a result of the different views held by Muslim, Christian and Druze factions, opposing positions intensified, leading, in some cases, to clashes within the territory. Isolated acts of violence occurred in Beirut and the other governorates, but the escalations led to the murder of four Christians outside a church on 13 April 1975 and the subsequent reprisal that ended in the assassination of 30 Muslims in the Beirut suburb of Beirut – that day marked the beginning of the Lebanese civil war that lasted until 1990.

In January 1976, the Syrian army entered Lebanon. The Israelis followed in June 1982. The militant political group Hezbollah (which began to dominate the eastern regions

of the country) soon followed in the last-1980s. During the remaining six years of the conflict, peace attempts and massacres alternated. In October 1989, a summit took place in the Saudi town of Ta'if, where the different warring factions negotiated a ceasefire. Following the peace agreement, Israel and Syria kept troops deployed in the country until 2000 and 2005 until the events following the car bombing that killed 21 people, including former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, forced their withdrawal. In 2006, Hezbollah launched an offensive against Israel. In 2011, with the outbreak of war in Syria, 1.5 to 2 million Syrians are estimated to have been forcibly displaced to neighbouring Lebanon, which has a population of over five million.

Few official figures about the conflict are available, but studies estimate that 120,000 people lost their lives, at least 17,500 are presumed missing during the period 1975-1990, and close to one million people were displaced in some way (Haugbolle, 2011), not counting those who were disappeared or tortured by the occupying armies.

1.2 Past and ongoing peacebuilding efforts in Lebanon.

Various peace efforts have been attempted to stabilise Lebanon's continuing political and social tensions. In addition to the military interventions by occupying forces mentioned above, a comprehensive peace agreement brokered by the Arab League followed. This arrangement sought to regulate extensively on a wide array of matters: from a Powersharing Transitional Government fofrmula, which included the passing of an amnesty law, to reforms in the operation of the state, the branches of the armed forces and interaction with paramilitary groups, troop withdrawals, Internally Displaced Persons, changes to the educational curriculum and the macroeconomic model in use, among others. According to the estimates made by Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies' scholars Joshi, Quinn & Regan in 2015 (pp. 551-562) the agreement achieved 59.3% completion. In another vein, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) had been deployed in southern Lebanon since as early as 1978. Its initial intervention has been adjusted three times, extending the mission's stay from an initial six-month term to 55 years to date (UNIFIL, 2019). Apart from peacekeeping on the country's southern border, the mission envisages development assistance and civil society capacity-building activities (UNIFIL, 2021).

A third track of assistance in the form of Stuctural Adjustment Program began to take shape shortly after the 4 August 2020 explosion: the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) was devised as a collaborative strategy between the government, civil society organisations and the international community - i.e. the United Nations missions, the European Union Delegation to Lebanon and the World Bank Group through the International Bank for Recovery and Development. This assistance mechanism seeks to

>"promote a different way of working, (...) as a collaborative process based on the participation of the government, civil society, the private sector as well as development partners (...) guided by the overarching principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusion" (3RF, 2020, p. 14).

specifically with regard to the matters discussed in this research, the 3RF prioritises advancing in *"(ii) anti-corruption, integrity, and transparency; and (iii) justice and human rights"* (3RF, 2020, p. 15).

1.3 Development and peace efforts today.

Three years after the most recent development and reform tool was implemented, it is difficult to estimate how much progress it has achieved in terms of improving the living conditions of the Lebanese public. However, the Independent Oversight Board in charge of periodically reviewing the implementation and impact of the 3RF published last August a report under the title "The future of Lebanon's impunity and human security, three years after the Beirut Blast" that sheds some light on the state of the situation. The report, divided into four sections, culminates with the following sentence:

> "**Impunity** is often the primary reason why the rule of law is not applied, and therefore a strongly anchored system of governance and accountability, strengthened by the enforcement of the rule of law, is long overdue and vital" (Independent Oversight Board for the 3RF, 2023, p.3).

1.4 Efforts tried elsewhere.

To find a strategy that advances development indicators is not a resolved task. Many societies face long processes of recomposing the social fabric following disputes that have turned into other, more destructive forms of conflict. Experiences gathered from countries like Cambodia, Colombia, East Timor, Kosovo, Myanmar, the Solomon Islands, Somalia, and Sri Lanka provide valuable insights into the challenges and consequences of different approaches to addressing these events. In the cases pointed above, dealing with their past is a crucial hallmark for restoring social relations. Through this, they seek to grapple with the consequences of the human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law that have been inflicted and to devise tools that can enable these communities to prevent their recurrence.

It is interesting to note then how the Independent Oversight Board's recommendations point precisely to this point in alluding to the predominant role of impunity – which in Lebanon's case is inescapably linked to the 1991 amnesty law – in achieving better development indices. The report is adamant in stating that this remains an issue that has not been duly pursued.

1.5 Localisation efforts to peacebuilding: key authors and ideas.

Taking the latter into account, I trust the reader allows me to pose the following rhetorical questions: How can we find a peacebuilding mechanism that will enable us to move towards a more peaceful social life? Is that idea of a more peaceful social life the ultimate goal of peacebuilding? The most influential response of the last twenty years emerged from the theory of conflict-transformation peacebuilding practice developed by John Paul

Lederach in 1997. Upon it, the publications of Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond – editor's board members of the specialised journal *Peacebuilding* (TaylorFrancis, n.d.) and several other scholars have built a substantial body of literature. Their invitation to deliberately target civil society, or 'Track II' as Lederach originally termed it, has come a long way from being an outlier of the prevailing ideas of the early 1990s to now being used in various peacebuilding efforts worldwide in recent years. The 3RF in Lebanon also draws inspiration from these ideas by incorporating civil society organisations in preparing, implementing and monitoring such aid architecture. On a smaller scale, in 2019, an initiative emerged in Lebanon by a group of civil society organisations and individual promoters alike under the name Forum for Memory and Future. It specifically focuses on

> "promoting ways of coming to terms with the past, including its violent conflicts and the conflicting memories that arose as a result, with a view to dealing with these conflicts and memories in light of their impact on the present and future" Forum for Memory and Future.

1.6 Research gap: Exploring the role of local initiatives dealing with the past as part of Lebanon's peace process

As can be seen, Lebanon's 80 years of independent life have not been free of significant challenges. Yet the responses implemented so far still fail to offer an option that promotes people's needs. One possible explanation for this is that Lebanese society has not yet been able to come to terms with its recent past, nor has it been able to bring closure to the process of social division and discord that the civil war aggravated. While the incorporation of local initiatives satisfies one of the expected elements of the critical school of peacebuilding - by addressing these concerns from a more country-based and attentive focus (which assumes that local NGOs have the capacity) - its impact continues to be endorsed by INGOs and by the precursors of the position advocated by Mac Ginty and Richmond among others, in what has come to be called local turn scholarship and more recently as the hybrid model of peacebuilding. Neither position, however, is uncriticised. Some alternatives aim at the promotion of more nuanced approaches to the effects of hybrid peace happenings (Paffenholz, 2015; Wallis et al., 2016; Agyei, Möller and Väyrynen, 2023). In this scenario, it is interesting to explore two things: First, to observe the local initiatives that are currently being implemented, claiming to use the hybrid approach to peacebuilding to effectively address the issue of memory and reconciliation (significant elements that contour peace) according to the features of such an approach. Second, deepening my understanding of these relational dynamics result from applying these ideas that have gained ground more recently, such as relational, everyday, perpetual or adaptative peace or whether these practices have been taking place from before.

1.7 Producing the research question

The ecosystem of initiatives working in this field is growing. Already in 2019, a study by Mia Bou Khaled, an American University of Beirut academic, put the number at more than 150. Government agencies, research centres, local NGOs, INGOs, collectives that operate

in a more sporadic manner and initiatives promoted by individuals all interact within this network. Therefore, this undertaking proposes to revolve on the following research question:

- In what ways the interaction of Lebanese promoters of initiatives dealing with the past allows for a coalesced understanding of the peacebuilding process?

Which brings to the fore the subsequent question:
  o Is a coalesced understanding of the past needed in the pursuit of peace at all?

1.8. Methodological approach to undertake this research

The study employed a qualitative methodology with secondary data collected and primary data that was coproduced in the form of interviews and observational activities conducted in the country itself as I will elaborate on below.

1.8.1. Methodology and data collection

I compiled secondary information from a variety of sources. This allowed me to approach the subject I was studying while at the same time maintaining a kind of distance from the subject itself, since the information was not produced by me, but by other previous academic efforts, in line with what O'Leary suggests (2017). In doing so, and in particular in obtaining information from the web, I followed the author's recommendations (ibid) keeping in mind parameters of credentials, motivation, authority and objectivity that she indicated.
         Primary data was obtained and co-created during the months of July and August. Data stems from participatory observations in meetings, the conduction of semi-structured interviews and me attending to exhibits and installations to gain deeper understanding in the ways that localising peacebuilding from an everyday, relational approach can contribute to promote the emergence of a system able of rebuilding social relations that respond to the critical need for peace (Lee, 2021, p.41). I engaged in ethnographic observations in different boroughs of Beirut like Ras Beirut, Achrafieh, Badaro, Daoura, Bourj Hammoud, Hamra, Gemmayzeh and Haret Hreik. Other cities and vicinities like Tripoli, Dar El Qamar, Aley, Baalbek, Bcharré, Bhamdoun, Broumana and Zahlé were also visited in an attempt to get a broader understanding of the presence of war until our present day from a different experience to that lived in the capital city. Coding was made manually after developing my field notebook to analyse the notes I took when the opportunity allowed.

1.8.2. Positionality

A significant caveat to bear in mind when looking at this paper is that of my position towards this research. The novelty that this type of work implies for me, as somebody who is just getting to grips with this type of undertaking. This work is certainly intended to be

carried out in a conscientious and rigorous manner, but it cannot be understood as anything other than the mere pursuit of a personal ambition to further understand in a more refined level the ways in which people interact with each other in society. With that in mind, I hope it is clear for the reader that this is, above all, an – admittedly insufficient – effort to engage with societal and development studies. Hence, the use of the methodological resources I employ may be perceived in a certain sense as not entirely suitable for endowing this research with a halo of truth.

