







TAPRI Studies in Peace and Conflict Research no. 100

**A Recited Community:  
Figures of an Identity Foretold**

Narrating Heritage and Positioning  
Boundaries among Student Partisan  
Groups in Plural Lebanon

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TAPRI Studies in Peace and Conflict Research no. 100

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Under the North Star, October 22, 2013,  
Bruno Lefort



# Abstract

This research is a study of the processes of social identification in contemporary Lebanon. Through the exploration of student activism in a political party, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), it defines social groups in a cognitive and performative perspective: the sense of belonging arises from the attribution of a shared signification to the social reality and the representation of the self in this horizon of meaning in public interactions. Narrativity plays a pivotal role in this twofold process as it conveys both the signification allocated to the social reality and the emplotment sustaining the staging of identification in interactional settings. This study argues that, in plural Lebanon, being engaged in a partisan group means to enter a community of interpretation, which is analyzed in a triple dimension. Each dimension underlines a gradual construction of attachment and uncovers specific forms of socialization, all relying on a narrative core: mediation, incorporation, and integration.

The group is first constructed by positioning in situational interactions – before everything in the university contexts in which students are inscribed. Collective as well as personal identity narratives create boundaries and support concrete allocation of positions in the time and space of social interactions. Identification with the FPM is primary positioning the self as a member or a supporter of the group, which in turn bears material consequences in terms of insertion within partisan networks. In that sense, the group stands out as a community of mediation, i.e. a gathering serving of interface in social encounters. It is through the mediation of the group and its narrative storyline that members engage in interactions.

Second, the inscription within social networks and the process of intragroup socialization means to enter in a community of incorporation. It generates the immersion within a culture, a system of shared beliefs and codes. This construction of joint significations is structured by collective narratives about the group, its boundaries and its founding stories. Building on the primary socialization of the adherents, which it transforms to unify the conception of the group, this process of allocation of meaning sustains the construction of a master narrative defining the dominant public identity of the group and revealing its internal power structure.

Third, adhesion means constructing the self in the horizon of a polyphonic collective memory. In that sense, the party becomes a community of integration as attachment entails the integration of a plurality of memory inherited from the various social groups in which the actors are evolving into a common plot. Narrative works here as an integrative concept, allowing the insertion of divergent experience into a shared representation of the past organized around an emplotment that gives sense not only to the past, but also to the present and the future. Accordingly, members compose their own story to stage an identity they have already incorporated. They are, to that concern, figures of an identity foretold.

Key words: Narrative, Identity, Memory, Socialization, Social ties, Lebanon, Youth.



## Résumé

A travers l'étude de l'engagement étudiant au sein d'un parti politique libanais, le Courant patriotique Libre (CPL), ce travail entend explorer les dynamiques de production de l'attachement et de constitution des groupes sociaux au sein d'une société plurielle. Un groupe peut être heuristiquement défini dans une perspective cognitive et performative: le sentiment d'appartenance serait construit par et manifesté dans un double processus d'allocation de signification et d'incarnation d'un rôle dans les interactions. A cet égard, la narrativité, parce qu'elle est à la fois action de mise en représentation et assignation de sens, constitue un des modes de construction et de réalisation privilégiés du lien social. Dans la société plurielle libanaise, appartenir à un groupe partisan signifie rejoindre une communauté d'interprétation, au sein de laquelle il est possible de distinguer analytiquement trois dimensions du processus de socialisation, recourant chacune à un ressort narratif: la médiation, l'incorporation, et l'intégration.

Appartenir à un groupe partisan signifie tout d'abord se positionner au cours des activités de la vie quotidienne, en particuliers au sein des espaces universitaires que fréquentent les étudiants. Ces positions sont construites dans l'espace et le temps de l'interaction par la mobilisation de récits identitaires collectifs et de présentation de soi révélant frontières et démarcations entre groupes. L'identification avec le CPL correspond donc avant tout à l'adoption d'une position de membre – ou de sympathisant – du groupe pour la présentation de soi, ce qui, en retour, encourage l'insertion concrète au sein des activités et des réseaux sociaux partisans. En ce sens, le groupe devient une communauté de médiation, jouant le rôle d'interface entre l'individu et le monde social extérieur. C'est au travers du groupe que l'individu se reconnaît et est reconnu dans le quotidien, et le récit identitaire collectif médiatisant sa participation aux interactions sociales.