So, to leave no trace of doubt: this work in no way seeks to deliver inscrutable results, and much less a final answer on the subject and on the case it studies. This research work, then, has to be understood above all as an attempt; an effort to gain an understanding, with the tools, time and capacities available in the context of a master's degree programme, from someone who comes not only from another area of professional development but also from another spatial setting that is far removed – and yet somehow extensible to the experience of my own country, Chile – from the place that has been observed in the scope of this research. If there is a single goal in this paper, it is to extend an invitation to us –the reader and I –to continue reflecting on the way we perceive and interact with our surroundings. An opportunity to listen, collect ideas with the potential to generate new one and engage in dialogue.

1.8.3. Participant selection and its limitations

War is a phenomenon that brings out in people feelings of fear, anger, frustration, worry and anguish. It is therefore risky to "*work in this trade*" as was stated by a participant (Interview III). Bearing that in mind, I thought that the most appropriate thing to do was to share with them the purpose of the research. I expressed to them my belief in the richness that lies in sharing with others, and I posed my approaching to them as an experience whose results aimed at honouring the shared and profoundly marking experience of working with a sensitive topic as the one of mnemonic efforts.

As this is an analytical attempt that touches onto a topic that can be triggering, the maxim of do-no-harm and avoid triggering the respondents was strictly observed. I strived not to force a conversation when I noticed my interlocutor did not want to talk to me. In that sense, I made used of my previous experience handling cases with sensitive legal implications to present the way in which I would handle the information that was being co-created with my discussants. Coupled with that, another trait of my previous work experience working as a sexual harassment investigator for about 4 years bestowed me with tools that facilitate the creation of a space of comfort when discussing sensitive information assuring it will be treated in a respectful and responsible manner.

Throughout my stay in the country and even before that I contacted 30 individuals who partook in conversations with me. Out of those many interactions with a wide variety of individuals I selected 14 of them, whose lives and professional experiences – which many times are deeply connected between each other – may provide valuable insights to allow me to attain a deeper understanding on how the various initiatives interact. Using snowballing methods alongside targeted contact to certain participants served to that purpose. I have decided to replace the name of all of them, unless they explicitly pointed

out they wanted to have their name included in this piece keeping in mind the sensitivity of the issue and the note to caution that I gathered from interview III.

1.8.4. Ethical considerations

Conducting research in a country that is not one's own entails, among other things, logistical preparation, academic scholarship probing, respect and - as has been pointed out to me on several occasions - cultural proficiency. On top of that, when visiting a country that has a declared state of war to a neighbouring country and with people being displaced by the remaining two other as it is the case of Lebanon additional considerations come into the equation. In that spirit I developed a research plan that was discussed with my thesis supervisor, my fellow programme colleagues and people working in the development sector currently in Lebanon. To all of them I owe this experience unfolding so satisfactory at a personal level.

After having reviewed the personal motivation to introducing myself into this research, the features of the conflict, the many efforts that have been attempted in the country. Having also noticed the avenue that exploring the effect and the drivers of local initiatives dealing with the legacies of the civil war and having posed a suitable research question to continue, the following chapter will elaborate in the timeline that peace and conflict studies has had and the way in which it fits into this particular research.

Chapter two. Framing research by conceptualising peace

The following section explores the ways in which both academics and practitioners working in the field of peacekeeping and peacebuilding have understood the object of their work. It will survey some of the positions and ideas that have been guiding part of the discussion during from the second half of the 20ᵗʰ century and in the present by briefly outlining their main postulates. Some of the ideas posed by part of their most influential exponents will be analysed with a focus on identifying certain elements that continue to shape the way practitioners conduct their projects today, as well as pointing out those that have been discarded. In doing so, I intend to lay out the current state of affairs in the field, the challenges it is facing and the mindsets that are the way in which the field is currently conducting its projects. Towards the end of this section, I intend for the reader of this piece of research to understand where I, as a researcher, stand when approaching the phenomenon of social interaction in the field of peacebuilding.

2.1 Studies on conflict and peace: a recount to entering this research

Conflict and peace studies have found the twentieth century to be an era marked predominantly by violence and conflict rather than peace. It is therefore not surprising that the destructive power of the Second World War led policymakers, practitioners, politicians, and academics alike to turn their efforts towards finding ways of understanding (and ideally learning how to avoid) such developments.

Beginning in the 1960s, Norwegian author Johann Galtung embarked on an effort to theorise peace and conflict in a way that Western scholarship had not previously done. His postulates start from the prevailing premise of the time - linking peace and violence in a way that assumes that peace is, to some extent, the absence of violence -. In doing so, he laid the foundation for the understanding that the field of peace studies has of this "region of the social order", as Galtung called it (Galtung, 1969, p.168). It is an explanation that continued to be worked on by more scholars; but its original formulation rests on three assumptions:

> "1. The term 'peace' shall be used for social goals at least verbally agreed to by many, if not necessarily by most. 2. These social goals may be complex and difficult, but not impossible, to attain. 3. The statement peace is absence of violence shall be retained as valid." (Galtung, 1969, p.168).

Galtung's achievements rest in his ability to identify the fundamental structural factors that influence the way in which social relations take place. He encourages his readers to closely study how positive peace may contribute to the understanding of the conditions that sustain what he refers to as "human basic needs" (Galtung, 1969). All in all, his postulates have been questioned by critics who, like Boulding (in Hadi, 2013, p. 20), see Galtung's approach as a static approximation towards society and praised by many who see in them a goal for which only the appropriate roadmap remains to be charted. Be that as it may, he did not stand alone: during the 1980s Edward Azar was pointing – somehow in a

similar vein to Galtung – at the need of efforts looking to promote peace to see conflict from a more holistic and enduring approach (1985).

2.1.1. Liberal Peace and its critics.

Another mandatory stop in outlining the current understanding of peace efforts moves this review to 1989, the moment that is commonly associated with the termination of the two-poles-order disputing the world after the implosion of the Soviet Union. These strains of thinking and practice rest on the ideas of modernity, republicanism, securitisation and individualism and have served as inspiration for a relevant part of the world for the past three centuries when approaching governance, polity, and power structures under the influence of Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, and others. Liberal Peace, as a category within the realm of liberal theory, underpins, in the words of scholar Roger MacGinty,

> "the dominant form of internationally supported peacemaking and peacebuilding (…) promoted by leading states, leading international organizations and international financial institutions (…) to reflect, the primacy of the individual, the belief in the reformability of individuals and institutions, pluralism and toleration, the rule of law, and the protection of property" (2010, p. 393).

In the same line, MacGinty's associate Oliver Richmond explores the same strain, referring to the liberal peace approach as

> "a model through which Western-led agency, epistemology and institutions, have attempted to unite the world order under a hegemonic system that replicates liberal institutions, norms, and political, social and economic systems" (2011, p.1).

Yet, a less critical stance aligns the liberal approach towards peace as one that fosters common interests. The tenets on which it rests posit that, to the extent that societies and individuals hold common interests, fewer incentives exist for these actors to hold opposing positions. The assertion seems simple and hardly refutable in appearance. Yet, there is a broad array of scholarly productions addressing the underpinnings of the liberal approach to peace and society.

A contributing factor to the rise in criticism to liberal peace endeavours is grounded in the substantial amount of peace interventions that were ultimately deemed a failure in the peacebuilding and peacekeeping fora as the United Nations' 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (A/RES/60/1) shows (UN, 2005). Criticism came from the values these types of interventions posited and the way the interventions were being implemented on-site. Critiques are grounded at the starting point of the liberal model intending to impose one only way to deal with societal issues (in this case, attaining peace as an outcome of promoting democratic regimes that rest on equality of opportunities and the promotion of private property drawing on a 'Wilsonian tradition') as suitable and accurate. In his piece *Hybrid Peace* – which will be presented with more detention below – MacGinty refers to the liberal model as one in which the private sector is – in his words – *"privileged over notions of the common good"* (2010, p. 394). And, he further elaborates that point by stating that that

when neoliberal peace enters the operationalisation phase of these types of endeavours it *"engages in aggressive social engineering"* (*ibid*). The piece does not name at that point what the author means by such a statement. In 2021, Richmond, MacGinty, Pogodda and Visoka imply how, more recently, the world's most prominent powers' efforts have provided a space for illiberal powers to take over certain places of the globe as long as there is stabilisation of supine governments but overlooking human rights abuses (p.8).

2.1.2. Transformation of conflict toward constructive outcomes.

'Building Peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies' has become one of the most notorious pieces of literature in Western peacebuilding studies – and the grounding stone of what later came to be known as the 'conflict transformation school'. What roughly 30 years ago was a manuscript developed at the United Nations University was rapidly integrated into the syllabi of other prominent institutions like the United States Institute of Peace. His, is an invitation to shift the focus and move beyond traditional diplomacy that emphasised top-level leaders and short-term objectives. As an alternative, author John Paul Lederach says:

> "Building peace in today's conflicts calls for long-term commitment to establishing an infrastructure (…) that empowers the resources for reconciliation form within that society and maximises the contribution from outside" (Lederach, 1997, p. xvi).

This seminal work focuses on the building of relationships and achieving reconciliation. He states that *"conflicts are characterised by deep-rooted, intense animosity; fear; and severe stereotyping",* and in contrast to the efforts that were being implemented at the moment he launched his book, he invited peacebuilding practitioners to move the focus away from trying to resolve those conflicts and rather "*engage the relational aspects of reconciliation*" (pp.23-24). This shift to relationships is based on the assumption that relationship lies at the ground of conflict and therefore it can also provide its solution (p.26). Other relevant aspects presented by Lederach are that of understanding peacebuilding as a process and conflict as a progression (p.70) and sustaining transformation as a goal of peacebuilding. In that sense, identifying that the majority of the conflicts taking place in the world might be addressed by a comprehensive strategic approach aiming at conflict to transform it. (p.150). Lastly, the conflict transformation school focuses on the middle-range actors. It sees them – these middle-range actors or "*Track II*", as Lederach calls them – as holders of a privileged position to influence and construct peaceful societal interactions.

While the conflict transformation school gained supporters, it also sparked scepticism towards this novel approach. Hesitant opinions like those of Christopher Mitchell (2002) aimed at wondering the extent to which the conflict transformation school detached itself from conflict resolution. He lamented the coining of a new term to explain something that in his opinion remains in a big extent equal to the state of affairs prior to this breakthrough. Along that line, others saw an increase in the use of the term without giving substance to the term, claimed Johannes Botes in 2003. Problematisations to this idea also address its need for analysis with regards to power dynamics in both informal and

formal arenas, as Paffenholz refers to it in an analysis on the conflict transformation theory (2014, p.16).