Appartenir à un groupe partisan signifie ensuite s'insérer à une communauté humaine, régie par des modes d'interactions routinisés et des représentations dominantes. L'apprentissage de cette culture et de ces croyances partagées conduit l'incorporation de figures institutionnalisées définissant le groupe, ses liens, ses frontières, et ses récits fondateurs. Opéré sur la base des socialisations primaires des acteurs, ce processus d'apprentissage touchant les pratiques comme les savoirs tend à produire une narration dominante façonnant l'identité revendiquée publiquement par le parti. Ce récit étalon est structuré par les dynamiques et les relations de pouvoir internes au groupe et compose le modèle sur la base duquel l'adhésion est interprétée en fonction des aspirations et des trajectoires personnelles.

Appartenir à un groupe partisan signifie enfin inscrire son moi au cœur d'une mémoire multi-vocale, inspirée par l'ensemble des groupes sociaux dont le collectif porte les héritages. Le parti se fait alors communauté d'intégration, dans la mesure où la mémoire qu'il revendique organise autour d'une mise en intrigue spécifique l'intégration au sein d'une narration unique la pluralité des mémoires vives de ses membres comme la diversité des cadres sociaux qu'elles intègrent. Le recours à la mémoire pour la mise en récit de l'identification permet l'activation de l'affectivité de l'attachement tout en assurant l'uniformisation des représentations du passé, des

perceptions du présent et des anticipations de l'avenir. La narrativité fonctionne alors comme un concept intégrateur articulant le temps biographique de l'individu, le temps moyen de l'institution partisane, et le temps long des communautés religieuses libanaises dans la construction du moi des acteurs. L'identité narrative ainsi formée constitue un agencement inédit dans les conditions du présent de narrations sociales héritées du passé. En ce sens, les adhérents du groupe partisan représentent des figures d'une identité recomposée.

Le détour par l'analyse de la narration de l'attachement permet ainsi de dégager les caractéristiques du lien partisan dans le Liban pluriel contemporain, fondé sur l'affectivité et l'activation de frontières identitaires produites dans et par l'interaction

Mots clés: Narration, Identité, Mémoire, Socialisation, Liens sociaux, Liban, Jeunesse.

# Tiivistelmä

Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan sosiaalista identiteettiä eli samaistumisprosesseja nyky-Libanonissa. Tutkimuksen kohteena on opiskelija-aktivismi poliittisessa Free Patriotic Movement -puolueessa (FPM). Tutkimuksessa määritellään sosiaalisia ryhmiä kognitiivisesta ja performatiivisesta näkökulmasta: kuulumisen tunne syntyy sosiaaliselle todellisuudelle annetuista yhteisistä merkityksistä ja itsensä esittämisestä julkisessa vuorovaikutuksessa tästä merkityshorisontista käsin. Kerronnallisuus on keskeisessä asemassa tässä kaksitahoisessa prosessissa, sillä kerronnan avulla välitetään sekä sosiaaliselle todellisuudelle annettuja merkityksiä että juonellistamista, joka tukee samaistumisen esittämistä vuorovaikutustilanteissa. Tutkimuksessa esitetään, että moniarvoisessa Libanonissa kannattajaryhmään kuulumisen merkitsee tulkintayhteisöön liittymistä. Tätä eritellään kolmen eri ulottuvuuden kautta. Kukin ulottuvuus korostaa kiinnittymisen vaiheittaista rakentumista ja paljastaa tiettyjä sosialisointimuotoja, joilla kaikilla on kerronnallinen ydin. Näitä muotoja ovat välittäminen, sulauttaminen ja integraatio.

Ensinnä ryhmä muodostuu tilanteisiin liittyvässä vuorovaikutuksessa tapahtuvan asemoitumisen eli positioiden ottamisen kautta, ennen kaikkea opiskelijoiden yliopistokontekstissa. Kollektiiviset ja yksilölliset identiteettikertomukset rajaavat ja tukevat konkreettisten positioiden antamista sosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen ajassa ja paikassa. Samaistuessaan FPM-puolueeseen yksilö asemoituu ensisijaisesti ryhmän jäsenen tai kannattajan positioon, millä on käytännön seurauksia kannattajaverkostoihin liittymisen kannalta. Tässä mielessä ryhmä on välittävä yhteisö (*community of mediation*), eli se toimii rajapintana sosiaalisissa kohtaamisissa. Jäsenet osallistuvat vuorovaikutukseen ryhmän välityksellä ja sen kerronnallisen tarinan kautta.

Toiseksi sosiaalisiin verkostoihin osallistuminen ja ryhmän sisäinen sosialisointiprosessi merkitsevät sulauttavaan yhteisöön (*community of incorporation*) liittymistä. Yksilöt sulautuvat ryhmän kulttuuriin eli yhteisten uskomusten ja sääntöjen järjestelmään. Yhteisten merkitysten rakentumista jäsentävät ryhmää, sen rajoja sekä sen syntyä ja perusperiaatteita koskevat yhteiset kertomukset. Tämä merkityksenantoprosessi perustuu kannattajien ensisijaiseen sosialisointiin ja muuttaa heitä yhtenäistääkseen käsityksen ryhmästä. Lisäksi prosessi tukee suuren kertomuksen rakentumista. Suuri kertomus määrittää ryhmän hallitsevan identiteetin ja ilmentää sen sisäistä valtarakennetta.

Kolmanneksi kiinnittyminen tarkoittaa itsensä rakentamista moniäänisen kollektiivisen muistin muodostamassa maisemassa. Tässä mielessä puolue on integroiva yhteisö (*community of integration*): kiinnittymisestä seuraa, että lukuisat muistot, jotka on peritty eri sosiaalisilta ryhmiltä, joissa toimijat kehittyvät, yhdistetään yhteiseksi juoneksi. Kerronta on tässä yhteydessä integroiva tekijä, sillä se mahdollistaa erilaisten kokemusten sisällyttämisen yhteiseen representaatioon menneisyydestä. Representaatio perustuu juonellistamiseen, joka antaa merkityksen paitsi menneisyydelle myös nykyisyydelle ja tulevaisuudelle. Sen perusteella jäsenet muodostavat omat tarinansa lavastaakseen identiteetin, jonka ovat jo omaksuneet. Siten he ovat ennalta määritellyn identiteetin henkilöitymiä.

Avainsanat: kertomus, narratiivinen tutkimus, identiteetti, muisti, sosialisointi, sosiaaliset siteet, Libanon, nuoret.





## Note on transliteration

This work uses a simplified system of transliteration of Arabic terms, derived from the standards adopted by United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names<sup>1</sup>. It highlights long vowels and diphthongs (transliterated *â*, *î* or *yy*, and *û* or *w*) but does not mark the emphatic consonants with diacritic signs. Such a system aims at easing the reading for those not acquainted with the Arabic language while at the same time enabling the clear restitution of the original word.

In addition, for more convenience, the commonly used names of people, organizations and places are transliterated according to their conventional spelling in the Lebanese setting (for example *Michel Aoun* instead of *Mîshâl 'Aûn*, *Samir Geagea* instead of *Samîr Ja'ja'*, or *Jbeil* instead of *Jbaîl*).

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<sup>1</sup> See: [http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/rom1\\_ar.pdf](http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/rom1_ar.pdf) [September 2013]



# Introduction

*“The language of contest, of a pure 'we' against a pure 'they', suppressed life's other realities.”*

Michael Gilson (1996, p. 164)

This research is a study of the processes of social identification in contemporary Lebanon. Through the exploration of the student activism engaged in a political party, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), my aim is to examine the dynamics of attachment, divisions, and conflict in a plural social setting. Bonds, boundaries, memory of violence, and narratives compose the frames of social interactions, which in turn play an important part producing the universes of signification in which partisan affiliations are elaborated, transmitted, appropriated and transformed.