2.1.3. The Local turn.

Despite previous productions of scholarly relevance, 2013 marked the moment in which the concept of the local began to gain momentum with *The Local Turn in Peace Building: a critical agenda for peace'* being cited to this date in over 500 articles. Authors proposing this avenue see the local turn as a part of a broader critical turn – as MacGinty and Richmond wrote back then (p. 763)– in the study of peace and conflict. The local turn is, in their understanding, a necessary exercise to better comprehend the subaltern agencies that may contribute to the emergence, curating, and handling of peace. They noted how, throughout the international architecture of peace, as they call it, several practitioners are looking to prevent the impact of implementing programmes that favour international agendas, affecting the everyday lives of the national societies.

The ideas proposed by this strain of literature are critical to the orthodox approach to international relations. By critical, they stand opposite to the problem-solving scholarship, hence inviting the peacebuilding stakeholders to engage in a comprehensive understanding of both peace and the root causes of conflict. They promote entering peace-and-state building in a more mindful fashion and work more closely with everyday practices that acknowledge the emancipatory capacity of society. The local turn then envisages a pursuit of everyday tasks that:

> "allow individuals and communities (…) to develop common bonds with members of other ethnic or religious groups, to demystify 'the other' and to reconstruct contextual legitimacy" (MacGinty and Richmond, 2013, p.769).

They see how local agencies confront structural power in a pursuit to ground a struggle that prevents the co-optation from both local elites and from outside actors – explicitly alluding to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank practices of structural adjustment programmes.

In short, the local turn scholarship highlights the need for a more combined work between state and society, since the latter might be endowed with better coping tools to face the challenges of everyday practices of peacebuilding. In their understanding, these features allow more subtle interventions, which now would rely more on the myriad of experiences gathered by the local agencies. The latter provides a better understanding of the *"injustices that cause conflict (…) and practices (often elite, state or Northern) that disguise them"* (p.780).

Reflection on this literature quite often finds an interesting angle, though. The local turn deploys patronising stances when referring to 'the local'. There is no direct allusion to the method of selection to delineate what kind of efforts fit within 'the local' in this allegory, yet patterns of romantisation and orientalism are shockingly noticeable in the use of this rhetoric (Richmond, 2008, p.459; Paffenholz, 2015, p. 862). Under this scope, 'we' could easily equal the West or any other ruling power of the sort, whereas 'the local' would fit into the emancipatory, the one pushing the struggle, the other. It is as if their

proponents were trying to come up with an exact antithesis to the mechanisms employed by the liberal approach, as if it sought to annul them in a zero-sum manner. An example of this romantisation is seen in Leonardsson & Rudd's 2015 piece, in which they argue that the local serves as a means to achieve effective peacebuilding and a platform to amplify the voices from below to criticise international peace agendas that ignore the local.

2.1.4. Hybridity & the everyday: zooming in on foci of relations, agency, and power.

Along the authors and time of the local turn, the notion of hybridity also acquired salience in the field of peacebuilding. With it, the interplay of local and international actors in their everyday became relevant to the field. MacGinty perceived hybrid peace in a piece of 2010 as the result of four components: i) compliance of liberal powers, agents, networks and structures; ii) the incentivising of those liberal powers; iii) agency of the local actors to resist, ignore, or adapt those types of peace interventions, and iv) the ability of local actors, networks and structures to present and maintain alternative forms of peacemaking (2010, p.392).

This approach to peacebuilding seeks to explain aspects of the power balancing between different spheres of power. It focuses on the role that the micro level has when it engages in projects that derive from a top-down institution-engineering. It provides a suitable explanation for the vessels that connect different power levels.

The notion of Everyday peace builds on what came to be referred to by critical scholars as the paradox of liberal peace. Although it shares certain features with hybrid peace, it pays bigger attention to philosophical pragmatism. In this framing which revolves around the idea of resilience, Chandler (2014) reflects on how, everyday practices offer an alternative to allocate agency in both international and local capacities. He grounds his argument in the assumption that society interacts in a world with problematic institutions. And that those institutions are incapable of getting the essence of the social processes from their top-down hierarchical manners to generate goals "*through community development itself*" (p. 30). By focusing on the everyday (as a variation of the hybrid peace), problems and their corresponding solutions are better suited when they remain mindful of the features of the given setting.

This frame gained notoriety partly due to the flexibility it provided. Endorsers spanned from those pushing away liberal peacebuilding like Richmond, MacGinty, Pogodda & Visoka (2021) to others addressing feminist approaches to peace like Tarja Väyrynen (2019). These scholars observe the everyday practices and attempts to provide meaning to those interactions. Such is the case for Väyrynen who points out that "*the relational body and mundane practices require a more nuanced ready of power*" (Väyrynen, 2019, p. 9); to the way in which a given society executes their version of the social contract and exert their agency. Richmond, MacGinty, Pogodda & Visoka (2021, p. 12) differently note that the current mainstream peace praxis "*may omit the susbtancial provlem of the conditions of everyday life and the legitimacy it may or mamy not generate for political order founded on a peace agreement or process*".

A weighted approach to hybrid and everyday peace efforts extends to looking and engaging cautiously when implementing interventions jointly by international and local actors. Instead, they advocate for a somehow more eclectic result and do not fall into illusions of including culturally relevant personalities to transform entire cultures under a veil of shared-consensual action. Ljungkvist and Jarstad refer to it and declare that there is agreement on the role of the local, yet what is understood by locals is still fuzzy, which leads to a continual failure of international actions when addressing the local. The question remains as to who, what, and where is the local? (2021, pp-2209-2210). More poignant critics call for more grounded implementation, as can be found in David Chandler's 2014 piece *'Resilience and the 'everyday''* or in Paffenholz's critique of the ambivalent relation of critical peacebuilders that engage in these discussions (2015, p. 866-867) or the dire outcomes that this type of approach can eventually lead to, as shown by Séverine Autesserre (2017). There is a need to keep in mind that including 'the local' is not fulfilled by building alliances among international and locally based actors for the sake of local participation. Instead, the everyday proposes that the programmes be jointly designed and owned.

2.1.5. Reconnecting while looking for peace.

With that in mind, relational peacebuilding approaches explore an aspect that has not had the same coverage as the rest. It proposes to focus on what truly constitutes peace beyond the absence of war. Their proponents say that the role of specific actors and, more importantly, their relations provide essential insights to peace. By acknowledging the relationship of actors within a society, *"peace and war become a web of multiple interactions where some actors are peaceful whereas others are hostile, and It becomes clear how peaceful and conflictual relations can coexist"* (Jarstad, Söderström and Åkebo, 20XX, p.3), to emphasise how peace is implemented in practice by those agents. Focusing on relationships allows, on the one hand, to move from micro to macro levels of interactions easily and, on the other, to start identifying patterns in how relations are built and sustained through time. It also makes a case for a better understanding of peace since, by studying relations, peace appears more neatly defined from other features of a 'good society' like democracy or development (Söderström, 2021, p.485).

A note to caution, however, appears after reading this position as it elaborates on the actors being addressed almost as if there were individuals whose role is to promote peace. In contrast, others encourage conflict, with clearly assignable roles for each of them. My understanding of how actors operate in a given context differs from that of the authors in that actors tend to take positions on certain aspects in a more purposive way and, in other cases, more adamantly.

All in all, relational peacebuilding is a fresh attempt in academia and a valuable tool for this research for two reasons: Firstly, since it shares the interests of this particular research by focusing more on providing insights to better understand how peace is sustained and how societal conflict should be addressed instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in previous attempts. Secondly, as it invites new researchers to enter the field by focusing on networks analysis among actors, arenas, and levels (Jarstad, Söderström and Åkebo, 2023, p.238), which is exactly where I intend to enter with this paper.

2.1.6. Perpetual games, adaptive peacebuilding.

This recounting of initiatives states the fact as to how the 'local' has become something of a code word. This observation is familiar; however, ten years ago, Cedric de Coning (2013) noted how practically all peacebuilding documents began or ended with a reference to this concept but did not address it directly. Almost in the same way Jarstad, Söderström, and Åkebo (2023) continue raising the same point. Notable exceptions confirm this rule. De Coning's 'Understanding peacebuilding as essentially local' and the 2014 and 2015 works by Thania Paffenholz make up this smaller group that is gaining a larger constituency (Auteserre, 2017; Lee, 2021; Day & Hunt, 2023). These authors highlight an issue that until now has been addressed only in a somewhat veiled manner, namely the overt tension between the interests of peace practitioners and those of the local actors. The tension extends to the degrees of hybridisation of peacebuilding processes, the form that local ownership will take, or the accountability mechanisms on a given issue. This flaw in the way peacebuilding efforts are structured is examined by de Coning, who – to address these phenomena in greater depth – chooses to make use of complexity theory. He recognises that societies in general and those dealing or having dealt with conflict recently possess even more apparent features of complex social systems and, as such, are able to organise and adapt organically "as a result of emergence - the ability of non-linear interactions that spontaneously result in self-regulating behaviour through feedback systems" (2013, pp. 3-4). The former is interesting because it stands apart from proposals designed to overcome the challenges of peace. He does so by postulating that complex systems (post-conflict societies being one such social system) evolve in a non-linear way. When acknowledged as such, the concept of solution (that had been used until then by a large part of the forum starting from Galtung referring to peace as a goal – as noted above) renders useless. In the same line, discussing what kind of mechanism is suitable also becomes meaningless. The wicked and complex nature of these systems overrides the need to constantly visit best practices and lessons learned. Instead, the focus shifts to understanding how societies - whether analysed with a focus on the micro, meso or macro - possess the capacity to organically self-compose, meaning that they do so by treating their components as essential parts in constructing such a system.
　　De Coning & Gelot promote a shift towards people by:

 "moving away from a narrow focus on state-building, institutional capacity, and the extension of state authority (…) with initiatives that engage people, communities, and societies and that support them in their ownership of sustaining peace" (De Coning & Gelot 2020).

　　To this end, they propose to draw on complexity theory and target social capital, social cohesion, and resilient local and national social institutions that *will in theory help local communities and society at large strengthen their own capacities to prevent conflict*" (de Coning & Gelot 2020). Then, de Coning further pushed for an open-ended and goal-free approximation (de Coning, 2023). Complexity theory accounts for high dynamism, non-linearity, and emergence of local systems. To meet the challenges of complex systems, the theory

proposes to co-evolve using iterative cycles between experimentation and never-ending feedback (2018). In adaptive peacebuilding, contrary what occurs in other determined-design methods where the objective is prefixed, the focus lies on the process from which peace can be sustained (de Coning, 2023, p. 10). In that sense, he argues, the main activity of practitioners is to facilitate processes aimed at enabling self-organisation within society, on the understanding that such self-organisation will allow social institutions to constantly adapt to stressors coming from outside or generated internally. Adaptive peacebuilding suggests that the tools and resources available to a society should not be regarded as absolute truths but as elements that form the system. This reasoning allows incumbents to acquire:

> "reflexive awareness of the incompleteness of our understanding is ... vital so that decisions are taken with a large degree of caution (and humility) while at the same time demanding that we think through the possible ramifications" (Hughes in de Coning, 2018, p. 309).

He explains it as a process of adaptation and exploration leading to an emergent and ongoing understanding of the system as it evolves.

Similarly, in 'Perpetual Peacebuilding' (2021), Paffenholz notes how pathways for peace, as she calls them, are never linear and may have a multiplicity of entry points to conflict. The challenge, then, is to be flexible and adaptive. By way of examples, it shows that peace promotion mechanisms are timidly encouraging discussion and dialogue. While these approaches are still regarded by mainstream academia as outliers and merely add-ons to an otherwise malfunctioning system, as has been shown by Autesserre (2019), its invitation is to move away from terms such as success or failure and instead adopt a language that recognises the perpetual nature that peacebuilding entails. To anchor it in an example, Paffenholz uses the notion of 'striving towards' a utopian and subjective space. It accounts for the infinite – and only sketchable but not entirely identifiable – nature of peace, as if it were a steering direction but not a goal itself. The ideas of de Coning and Paffenholz have another distinctive feature that sets them apart from previous debates: both take somehow less-dichotomising premises as a basis. In the case of Paffenholz, she derives from the utopian ever-moving vision found in the works of Kant, particularly in *'Zum ewigen Frieden'* (2021, p. 378) and in the case of de Coning in Luhmann's *'Autopoeiesis of social systems'* (2018, p. 305) and perhaps unwillingly – since there is no direct allusion to it – to the web of links present in Lederach's '*Moral imagination*'.

2.2. The underpinnings of this research: plurality, subtlety, and connectivity.

Towards the end of this survey of the theories that have shaped different approaches to peace, I come to the following question that drives my research: how do we move forward in the studies of peace? What underpins and holds together this more nuanced understanding of ways of approaching peace support efforts? In doing so, I employ three

traits proposed by SungYong Lee (2021, 2022) when referring to peace: plurality, subtlety, and connectivity[1] as I believe they are fit to analyse the social dynamics of memory and

> "the linkages between the individual and the collective, and the roles that traces of the past play (…) in shaping political life" (Bell, 2009, p. 345).

Yong argues that noticing subtlety allows us to assimilate the notion that peace emerges from this trait, which sometimes may be barely noticeable or regarded as insignificant. Nevertheless, it plays a key role in 'curating' the actions contributing to keeping conflict at bay and promoting understanding within communities. In turn, this multiplicity of actions spans from i) agonistic non-violence behaviours to ii) rehumanised relationships covering also attempts to iii) avoid the past, actions of healing and commemoration, iv) engagements of tolerance and v) acknowledgements of counterparts' goodwill (Lee, 2022, p.91). The nuanced character I referred to above relies on the multiplicity of actors playing a role within a system; they see peace practices as fitting and being shaped by reflecting the social, cultural, and political conditions prevailing in the communities they represent. Finally, this plurality of subtle actions would be meaningless if they were not connected. As Lee pointed when studying the everyday reconciliation efforts occurring in Cambodia, *the contour of everyday peace practice was partly determined based on the interaction between community members and the wider contextual factors*" (ibid, p. 106). The forms taken by the 'eternal game of peace' are thus based on the constant interaction between local (at micro, meso and macro levels) and international communities and the shared meanings that constantly emerge from this interwoven ecosystem that supports peace.

As this last section of the chapter attempts to make clear, the answer to the question I asked a couple of lines above and which has been asked by many before me, namely 'What holds things and people together?', would seem to have an unambiguous answer that Lederach (2005) was already rehearsing at the turn of the century. That what holds them together is *"the invisible web of relationships"*. Alternatively, the notion of an ecosystem around which we approach to the wicked problem of dealing with peace may also provide a more suitable path for promoting and sustaining peace; an idea that will become clearer as we delve into the following chapters.

---

[1] It should be noted that the seminal article written by YongSung Lee in 2021 'Understanding Everyday Peace in Cambodia: Plurality, Subtlety, and Connectivity' includes three underpinnings upon which the nature of everyday peace rests. This idea however kept on moving in his work to be turned out as a book released in 2022 as part of the 'Rethinking Political Violence' Series of Palgrave MacMillan – a series edited by Roger MacGinty. In that book Lee adds a forth pillar – obscurity - which lacks the level of development observed in the other three.

The reader should note that even though this research paper draws on both the academic article as well as the book, when referring to the pillars, I have chosen to remain using the first layout.

Chapter three. Five million stories carry memory to the forefront

The characteristics of Lebanon's socio-political situation are dynamic. They influence the way interactions within the country are conducted. The 1975 war is undoubtedly one of the many events that are intertwined in tracing the country's history. While its impact is profound in several respects, the following section will delve into how these events have shaped current democratic and institutional developments. This section will specifically address the characteristics and experiences of the promoters of projects that, to a greater or lesser extent, are part of the ecosystem of initiatives that deal with the past through memory-making, truth-finding and reconciliation in the aftermath of war.

3.1 History is everywhere to be retrieved

Preparing for this research project entailed entering a context that was initially alien to me and, even after this research, was still very difficult to fully unravel. More experienced researchers, when listening to my interest in learning more about the situation in Lebanon and discovering what the consequences of the civil war have meant in terms of social cohesion, continually alluded to the notion of cultural proficiency I needed to develop. To do so, I turned to a variety of sources: news outlets covering the recent port explosion and the political turbulence of recent years; reports identifying possible reasons to explain the financial crisis; policy reports with packages of measures that would help unlock foreign aid that the country could receive should it adopt Structural Adjustment Programmes presented by the US or the EU and the IFIs; working notes dating back to the Ottoman empire ruling to stress the chaotic dispersion of the different ethnic groups across the Levantine territory; country reports drafted by international advisories explaining the current events from security and geopolitical standpoints. As my literature review approached more contemporary times, an idea began to loom large that would be endorsed by four of the people I interviewed: war is not taught in schools in Lebanon. In 1990, following the signing of the Ta'if Agreement, the educational curriculum was modified intentionally, leaving any reference to the war in the dark, which at that time was – as expressed in one interview – still very fresh in the national imagination. Since then, 33 years ago, the curriculum has not been modified, allowing the more than five million inhabitants to stick to their own stories and explanations on how the war was conducted and how it reverberated.

A project designed and conducted by the Lebanese Association for History, with the support of an international donor interested in conflict transformation processes during 2018, presents a laudable alternative to this notorious neglect by the authorities responsible for the national school education programme. The project titled "from local history to a wider understanding of the past" focuses on expanding secondary school students' understanding of the Lebanese civil war. With the support of the Lebanese Ministry of Education, it had been implemented in eight schools in the Governorate of Mount Lebanon. Through the oral transmission of history, with the assistance of project

volunteers who experienced the war and its legacies first-hand, the project promotes an intergenerational conversation about the country's recent history. In this way, they could learn about the harrowing experiences of the people who endured it. They became interested in learning how people coped with and managed to overcome these challenges. Another participant found it remarkable that the project worked with opposite stories presented by people on opposite sides of the war. One of the organisers explains this layout by pointing out that, as these are oral histories, what happens is that generating this interaction allows them to get to know the vision of the other. Together, they build a space that models a version of reality that aims to recognise these differences.

Three years later, in 2022, a similar initiative that brings together some of these same promoters and adds some others takes on a new materiality: Maabar (معبر), which in Arabic stands for junction, appears as an audio-documentary series. This 12-part series brings together experiences accrued during those 15 years of war. It is an effort to promote a space to talk openly about the war. Rather than worrying about the participants' names, ages or identities, the aim is to focus on their lived collective journey and what it signifies for them today. And here's a disclaimer: the reflection I began to incubate while listening to the documentary pods is precisely what the creators of this project seem to have intended from the very start. Listening to it, I could not help but consider how the testimonies and, ultimately, the human condition of those who experienced the conflict traversed the green line that divided Beirut and, more symbolically, the country as a whole. Its creators point out in this regard: Maabar bridges the gaps created by conflict and cultivates a deeper appreciation for our shared humanity. It encourages us to reflect on our collective experiences fostering empathy, reconciliation, and a renewed sense of connection"[i].

When I interviewed one of the people involved in the production of this initiative a few months ago, they told me that the series had been well received by the public across all sectors in the country. This encouraged them to develop new episodes, which are currently being produced and soon to be released. With this, the promoters of the project seek to continue diving *"into the layers of what was experienced, what is remembered and what therefore still exists"[ii]* by bringing a new lens to look at what the conflict brought to the generations that were exposed to it, but also to those that later followed.

They also shared with me their reflection on how even though the arms were effectively stripped after 1990, the conflict continues in other ways until this day. It was precisely that feeling – which in their understanding is shared by many others within their age band and in their social circles – that something like the LAH and Maabar had to be done. They continue by stating how the general feeling among scholars and various active members of society[iii] is that the state is not doing the work they're supposed to do. And that, as a result of it, more corruption appears, and sectarianism becomes even more tense.