## ***A political articulation of social divisions***

Located in the Middle-East, Lebanon has become the symbol of divided societies. A land of communities (Picard 1997), the country hosts up to eighteen religion-based groups coexisting in a unique power-sharing political order<sup>2</sup>. The distinctions between the various communities are generally analyzed against the backdrop of lasting sectarian identities, which have institutionalized in the personal law and the political system. All Lebanese citizens are necessarily registered as members of one of the sects, most frequently the one they were born in. Though these sectarian groups are confession-based, they constitute in fact social distinctions as neither belief nor the respect of religious rules determine the affiliation. Confessional categorization is somehow an empty shell, because it does not account for the multiplicity of potential religious, political, or social practices, nor of the economic disparities of the people who compose them. As Albert Hourani noted, “the communities are not, beyond a certain limit, solid bodies having a single interest or attitude (...)” (1976, p. 34). However, they nonetheless play a central role in the daily life of the Lebanese. The

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<sup>2</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Lebanon, which began in 1990, imposed that 50% of the members of Parliament are Christian and 50% Muslims. Besides, the common law imposes that the President of the Republic is to be chosen in the Christian Maronite community while the Prime Minister is to be a Sunni Muslim and the President of the Parliament a Shiite Muslim. The seats in the government are also shared between sects as well as numerous positions in the state administration.

rules organizing marriage, divorce, inheritance, or, to some extent, education are determined according to the confession. A result of a process of *habitualization* (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 70), the question of sectarian belonging hangs over a vast number of social situations. Though, confessions are not the only form of distinction. Typically, criteria of many kinds are used during encounters to define the *other*: the name, the accent, the village or district of origin, the family, or even appearance. These criteria are integrated into panels of potential affiliations, more or less highlighted according to the circumstances. These possible assignments generally operate as cohesive system more than in a hierarchical arrangement (Picard 2006, p. 66). Hence, Lebanese communities, like other social groups only acquire a reality in “communalization” [*Vergemeinschaftung*] i.e. the subjective perception to belong to a same community (Weber 1978 [1922]), mainly constructed during interactional processes, and especially intergroup relations (Barth 1969).

In spite of its communal nature, shared by many countries in the area, Lebanon was long considered an exception in the Arab Middle-East. From 1926, the implementation under the French Mandate (1920-1943) of consensual democracy (Lijphart 1977) has distinguished the newly formed country from its surroundings. The independence, proclaimed in 1943, confirmed this orientation with the adoption of the “National Pact”, a tacit agreement that ensured the sharing of power between the communal elites. They were governing upon a formula of broad coalition emphasizing consensus over the majority/minority equation. Communal autonomy and a powerful domination of economic liberalism led to the development of the Lebanese political entity upon the model of a “weak-state” and of an economy centered on commercial and financial interests. However, the idealized vision of the “Swiss of the Near East” rapidly vanished. Illusion did not come, as it was often said afterward, from the incapability of the Lebanese to coexist. Rather, the misrepresentation of the Lebanese model originated in the ignorance of its structural imbalance both social – between merchant and political elites and deprived populations living in neglected areas – and political as the country was built on a national narrative deeply inspired by the Christian Maronite elite (Salibi 1989 [1988]).

The emergence of Lebanon in history already constitutes a political issue. A multiplicity of episodes have nourished contradictory stories about the origins of what would become Lebanon before the western powers – mainly France and the United Kingdom – imposed the constitution of a unified political entity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These narratives have mobilized elements dating back to the Phoenicians, an antic people, urbanized along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean from the third millennium. The construction of a political entity however originates in the 19<sup>th</sup>

century. At that time, the territory of present-day Lebanon was under the control of the Ottoman Empire, whose domination had started in 1516. Two different worlds composed this space (Hourani 1976, p. 36-40). On the one hand, was the society of the coastal cities, which lived primarily from prosperous trades. A mixed, open, and tolerant universe, these urban societies fostered a cultural and political effervescence participating in the Arab renaissance, *al-Nahda*. On the other hand, existed a society of the Mountain, “a culture formed by a solidarity of clans politically organized by family hierarchies” (Picard 1997, p. 5), marked by cyclical violence between rival groups. The Mountain constituted a deeply unequal world in which elite families reigned over peasant farmers.

The reforms introduced in the Ottoman Empire from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century generated an intense political and social turmoil aggravated by the attitude of the local notables. From 1820, a succession of peasant insurrections and inter-elite conflicts erupted, culminating in the massacres of 1840 and 1860, mainly between Druzes and Christians. In 1842, the Ottomans reacted by transforming the administrative divisions of the territory, now divided between *kaymakamate*, one Druze, and one Maronite, hence emphasizing the political shift between communities. In turn, European powers, pursuing their strategy of weakening of the Ottoman Empire, interfered and imposed their essentially sectarian understanding of the crises: France supported the Christian Maronite, the United Kingdom the Druzes, Russia the Orthodox. They imposed another administrative reform in 1861 implementing a communal division of power: the territory was now administrated by an unique governor, a Christian, in the name of the Ottoman Sultan, assisted by a council of twelve members incorporating the representatives of the six main confessional groups: the Christian Maronites, Greek-Orthodox, and Greek-Catholic, and the Muslim Sunnis, Shiites, and Druzes.

The system was maintained until the First World War. Victorious, France and the United Kingdom enforced a division of the Middle-East in two zones of influence, according to the famous Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916, confirmed in the conference of San Remo in 1920. As a result, France obtained from the League of Nation a Mandate over Lebanon and Syria. Following the aspirations of their allies, the Maronite elites, and its economic interests, France proclaimed the state of Greater Lebanon, grouping the province of Mount Lebanon with the coastal cities of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre, the fertile Beqaa valley in the East, and the Jabal Amil in the South. In 1926, the constitution of the First Republic of Lebanon consecrates the

confessional power sharing, granting a prominent position to the Christians<sup>3</sup>. However, the creation of Greater Lebanon was imposed by force against the Arab nationalists and some reluctant populations<sup>4</sup>. For decades the issue of the integration of the new state into the Arab world in general, and the question of the unification with Syria in particular, dominated the Lebanese politics. The National Pact of 1943 adopted after the independence of the country organized a compromise negotiated between the Maronite and Sunni elites, the main political forces of that time. Christians recognized the “Arab face” of Lebanon, Muslims its distinction from its surrounding.

The conflict resurfaced openly in 1958, at the occasion of a violent internal crisis opposing the pro-West President Camille Chamoun to Arab nationalists and Leftist groups aligned on the regional arena with Nasser stances. The rise of the Palestinian issue from the 1960s and the aggravation of the internal inequalities hence generated too much pressure for a fragile political formula. The growing presence of Palestinian commandos operating from the Lebanese territory and the frequent violent Israeli retaliations it entailed finally led to clashes between the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese Army. Politically, advocates of the Lebanese sovereignty opposed the supporters of the solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Cairo Agreement, signed between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) of Yasser Arafat and the head of Lebanese Army in November 1969 came to end the spiral of violence, but only accentuated the gap between the two sides and their respective supports in Lebanon. While the Left, led by Kamal Joumblatt, a Druze landlord founder of the Progressive Socialist Party, along with the Arab nationalists took up the cause of the *Fedayîn* and called for improvements of the Lebanese political system, the Lebanese nationalist forces, mainly formed of Christians, refused any reform and rejected the Palestinian armed presence in the country. The latter started to organize militias in front of the incapability of the Lebanese Army to prevent Palestinian operations. The cycle of violence initiated.