I had the opportunity to meet with another promoter who participated in Maabar's documentary production on behalf of his project Fighters for Peace. His story mirrors, to some extent, that of many Lebanese drawn into the war in various ways. In his case, he joined the war from its outset until the very end. He moved into arms following an active participation in Christian collectives as a university student. The motivation to undertake this initiative stems precisely from the clashes in 2013 in Tripoli, the country's second city. Two factions driven by politico-religious strife continue to fight each other in the districts of Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen. Two ex-combatants, witnessing the escalation in

conflict, began to attend meetings with other Civil Society Organisations. During one of these events, they met and began to devise ways to share their own experiences during the civil war with the national society. This first contact led them to make further outreach to other comrades-in-arms. A letter to the various media outlets called on current generations not to resort to the mistakes they had previously perpetrated. Today, Fighters for Peace carries out advocacy and awareness-raising work targeting two key groups: youth, through visits to academic establishments, and ex-combatants, by providing psychosocial support designed for this type of audience. To date, activities have been carried out with other Lebanese and foreign civil society actors and have been covered by the written and regional media such as Al Jazeera, BBC or Radio France International. In addition to participating in the activities mentioned above, its members are active advisors for initiatives like Initiatives for Change, Deleel Madani and others. They also have written books sharing their own experiences during the war.   Two examples of their active participation in the discussion on ways of dealing with the war were witnessed during my stay in the country. In early August, as I was still conducting my fieldwork, two people were killed in an armed clash between Hezbollah members and local militias in the municipality of Aley, in the mountains that separate Beirut from the interior valleys (Le Figaro, 2023; l'Orient Le Jour, 2023). The news caused a stir in the country, and a Fighters for Peace spokesperson made a statement during the burial ceremony of the dead. The next day, that person and I met. While we were in a café in Achrafieh, two pedestrians approached my interviewee, expressing their sympathy with the statements made by him the previous day.

The paths that the work of Fighters for Peace has begun to chart have led them to start collaborating with other civil society groups, such as Umam Documentation and Research, an initiative that "*seeks to inform the future by dealing with the past*" (UMAM D&R, no date). UMAM's work consists of incorporating archival material from various collections of documents, films, magazines, newspapers, and other materials related to the history of Lebanon. As part of its archival work, the initiative promotes and participates in projects authored by other people to "*foster dialogue between stakeholders*" (ibid). The purpose, ultimately, is to provide an understanding of Lebanon's recent memory from a perspective that harnesses and considers art and culture as mechanisms capable of grasping the essence of society at a moment in time. The historical archive project has been in operation since 2005. Its main concern is the period of the civil war and, more specifically, how this event is successfully deployed as an "*inhibitor on the path towards peace and prosperity*". Ultimately, their idea is to promote an inclusive political life that refrains from the use of taboos hitherto shaping public discussion. The focus is on getting down to forming a centralised resource centre as a kind of endowment for future generations. As the founders of this initiative pointed out in their manifesto, the past – and the different versions about it – continues to be an issue that provokes heated and many times even violent exchanges. One of the founders, philosopher, editor, and social critic, Lokman Slim, was shot to death with four shots to the head and one in the back in February 2021. Among the initiatives that UMAM D&R promotes is the drafting of a list of all the people who have been involved in any activism and have been killed as a result thereof. UMAM's work aims to influence on how we perceive the future by providing a space for people who also harbour such an interest. I met one such person on my visit to Hangar 12, the exhibition hall in the adjoining building of UMAM's headquarters in Haret Shreik in South Beirut.

Before turning to the work of this "new generation" of advocates, I must pause to introduce another pivotal advocate in the development and functioning of this ecosystem. ACT for the Disappeared bases its work on the failure of militias and political parties to provide answers about the unresolved fate of more than 17,000 people commonly referred to in the public discussion; a tragic toll that, however, does not include those many others that were illegally detained or disappeared by the occupying forces in the aftermath of the civil war and the two occupations that followed. The families of those missing still do not have adequate information on the whereabouts of many of them[iv], thus affecting how the grieving relatives cope with their losses.

The organisation was founded in 2010 with the aim of i) promoting investigation into the fate of the disappeared and protecting the gravesites. Since 2012, they have been engaged in advocacy and legal mobilisation efforts that bring those mourning the disappeared closer to fulfilling their right to know. They meet these objectives by collecting testimonies; developing databases containing information on illegal detainees and clandestine gravesites; locating new gravesites and judicially preventing their destruction and its further degradation; and providing training the Lebanese authorities by arranging knowhow exchanges with foreign experts in skeletal remains management.

By 2015, they launched a second course of action aimed at ii) foster a sustainable peace and reconciliation process and enhance the tools of relevant stakeholders and other civil society members in 2017 with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent iii) provide psychosocial accompaniment and day-to-day support to the families of the disappeared. To this end, they carry out outreach activities organised together with different partner organisations promoting intercommunity dialogues.

The activities arranged and promoted by this collective were aimed at helping to eventually establish a truth and justice commission in the country. This was reflected in the creation in 2016 of the still-developing National Human Rights Commission, including the Committee for the Prevention of Torture. The aim is ultimately to ensure that this administrative governmental agency can build on the body of information that UMAM D&R has been curating over the past years.

3.2. Imagine the country beyond the divisions caused by the war. An invitation.

I went to UMAM's premises to see an installation nearing completion after more than a year at the Hangar 12 exhibition centre. It was Memory of a Paper City by the artist Alfred Tarazi. In this installation, the artist aims to highlight the power that paper and the publishing industry had and how, today, this heritage is "irretrievably lost", as he repeatedly said (interview XXV).

Through a historiographic work compiling hundreds of publications from 1930 to 1980, Tarazi brought to the audience's attention the way publications shaped the country. This work, which mixes archival and activist features, emphasises the driving forces behind these magazine and newspaper strips. It accounts for two lines of thought. The first uses women to symbolise political and sexual freedom while paradoxically being objectified in

such representations. The second aims to endow the armed conflict with rhetoric seeking to install the following idea: the sacrifices manifested in acts of violence are worth enduring. Through his work, the artist aims to show how the depictions, although disruptive for the time, did not contribute to constructing a more modern country. On the contrary, they have installed a kind of justification for contempt for women, a blanket acceptance of corruption and a total de-sensitisation towards acts of violence happening in plain daylight. The author ventures to point out that this is the paradox of art, which, through a feast for the eyes, paints an image of a country that works as a distorting mirror of the West and a deforming echo chamber of the East (UMAM D&R, n. d.) until the actual violence is of such a magnitude that the art becomes virtually impossible to appreciate. The installation is an invitation to look at things differently, to understand the patterns that shape the conversation in public space and to think about the part that the different elements that make up contemporary society can play in shaping the coming generations.

Similarly, a project hosted by the American University of Beirut (AUB) seeks to instil a new way of approaching social and community interaction. The Centre for Civil Engagement and Community Service is the product of volunteering initiatives conducted by members of the AUB. Slowly but steadily, the project grew and started responding to more of the basic needs of communities affected by protracted crises. Their services range from psychosocial services to enhancing livelihoods and assisting in managing domestic violence cases. The purpose of the centre is to position the university and its students as conveners in the face of social challenges such as those outlined above. It seeks to extend an invitation to AUB students and alumni to contribute to a socially-centred approach to these challenges, drawing on the cultural and social capital and resourcefulness available to the university. The centre's vision concerning the projects it develops and the communities with which it is involved is based on the assumption that universities are not islands of knowledge but rather that they are embedded in society.

Episodes of conflict in the country have been ongoing for years. Furthermore, it is far from being a phenomenon experienced only at the national level. Still, it also impacts more localised arenas, such as the case of Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen's episodes of violence referred to above (MARCH Lebanon, 2019, p.16). Those not only served as the motivation for bringing former combatants to sit together and promote a form of national coexistence that is mindful of experience, like the case of fighters for peace. It also served for other projects to emerge with an equally nuanced aim: to bring positions closer together and tend towards a sustainable coexistence that recognises the importance of community life in Tripoli. MARCH's work began in 2011 as a project promoting social cohesion through peacebuilding. Its medium of work consists in fostering the arts and culture. In its more than ten years in operation, individuals linked to the project that were interviewed have realised – among other things – the cathartic function that can occur within these social expressions. Today, there are two cultural spaces where MARCH conducts activities to consolidate ties between members of these different communities in conflict. To this end, the initiative seeks to provide venues which the participants perceive as a neutral space that belongs to both fractions, favours cross-communal acceptance and promotes mutual acknowledgement.

According to one of the people I interviewed, who was a former project manager for many years and now performs similar functions in an INGO dedicated to promoting human rights, integrity and accountability, MARCH's work weaves different elements of community life. Whether activities are linked to thematic tourism on the conflict that arose between two neighbourhoods, such as the project 'Love & war'[v], either by bringing young people from these two communities together with young personnel from the Lebanese Armed Forces in the project 'Collaborative Journey'[vi] or through a reflection aimed at digging deeper in phenomena like statelessness and the upsurge of violence as it happens in the case of 'Plight of the rightless', MARCH's driving principle remains unchanged: to bring realities together and to reduce the damaging impact stemming from violent behaviours.

These Lebanese suburbs have become a space for initiatives to reach beyond the limits of violence to rebuild the social fabric from other angles. Such is the case of Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya (رواد التنمية), translated into English as 'Development Pioneers'), a philanthropic effort focusing on three axes: child development, youth development and community empowerment. This third variant brought the project into the scope of this research paper. Its work today spans four countries, covering communities in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Palestine. As they neatly conclude their presentation:

> "Ruwwad's is a continuous conversation with the communities' various constituencies, as much to invite freewheeling expression and critical thinking as it is to disrupt the status quo and its entrenched interests". Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya.

One aspect that drove my interest in their approach to philanthropy was the constant iteration of how they conducted their projects with members of the communities where their programmes are being conducted. Most of the roster of Ruwwad's members enter as interns to Ruwwad's programmes that aim to provide learning spaces for low-income communities. As time pasts, members that enter the programmes can apply for scholarships to continue secondary and higher education.

As I got to know some of the organising members of these various initiatives, another person began to appear. He is one of those people with that uncanny ability to hold many positions simultaneously. From serving on the board of trustees of one of the country's most reputable educational institutions to being a strategic advisor to a philanthropic endeavour with operations in four countries in the region, to a geopolitical analyst for the happenings in the Middle East, to becoming an avid social critic of Lebanon's daily life – the latter of which has been done through the two books that have been written to date. After arranging the appointment, we met at an elegant cafe in Gemmayzeh, one of the most fashionable and hardest-hit neighbourhoods after the explosion that rocked Beirut's port. While at this point, it may seem to the reader that the activities carried out by this last participant do not bear much relation to the ones listed above, the next chapter will shed more light on how the ecosystem of initiatives is indeed interwoven within the very distinctive environment around memory and the future in Lebanon by creating a space where the meaning of the past and its manifold traces tries to be somehow contested (Bell, 2009).