On April 13, 1975, yet another clash between PLO fighters and the armed-men of the Christian Kata'eb Party in Beirut suburban district of Ayn al-Rummaneh led to a general conflagration. On the one hand, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), a leftist coalition grouping under Joumblatt's leadership the PSP, the Lebanese Communist Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, and Arab nationalist forces, mainly composed of Muslims, allied the Palestinians. On the other, the Christian movement constituted a “Lebanese Front”, uniting the political and military

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<sup>3</sup> The Christians benefited from a ratio of six to five in all political and administrative positions.

<sup>4</sup> For example, it was the case of the Shiites of South Lebanon. See Mervin 2008.

organizations of the three main Maronite leaders, Pierre Gemayel for the Kata'eb, Camille Chamoun for the National Liberal Party, and Suleiman Franjeh. They were joined by extremist movements, like the Guardian of the Cedars or the *Tanzîm* [the Organization]. After one year of fighting, the support of the Palestinians gave the LNM the upper hand. The Christian leadership turned toward Syria, whose military intervention from June 1976 led to a stalemate of the conflict. The political opposition between the revolutionary stances and the conservative forces then rapidly degenerated into sectarian conflict. Beirut, the capital, divided between the Muslim West and the Christian East along “the green line”, symbolized the collapsing of the country. The various successive episodes of this struggle, including the Israeli invasion of 1982 and multiple internal fights, constituted the Lebanese Wars, lasting between 1975 and 1990.

Fifteen years of fighting played an important part in the *habitualization* of intergroup boundaries. The political movements were at the center of the process. Most of them established militias and took part in the destruction of the Lebanese political entity, the tearing of its social fabric, and the annihilation of coexistence. The imbrications between partisan forces and militias were so deep that the word “parties” [*Âhzâb*] came to refer to the armed groups. As a consequence, the parties became the main embodiment of the fragmentation of the society. Since then, they have articulated the social divisions and structured the intergroup conflicts.

### ***Introducing the Free Patriotic Movement***

The Free Patriotic Movement (*al-Tayyâr al-Watanî al-Hurr*), officially established as a political party in 2005, is rooted in one of the last episodes of the Lebanese wars: the experience of its leader, General Michel Aoun, as a Prime minister between 1988 and 1990. At that time, the lack of agreement between factions resulted in a vacuum in the government, leading President Amine Gemayel to charge Michel Aoun, then chief of the Lebanese army, to head a military government. Facing much opposition, inside as well as outside the country, Michel Aoun tried to impose himself by fighting the Syrian army and the Lebanese militias, especially the Christian Lebanese Forces (LF). Originally an umbrella organization of the Lebanese Front aiming at unifying the command of its various militias, the LF soon became the main Christian political actor and established its domination over the Christian populated areas of the country in which it constructed a state-like apparatus taking in charge public services, social and medical care by imposing taxation on the inhabitants. Aoun's political rhetoric claimed to “bring the state back in”, to face the corrupted and violent militia order. His posture gained him the support of an important part of the population, especially among



Christians. Between 1989 and 1990, massive demonstrations rallied toward the Presidential palace situated in Baabda, near Beirut, in which the General had his headquarters. His popularity however did not prevent his political and military failure. After several months of resistance, Michel Aoun was finally evicted from power by a Syrian military operation in October 1990.

One year before, in 1989, Michel Aoun had opposed the process of Taef. On the initiative of the Arab League, the Lebanese Members of the Parliament gathered in the Saudi Arabian city of Taef and adopted a document of National Understanding on October 22, 1989. The agreement, sponsored by Lebanese political and military forces and the international community, introduced changes in the power sharing between the confessional groups of the country. It notably reduced the powers of the Maronite President of the Republic to the benefit of the Sunni Prime Minister and balanced the religious representation between Muslims and Christians in place of the five-to-six formula. Aoun strongly rejected the agreement “because it did not allow for a complete Syrian military withdrawal from Lebanon, and decreased the president’s prerogatives (...) without any other reform of the political system.” (Traboulsi 2007, p. 242) Aoun refusal earned him a strong popular support among the Christian populations. However, he remained unable to stop the process. A new president, Rene Moawad, was soon elected on November 5, 1989. Assassinated two weeks later, Moawad was in turn succeeded by Elias Hrawi. Hrawi named a new Prime Minister, Salim al-Hoss, and a new head of the Army, Emile Lahoud. Under pressure, Aoun refused to step back. Two concurrent “legalities” thus coexisted, until the attacked on Baabda on October 13, 1990. Aoun finally left the Presidential Palace and took refuge in the French Embassy.

As the General was exiled in France, his followers progressively organized a clandestine civil movement to protest against the Syrian presence in Lebanon. FPM activists played an important role in the events of the spring 2005, when, within weeks of the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, popular demonstrations and an intense international pressure caused the fall of the government sponsored by Damascus and the withdrawal of the Syrian troops from Lebanon. A few days later, on May 7, 2005, Michel Aoun came back to Lebanon with the intention to organize politically his movement. However, the General's return was met with circumspection by the rest of the political class, frightened by his hard-line stances targeting the endemic corruption. In spite of its political isolation, the FPM was able to obtain a great electoral success in the Christian regions, winning 21 of the 128 seats at the occasion of the Parliamentary elections of the summer 2005. Following this success, the FPM officially became a political party on September 18, 2005. It recruits mainly

within the Christian population although it officially campaigns for a secular vision of Lebanon.

### ***Lebanon in crisis***

The Syrian withdrawal as well as the takeover of the Lebanese security apparatus allied with Damascus generated a reshuffle of the political scene. Two antagonist poles rapidly emerged. The wide coalition that enabled the party of Rafiq Hariri to obtain a majority in the Parliamentary elections of 2005 collapsed. Like it was the case before, regional strategies and local issues combined. On the one hand, the Future Movement of the Hariris, in majority Sunni, the Druze PSP, the Christian Lebanese Forces and Kata'eb, known of the March 14 coalition in reference to the date of a massive demonstration demanding the Syrian departure, aligned with the American agenda in the region. Externally, they consequently strongly opposed the Syrian regime. Internally, they maintained the economic policies implemented during the 1990s and the early 2000s under the leadership of Rafiq Hariri and denounced the armed presence of Hezbollah, the powerful Shiite party, whose role in the resistance against the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon allowed him to keep its military forces. It was the only armed-group officially not to be dismantled after the end of the fighting in 1990. On the other hand, stood parties regionally allied with Syria, regrouped in the March 8 coalition, named after a demonstration in support of the national and regional role played by Damascus. This coalition was mainly composed of the Shiite movements Amal and Hezbollah, which, in November 2005, departed the electoral coalition they formed in the summer 2005 with the March 14 alliance. The FPM joined them in the “national opposition”.

The two sides strongly opposed each other. The crisis worsened after the outbreak of the July war in 2006, when Israel attacked Lebanon, in retaliation of an operation conducted by Hezbollah's Islamic resistance in the South. Spurred by Hezbollah's tactical victory, the opposition accused the March 14 government to have secretly bet on an Israeli victory. Violent demonstrations were organized by the opposition in the winter 2006-2007, without succeeding in overthrowing the government. The climax of the conflict was reached in May 2008. Armed clashes erupted in West Beirut between March 8 forces and supporters of the Hariris. The combats then spread to the southern slopes of Mount Lebanon where the PSP opposed Hezbollah fighters. After several days of violence, an agreement was negotiated in Doha under the auspices of Qatar. The two sides reached a compromise to elect the former head of the Army, Michel Sleiman, at the presidency of the Republic, to adopt a new electoral law for the

upcoming 2009 elections, and to form a coalition government. For the first time, the FPM participated in a government, appointing three ministers.