Chapter four. The pillars and the loom

As this study has drawn attention to in the previous chapter, the initiatives that are being put in place to keep alive and mobilise memorialisation efforts in the wake of the 1975 civil war do not occur spontaneously. They are projects that are gradually encouraging this to happen by looking into the past and offering ways to move forward. Then, in this next chapter, the work of other types of promoters who - from their positions - "contribute to enacting small, tangible, human-driven changes"[vii], as one of the interviewees openly declares, will be further explored. INGOs, research institutes, think-and-do tanks, IFIs and development aid donors play a role in shaping how an ecosystem of initiatives can take place on the ground. Specifically, this article seeks to analyse how promoters operate in this regard. To do so, I will draw on the notions of adaptive and perpetual peacebuilding presented by Thania Paffenholz and Cedric de Coning and will examine whether the pillars necessary for the sustaining of peace proposed by SungYong Lee – those being subtlety, plurality, and connectivity – are applicable in this context.

A brief recap of the theory backing this rationale is handy now. The notion of peace under which this paper is grounded rests in a modified understanding of two concepts: one presented by Thania Paffenholz in 2021 and the other by Cedric de Coning, first introduced in 2018 and then further developed in 2023. For this research paper, the approach to peace is acknowledging it as both adaptive and perpetual. Adaptive, since it recognises the extent to which stances to deal with peace are neater when they focus not on the conflict itself but on the awareness that local communities develop over the drivers of conflict in a particular system. This approach to peace understands that through an ongoing process of experimentation, selection, and adaptation, the emergence of local social institutions advances in the self-management of future tensions (de Coning, 2018, p. 313).

On the other hand, it is also perpetual in that it proposes dismissing terms like 'success' and 'failure' when referring to peace. It advocates for their retrieve because it argues that perceiving peace as a goal or a recipe to abide by or the prize after solving the problem named 'conflict' becomes pointless (Paffenholz, 2023). Perpetual peace acknowledges instead that peace is an ever-developing movement towards a cardinal point.

4.1 Quality control on the pillars

SungYong Lee's 2022 'Everyday reconciliation' shows its readers that discovering the nature of peace and reconciliation in societies that are just stepping out of conflict is not easy. The claim stems from previous work conducted by this author who, in his 2021 'Understanding everyday peace…' piece, pointed out that the post-conflict communities he studied in Cambodia presented three features when conducting their approaches to peace: plurality, subtlety and connectivity. I will now observe how these pillars may also be present in the efforts to deal with the past by Lebanese promoters.

4.1.1. Plurality

Lee expressed that peace is characterised by plurality. What does the author mean by it? That peace emerges within and between communities at multiple levels and in varied forms. In his observations, he noted how "*community members develop various peacebuilding practices reflecting the social, cultural, and political conditions on their own communities*" (2021, p. 28)

      The initiatives I have presented above are indicative of the variety and array of approaches that, from their originality and with their features, deal with the past—ranging from artistic and historiographic manifestations to advocacy and lobbying interactions. Some of them resort to an explicit confrontation of abhorrent and sad moments in their recent history that should never be repeated (as seen in the case of those demanding more transparency on the fate of disappeared detainees). At the same time, others use more subtle ways (as shown by the many activities taking place between the warring suburbs of Tripoli or those happening in the first years of a bachelor at a university). This plurality to which Lee referred a few years ago, then, is made manifest in the more than 150 initiatives recorded by Mia Bou Khaled nearly five years ago taking place in the country. After reviewing for a more updated version for a long, I was not able to find it, a circumstance that offers an avenue for upcoming research on the matter.

      Following the structure presented in Lee's work, plurality acquires thematic dimensions, as well as spatial and creed-transcending boundaries. These features were also found in the initiatives dealing with the past that takes place in varied ways: not only in different areas of the capital alone but also in Tripoli (Sunni-majority) and in the governorate of Mount Lebanon, where a strong Druze presence is found.

      As one of the interviewees pointed out in our talks:

"Let Georges and Jacques do their thing; let Mia and Zahra change the curricula, et, et, et. [sic] Together we form the collective pressure. We are all committed to rebuilding the country. We cannot live and die without try. We focus on making change; everyone from their own space". Interview XXX.

Similarly, the representative of another initiative aimed at bringing former combatants together also commented along this line of thought and stated – while also coming out with 7 other names of people that 'are active' came out:

"By the time we came to the idea of [of the organisation they founded], 52 different NGOs were trying to address long-term peace". The conversation continued and another quote in this regard came up: "the only way of counteracting the sprout of violence is by getting more active". Interview XVII.

      The multiplicity of efforts simultaneously is not seen as something inherently good by some of the people I interviewed. One of them (interview VI) was adamant in stating that most of the people trying to work in this field "*lack the thick skin to do this job*" and went on by expressing how that is due to "[those lacking the thick skin] *see things from the lens of the West. They only want social cohesion within their own tribes*". What was meant by saying it was that it doesn't matter how many efforts there are in the end. If they are not good enough, then

they do not matter. A profound sense of hopelessness and cynicism was felt when the participant referred to the extent to which such initiatives could bring about change. The statement was unequivocal: "*in Lebanon, such initiatives run up against an iron dome that stops them cold. Full stop*" (interview VI).

4.1.2. Subtlety

Subtle actions proposed Lee, contribute to building or withholding peaceful relationships. Many times, he claims, the actions for peacebuilding may need to be more significant. To counteract that apparent tendency to disregard meaningful actions, the author invites us to look at the details and focus on silence and non-actions (2021, p. 30).

In that sense, subtlety can be noted on site. It can take the form of recognition (for instance, in the acknowledgement of others' promotions to deal with the past), something that the various conversations held while spending time in the country led me to perceive. Throughout that period, the setting where subtlety provided the most apparent exhibit was in the work carried out by representatives of big donors. I am, however, aware that there are many practices that, sadly, to the purpose of this research endeavour, remained unrecognisable to me. Nonetheless, one element that caught my attention is exemplified in the actions and omissions referring to ethnoreligious divides. In a country where sectarian tensions were pointed out by all the participants as a hindering factor of collaboration and a leading cause for division, only two of them expressed zealousness to work with individuals coming from other groups. I see this as a way by which the participants move above what is perceived as normal in their surroundings, that being, to hold animosities between confronting parties. This observation could benefit from being ethnographically covered over a more extended period of physical engagement with the local communities studied for this research.

4.1.3. Connectivity

As this document has insisted, activities promoting ways to deal with the past are many and diverse. As promoters become familiar with one another and more activities appear, so do collaboration spaces. How promoters and new activities emerge in this setting is what will be covered in more detail in this section. Exploring the initiatives dealing with the past shows signs of some connection between each other. In this sense, the observation occurs on different grounds, falling into three categories: thematic, contextual and conjunctural.

4.1.3.1. Thematic

The first and immediately recognisable feature to the reader is the connection that develops among initiatives that share an interest in dealing with the past. The initiatives cover a range of sub-issues within that topic as well as a variety of objectives and approaches, from projects focused on the right to know or non-recurrence to others whose main goal is to obtain official apologies and monetary reparations. Those promoting them operate in clusters according to different approaches, i.e., dialogue and reconciliation, awareness

raising, cultural production, documentation, education, whereabouts of missing and disappeared, psychosocial support, advocacy and legal reform.

It is worth noting how initiatives emerge from those connections within the system. An example is the joint endeavour that brought together an INGO, the Lebanese Association for History and the Ministry of Education. That collaborative initiative ended up implementing the programme "from local history to a wider understanding of the past". Years after, Maabar brought two out of the three institutions mentioned above with sound engineers and creative musicians, former combatants of Fighters for Peace and advocates of ACT for the Disappeared.

4.1.3.2. Contextual

Lee pointed out how context plays a significant role in the pursuit of peace (2022, p.4). His work attempts to explore the influence of external factors in the nature and shape of peace practices; vice versa, it also poses questions on the responses promoted by local communities to contextual/external factors (ibid, p. 96).

In the words of their promoters, the initiatives currently being attempted in the country, examined herein, respond to a large extent to the structural and social conditions that make up the Lebanese setting. The statements provided by the individuals I interviewed and the systematic review of other sources before and after the fieldwork suggest this may be the case. Notions like *'governmental abulia'*, *'call to action'*, and *'moral duty'* appeared repeatedly in my conversations (interviews VIII, XVII and XXVII).

It should be noted, however, that initiatives are context-sensitive does not mean they are reactive. Instead, it accounts for how the system of social initiatives occurs and adapts to its environment. An example of this can be found in the work of ACT for the Disappeared. As mentioned above, among the most important activities carried out by ACT is to contribute to the preservation of gravesites scattered throughout the country and to exert pressure on people who know of more of these graves to reveal their location. This work takes place with the 1991 amnesty law in force. If such a law were not in place, the mechanisms through which pressure could be exerted could not be the same. A similar situation occurs with Fighters for Peace: The meaningful tasks of awareness and dialogue promoted by its founders and other former combatants take place given that the amnesty law sets out the ground for it.

4.1.3.3. Conjunctural

At this point in my research, it appears that junctures play a catalysing function. One example demonstrating this may be found in the Thawra. This series of demonstrations in 2019 helped promoters of different issues linked to dealing with the past to connect with others from other fields of practice. In three interviews, my interlocutors identified the protests and the conversations that these protests brought about as the moment when new initiatives began to emerge. One of them sees in Thawra what, along our conversation, was referred to as the *"network of leaders of Thawra"*. In their words, the work that this person promotes is one of

"Bringing positions closer together using the points in common that different personalities from the political scene have on determined points. Is to lead them to reflect on what has been done well and what has been done badly so that new generations of politicians can learn". Interview XXIII.

Something similar occurred at the time of the inter-neighbourhood violence in Tripoli. After these clashes began, initiatives like Ruwwad, MARCH and Fighters for Peace began to emerge subsequently.

4.2. An afterthought on those who weave

As Lee points out, recognizing plurality is pivotal to understanding peace efforts' nuanced nature. This research has attempted to show that, in this case, this plurality does not only refer to the variety of forms but also to the diversity of actors and the sophistication of the different initiatives. Moreover, this phenomenon plays a significant role on the way these initiatives converge into a highly complex and interconnected system. In it, the work of all sorts of promoters has the potential to contribute to its continuity. This is because the initiatives observed during this period ultimately have more than one objective to be met at all costs; there is no 'one-goal'. Instead - as we have already noted above – they have a palette of materialities, mechanisms, and context-tailored objectives that head towards the sustainment of peace. Each of them from their own lived experiences and based on their attributes. In some cases, the work carried out by these initiatives will have effects that may be perceived as positive for the parties involved – such is the case with the appointment as Commissioner for Lebanon's National Commission for the Missing and forcibly Disappeared. Meanwhile, others will be perceived as fruitless or chaotic even by the people who participate in them, as one person told me during an interview - alluding to the difficulty of coordinating the work in roundtables involving actors drawn from various backgrounds, sensitivities, and motivations.

This in no way seeks to deny the role that power relations play in shaping society. The latter exceeds at length what this paper deals with. Scholarship dealing with power dynamics in various settings are dealt with in depth by the Gramscian school. Tuhkanen (2023) gives a thorough account of it when covering the role of participation in driving changes in power relations. Instead, the paper serves as an invitation to look at how it is that these promoters articulate spaces for initiatives to interact with each other within an intricate system of connections that ultimately keep entropy (Shannon, 1948, p.396; Mavrofides, Kameas et al., 2011) with regards to the promotion of initiatives. As underlined by Wennmann (2023, p. 31), striving to change is a complex endeavour that requires coordination, observation, and synergies to deliver assistance and execute various actions. Locally driven and locally embedded are not only entry points for an integrated approach but pivotal in advancing efforts to sustain peace.

Chapter five. Set us free?

This study has taken stock of the initiatives installed in the public discussion of memory in Lebanon by showing how the interactions they employ span a multiplicity of forms by subtly intertwining through actions and inactions, creating spaces out of which various points of connection emerge and converge. In a way, the space that has been taking shape among these initiatives dealing with the memory of the civil war echoes what Haugbolle observed when focusing on the Lebanese public space some years earlier in 'War and memory in Lebanon' (2010). It also builds upon what Seyla Benhabib (1997) eloquently argued about how public conversation takes place in spaces that come into existence when actors interact with each other. This associativity is a manifestation of the ways in which they articulate their rights. She argues,

> "It is through the interlocking web of the multiple forms of associations, networks and organizations that an anonymous public conversation result. It is central to the model of deliberative democracy that it privileges such a public sphere of mutually interlocking and overlapping networks and associations of deliberation, contestation, and argumentation. Today our guiding model has to be that of a medium of loosely associated, multiple foci of opinion-formation and dissemination which impact each other in free and spontaneous processes of communication" (p.10).

The following subsections aim at explaining how the latter comes together.

5.1. "A public interlocked space"

Sitting on the pillars of plurality, subtlety and connectivity, initiatives that address issues of memory and, as a consequence, promote the sustaining of peace encourage, inform and, to a large extent, steer the way into the next momentum where suited promoters can continue dealing with the past. The statements of the people I spoke to attest to this and are also in line with what Thania Paffenholz mentions in her 2023 piece – based *among other things* on conversations she had with peace scholar herself, Christine Cheng: initiatives weave an ecosystem around which we can observe how this approach to the wicked problem of dealing with peace may provide a more suitable path for promoting and sustaining peace. In that regard, one of the conversations went precisely along these lines; on that occasion the person I was talking to said: *"we, among ourselves, work to create a safe space that allow us to speak about these issues. We strive to solidify those different efforts"* (interview VIII).

5.2. "Central to the model of deliberative democracy that privileges that public sphere"

As we have seen in the previous sections of this paper, Lebanon is a country of busy interactions within its civil society. Its history and geopolitical status pose major interest for a number of high-profile actors at the global level and, certainly for the United Nations.

Perhaps the reader may still harbour doubts about the role of large donors and IFIs in these interactions; if so, the following section attempts to offer another possible way of looking at these dynamics taking place on the country's social map when it comes to contributing to peace.

To that end, it is worth pointing out how the UN recently remodelled its stance when approaching peace. The current rationale goes as follows:

> "'Sustaining peace' (…) should be broadly understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development, and emphasizing that sustaining peace is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the Government and all other national stakeholders, and should flow through all three pillars of the United Nations engagement at all stages of conflict, and in all its dimensions, and needs sustained international attention and assistance" (Rosenthal, 2017).

This understanding of peace expressly argues

> "in favour of 'inclusive national ownership' in peacebuilding, whereby the national responsibility to drive and direct efforts is broadly shared by the national government across all key social strata and divides, across a spectrum of political opinions and domestic actors, including minorities. This implies participation by community groups, women's platforms and representatives, youth, labour organizations, political parties, the private sector and domestic civil society, including under-represented groups" (Advisory Group of Experts, 2015, p.21).

5.3 "Networks of free deliberation, contestation and argumentation", or is there perhaps room for something else?

It would seem then that the UN's approach to peace - which has been criticised by much of the peace doctrine as championing a liberal peace that disregards local knowledge and installs simplistic approaches to problems with one-size-fits-all recipes - may ultimately be using and encouraging quite similar approaches to those proposed by its most vocal critics. What can be drawn from this observation: how is this approach, which aims to push for a peace that includes people and groups in between, experienced in the field? In this regard, a final examination of the field notes sheds light on one idea. It is a concept that came up in absolutely every conversation I had. To a greater or lesser extent, all those who promote these initiatives stand up and - by that fact alone - are already overcoming the fear installed by the war.

Therein lies the contribution of this work to the domain of development studies: in highlighting how people use their agency and, as a consequence, live beyond fear. It sheds light on those working to promote a country where their children live without being shaped by fear - as one interviewee put it. Where fear no longer paralyses them, as another said. Fear is no longer as strong as before, so now they dare to speak out, as another said. One in which they will continue to look for ways to browse this setting so that the next generations no longer look at each other with mistrust, but rather one in which they look at each other with the awareness that both fate and the space for which they are all guarantors is shared.

Chapter six. Closing remarks

6.1. Recapping

The present study delves on the ways in which a wide array of promoters interact in the hopes of developing a broader understanding of the civil war that scarred Lebanon, a country that continues to ignore the whereabouts of thousands of compatriots and keeps being immersed in a profound institutional crisis. To do so, chapter one briefly essays a review of the milestones that Lebanon has undergone in the brief history it has had in its 80 years of independent existence and then moves into presenting the features that the research itself took into account to undertake these observations. Chapter two stopped to consider the most influential positions when entering the studies of peace and conflict to sit in the end in the pillars of plurality, subtlety and connectivity proposed by YungSong Lee. Additionally, it rests in the current models that continue to be developed by Cedric de Coning and Thania Paffenholz, authors who invite to enter the understanding of peace more in the sense of a navigational direction rather than an end on itself. Chapters three and four enter into the stories and ways in which different initiatives in Lebanon weave an ecosystem upon which peace can be sustained and that have allowed for their promoters to move beyond the fea that the civil war installed. Lastly, chapter five points to the close similarity that can be observed in the way initiatives interact with each other and the current approach of the UN – which keeps on being named by critical scholarship as the liberal peace promoter *par excellence* – keeping a will to constantly adapt to the parameters set by this uplifted liberal peace-sustaining agenda.

Through it, I have presented one version – my personal reflection regarding the many visions and shapes a phenomenon can adopt – to see how society interacts in the pursuit of sustaining peace and keeping memory alive from a complexity theory lens.

6.2. Future research directions

This study focused in observing one setting and as a result of it, offers a small standing point for topics that can be further elaborated. One interesting avenue of research may be following and present an up-to-date version of the mapping of initiatives dealing with the legacies of war in Lebanon. Other phenomenon that also caught my attention, and that can be further pursued goes to the connection between gender and war; observation that results after noticing that only four out of the 30 people I interacted are men.

6.3. Final reflection

As I begin to bring this piece to a close, violence in the region is at an upswing point. The conflict between Israel and Gaza is spreading to southern Lebanon, the area that has risen to become a stronghold of Hezbollah against Israel. As of today, the group keeps a watchful eye on the conflict (Khoury, 2023; Gheit et al., 2023). Almost 50 years ago, another episode of the same conflict between the state of Israel and the factions contesting its actions in Palestine triggered a civil war that has left scars to this day in Lebanon. These

scars are slowly beginning to heal. Over the last few days, I have been communicating with some of those who shared with me coffees, mint lemonades and *soubhiyes*. They express to me a sense of suspense and expectation. And while they do that, I wonder about the impact these feelings produce as they surreptitiously install at meals and social gatherings, as long as the constant movement of the cities, the tranquil mountains, and the unremitting work in the valley allow them to do so.

Almost 50 years ago, another chapter in the very same conflict contributed - along with many other factors - to the outbreak of the civil war that scars Palestine to this day. These scars are slowly beginning to heal with initiatives like those described in this paper. We do not know how history will unfold, but we do know that many (that we have seen and many more that remain to be contacted) strive to ensure that memory continues to have a place on the course towards this perpetual peace.

Interview List

- Interview I, a development practitioner for an INGO in Hamra (July 2023)
- Interview III, a grassroots movements supporter, freelance correspondent for international media outlets and development practitioner in Mar Mikhael (July 2023)
- Interview VI, a university professor in Ras Beirut (July 2023)
- Interview VIII, an international donor development practitioner in Badaro (July 2023)
- Interview X, an international donor development practitioner in Gemmayzeh (August 2023)
- Interview XI, a development practitioner for an INGO in Sodeco (August 2023)
- Interview XVI, an activist in Achrafieh (August 2023)
- Interview XVII, an activist and former combatant in Achrafieh (August 2023)
- Interview XX, a writer and philanthropist in Gemmayzeh (August 2023)
- Interview XXI, a programme manager for a LNGO in Sodeco (August 2023)
- Interview XXIII, an political activist and scholar in Achrafieh (August 2023)
- Interview XXV, an artist and activist in Daoura (August 2023)
- Interview XXVII, an international criminal law practitioner in Ras Beirut (remote) (September 2023)
- Interview XXX, a history teacher and activist in Ras Beirut (remote) (September 2023)

References

Advisory Group of Experts to the United Nations (2015) 'The challenge of sustaining peace: for the 2015 review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture'. United Nations. New York.

Agyei, P.D., Möller, F. and Väyrynen, T. (2023) 'Two Maps, Two Tales and Two Truths: A Purposeful Transformational Approach to the Nkonya–Alavanyo Conflict in Ghana', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, p. 15423166231190045. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/15423166231190045.

Autesserre, S. (2017) 'International Peacebuilding and Local Success: Assumptions and Effectiveness', *International Studies Review*, 19(1), pp. 114–132. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viw054.

Autesserre S. (2019) 'The Crisis of Peacekeeping: Why the UN Can't End Wars', *Foreign Affairs*, February, pp. 101–116.

Azar, E.E. (1985) 'Protracted international conflicts: Ten propositions', *International Interactions*, 12(1), pp. 59–70. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/03050628508434647.

Bell, D. (2009) 'Introduction: Violence and Memory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 38(2), pp. 345–360. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829809347541.

Benhabib, S. (1997) 'The Embattled Public Sphere: Hannah Arendt, Juergen Habermas and Beyond', *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, (90), pp. 1–24.

Bou Khaled, M. (2019) 'Contested history, conflicting narratives, and a multitude of initiatives: An analysis of the Mapping of Initiatives addressing Past Conflicts in Lebanon', Civil Society Knowledge Centre, Lebanon Support. Available at: https://doi.org/10.28943/CSKC.002.60001 (Accessed: 14 October 2023).

Botes, J. (2003) 'Conflict Transformation: A Debate Over Semantics'. *International Journal of Peace Studies* 6 (2). Available at: https://www3.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol8_2/botes.htm (Accessed: 23 October 2023).

Day, A. and Hunt, C.T. (2023) 'A Perturbed Peace: Applying Complexity Theory to UN Peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping*, 30(1), pp. 1–23. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2022.2158457.

De Coning, C. (2013) 'Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(1), p. 6. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.as.

De Coning, C. and Gelot, L. (2020) 'Placing People at the Center of UN Peace Operations', *IPI Global Observatory*, 29 May. Available at: https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/05/placing-people-center-un-peace-operations/ (Accessed: 21 October 2023).

De Coning, C., Saraiva, R. and Muto A., (eds) (2023) *Adaptive peacebuilding: A New Approach to Sustaining Peace in the 21st Century*. (Century Perspectives on War, Peace, and Human Conflict). Available at: https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/94/2/301/4851911 (Accessed: 21 October 2023).

Galtung, J. (1969) 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (3): 167-191.

Gheit, A.S.-G.A.A. *et al.* (2023) 'Live Updates: Israel defense chief warns Lebanon of a Gaza scenario as Arab leaders call for arms embargo - Al-Monitor: Independent, trusted coverage of the Middle East', 10 November. Available at: https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/10/live-updates-israel-defense-chief-warns-lebanon-gaza-scenario-arab-leaders-call (Accessed: 12 November 2023).

Hadi, M. (2013) Tackling Structural Grievances: Towards Peace- Building in Afghanistan. Master's Thesis. Erasmus University Rotterdam. Available at: https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/15332 (Accessed: 22 October 2023).

Haugbolle, S. (2010) *War and Memory in Lebanon*. 1st edn. Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511676598.

How the Beirut explosion was a government failure (2020). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFpfYTYupKA (Accessed: 14 October 2023).

Joshi, M., Quinn, J.M. and Regan, P.M. (2015) 'Annualized implementation data on comprehensive intrastate peace accords, 1989–2012', Journal of Peace Research, 52(4), pp. 551–562. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343314567486.

Khāzen, F. al- (1991) *The communal pact of national identities: the making and politics of the 1943 National Pact*. Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies (Papers on Lebanon, 12).

Khoury, J. (2023) 'Hezbollah leader Nasrallah demands pressure on U.S. to force cease-fire on Israel', *Haaretz*, 11 November. Available at: https://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/2023-11-11/ty-

article/.premium/hezbollah-leader-nasrallah-demands-pressure-on-u-s-to-force-cease-fire-on-israel/0000018b-bf0c-dedf-adab-ff1cf37b0000 (Accessed: 12 November 2023).

Lederach, J. P. (1997) 'Building peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies'. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Lederach, J.P. (2005) *The moral imagination: the art and soul of building peace*. Oxford ; Oxford University Press.

Lee, S. (2021) 'Understanding Everyday Peace in Cambodia: Plurality, Subtlety, and Connectivity', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 16(1), pp. 24–38. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1542316620974371.

Lee, S. (2022) *Everyday Reconciliation in Post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia: Subtle Agency and Hidden Narratives*. Cham: Springer International Publishing (Rethinking Political Violence). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13987-1.

Leonardsson, H. and Rudd, G. (2015) 'The 'local turn' in peacebuilding: a literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding', *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5) pp. 825-839. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015-10129905

Liban: l'armée saisit des munitions du Hezbollah après des heurts (2023) *Le Figaro*. Available at: https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/liban-l-armee-saisit-des-munitions-du-hezbollah-apres-des-heurts-20230810 (Accessed: 31 October 2023).

Ljungkvist, K. and Jarstad, A. (2021) 'Revisiting the local turn in peacebuilding – through the emerging urban approach', *Third World Quarterly*, 42(10), pp. 2209–2226. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2021.1929148.

L'Orient Today (2023) 'Key points from Nasrallah's speech on Saturday', 11 November. Available at: https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1357023/key-points-from-nasrallahs-speech-on-saturday.html (Accessed: 12 November 2023).

MacGinty, R. (2010) 'Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace', Security Dialogue, 41(4), pp. 391–412. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010610374312.

Majzoub, A. (2021) '"They Killed Us from the Inside"', *Human Rights Watch*, 3 August. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/03/they-killed-us-inside/investigation-august-4-beirut-blast (Accessed: 12 November 2023).

MARCH Lebanon (2019) *Plight of the Rightless: Mapping and Understanding Statelessness in Tripoli*. Policy recommendations. Beirut, Lebanon: MARCH, p. 76. Available at: https://www.marchlebanon.org/report/plight-of-the-rightless/.

Mavrofides, T. *et al.* (2011) 'On the Entropy of Social Systems: A Revision of the Concepts of Entropy and Energy in the Social Context', *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 28(4), pp. 353–368. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.1084.

Memory of a Paper City (no date) *UMAM D&R*. Available at: https://www.umam-dr.org/event_detail/114/ (Accessed: 1 November 2023).

Memory of a Paper City: A conversation with Alfred Tarazi (2022). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZz2Tc2uZWs (Accessed: 1 November 2023).

Middle East Eye (no date) 'Israeli troops besiege Gaza hospitals as Arab leaders denounce "war crimes"'. Available at: https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-war-troops-besiege-attack-gaza-hospitals--arab-leaders-denounce-israeli-war-crimes (Accessed: 12 November 2023).

Paffenholz, T. (2015) 'Unpacking the local turn in peacebuilding: a critical assessment towards an agenda for future research', *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), pp. 857–874. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1029908.

Paffenholz, T. (no date) 'Civil society and peacebuilding'.

Paffenholz, T. (2014) 'International peacebuilding goes local: analysing Lederach's conflict transformation theory and its ambivalent encounter with 20 years of practice', *Peacebuilding*, 2(1), pp. 11–27. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.783257.

Paffenholz, T. (2015) 'Unpacking the local turn in peacebuilding: a critical assessment towards an agenda for future research', *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), pp. 857–874. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1029908.

Paffenholz, T. (2021) 'Perpetual Peacebuilding: A New Paradigm to Move Beyond the Linearity of Liberal Peacebuilding', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 15(3), pp. 367–385. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2021.1925423.

Peacebuilding (no date) Taylor & Francis. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=editorialBoard&journalCode=rpcb20 (Accessed: 15 October 2023).

Richmond, O.P. (2008) 'Reclaiming Peace in International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 36(3), pp. 439–470. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298080360030401.

Richmond, O. P. (2011) *A post-liberal peace*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon England: Routledge (Routledge studies in peace and conflict resolution).

Richmond, O.P. *et al.* (2021) 'Power or peace? Restoration or emancipation through peace processes', *Peacebuilding*, 9(3), pp. 243–257. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2021.1911916.

Rosenthal, G. (2017) 'Reflections on the Meaning of "Sustaining Peace"', *IPI Global Observatory*, 17 July. Available at: https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/07/sustaining-peace-peacebuilding-architecture-united-nations/ (Accessed: 10 November 2023).

Söderström, J., Åkebo, M. and Jarstad, A.K. (2021) 'Friends, Fellows, and Foes: A New Framework for Studying Relational Peace', *International Studies Review*, 23(3), pp. 484–508. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viaa033.

The historiography and the memory of the Lebanese civil war | Sciences Po Violence de masse et Résistance - Réseau de recherche (no date). Available at: https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/fr/document/historiography-and-memory-lebanese-civil-war.html (Accessed: 15 October 2023).

The Lebanon 3RF Consultative Group (no date). Available at: https://www.lebanon3rf.org/consultative-group (Accessed: 15 October 2023).

'The Taif Agreement' (no date). Available at: https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/LB_891022_Taif%20Accords.pdf. (Accessed: 15 October 2023).

Tuhkanen, H. (2023) 'Shifting power through participation in post-disaster recovery: A scoping review', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 97, p. 104041. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2023.104041.

Two shot dead after Hezbollah-owned truck overturns in Kahaleh (2023) *L'Orient Today*. Available at: https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1345997/two-shot-dead-after-hezbollah-owned-truck-overturns-in-kahaleh.html (Accessed: 31 October 2023).

UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program (n. d.). Available at: https://ucdp.uu.se/country/660 (Accessed: 22 October 2023).

UNIFIL Mandate (2016) UNIFIL. Available at: https://unifil.unmissions.org/unifil-mandate (Accessed: 15 October 2023).

United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (n. d.). Available at: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml (Accessed: 22 October 2023).

Väyrynen, T. (2019) 'Mundane peace and the politics of vulnerability: a nonsolid feminist research agenda', *Peacebuilding*, 7(2), pp. 146–159. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1590081.

Wallis, J., Jeffery, R. and Kent, L. (2016) 'Political reconciliation in Timor Leste, Solomon Islands and Bougainville: the dark side of hybridity', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70(2), pp. 159–178. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2015.1113231.

Wennmann, A. (2023) 'Grasping the Strengths of Fragile States: Aid Effectiveness Between "Top-down" and "Bottom-up" Statebuilding'. Geneva.

World Bank Group (2021) *Lebanon Economic Monitor. Lebanon Sinking to the Top3*. World Bank.

---

[i] https://www.forumzfd.de/en/reimagine-past

[ii] https://www.maabarpodcast.com/enhome

[iii] At this moment, the interviewee expressed how this is something that only can be spoken with tact among circles of trust.

[iv] http://www.actforthedisappeared.com/our-cause/context

[v] https://www.marchlebanon.org/news/jabal-mohsen-and-beb-el-tebbenehs-former-demarcation-lines-officially-featured-on-the-tourist-map-of-lebanon/

[vi] https://www.marchlebanon.org/news/collaborative-journey-with-the-lebanese-armed-forces/

[vii] https://www.synaps.network/post/be-part-of-our-growth