In June 2009, the March 14 coalition narrowly won the elections. The FPM, however, managed to improve its Parliamentary representation, by winning 28 seats. A new national unity government was formed in which Michel Aoun's party obtained again three ministers. In spite of this, the crisis did not ease down. Tensions between the two main components of the cabinet remained. Finally, in the winter 2011, the PSP left the March 14 coalition and provoked a reversal of the balance of power in the Parliament. The FPM and its allies of the March 8 alliance were now in control of the political institutions. However institutions were more paralyzed than ever. This lasting political crisis has strongly emphasized the role of partisan affiliations in the Lebanese society, constituting the rival coalitions in irreconcilable factions.

### ***Political parties as societies***

In analyzing political parties in the Middle-East and especially in Lebanon, researchers often face a dilemma (Santucci 2006, p. 149-150). On the one hand traditional conceptions of political organizations based on western parties' model seem usually unable to provide the theoretical tools needed to appropriately describe the empirical cases (Seiler 2003). But on the other hand, observing this unsuitability generally leads to neglect political parties to focus either on other form of political participation such as governance processes (Baduel 1996) or on assumed cultural specificities such as ethnic, religious or tribal kinship that supposedly shape the political structures in the area (Badie 1991; Abu Khalil 1985; Khalaf & Denoeux 1988). However, recent observation of the increasing influence of partisan movements in the Arab worlds has stimulated a cautious return to political parties as scientific objects (Catusse & Karam 2010; Ishtay 1997; el-Khazen 2003; Norton 1999; Tozy 1999), with a specific focus on Islamic movements (Burgat 1995; Hamzeh 2004). Overall, the study of Arab parties generally focus on ideological frames, especially in the case of the Islamic groups, or on leadership, conceptualizing the parties as bare structures for the expression of religious awakening or clan networks. In his study of the Lebanese parties, Farid el-Khazen (2003) even stigmatize "Parties in search of partisans", as if their activists and followers were devoted of the slightest importance in the functioning of the political forces as well as in their study.

In this work, my aim is precisely to "bring the people back in" so as to provide an analysis of parties as sociological and anthropological realities without disregarding political organizations as mere manifestations of unchanging social structures. To do so, a constructivist framework highlighting the importance of cognition in the

materialization of the group has been associated with a societal approach of political parties underlining social networks and political cultures shaping an organization and its members (Sawicki 1997). I hence consider political parties as societies or, to denote their cohabitation within the Lebanese setting, sub-societies. The partisan societies do not represent immutable social divisions but rather constitute actualized social structures, reconstructed along the partisan lines (Mermier & Mervin 2012, p. 24). They are composed through sociabilities and rituals, as well as the promotion of specific bonds and boundaries, which have to be examined. As Geertz notes, in the study of cultures, the essential element to take into consideration is not the visions of reality but rather their modes of expression (Geertz 2001, p. 62). It enables to distance the analysis from the official discourses produced by the parties themselves to study precisely these productions of meaning and to study the role of political parties as identity mediators i.e. social agents that contribute to the construction of groups through a twofold mobilization linked with the two dimensions of identity, inclusive and exclusive (Martin 1994).

Adopting this approach, my objective is to start from the human group to understand how the parties, and beyond the social ties, are produced (Pudal 1989) in contemporary Lebanon. In turn, it raises another fundamental issue underlying social research: where and how grasp the social (Lahire 1999, p. 30)? Student groups, because they concentrate an important part of the parties' socialization efforts, seem a particularly suitable population to study the mechanisms of invention of identities, the construction of sociability networks sustaining them, and the potential transformations of the parties. Furthermore, they offer the opportunity to analyze the trends shaping the Lebanese society and to envisage the central question of the memory of past conflicts and reconciliation in a troubled social environment.

I decided to focus on students engaged in the FPM between 2005, when the Party was legalized, and 2011, when it gained access to power. Along this period, the people of the Free Patriotic Movement I met staged their own sub-universe. In encounters, the strength of bonds and boundaries immediately imposed itself, suggesting the difficulties of a potential reconciliation but also the omnipresence of the partisan horizon. One of my aims is to examine the processes which constructed such a social universe.

### ***From identity to identification***

“Social groups are not 'things', they are processes” (Tajfel 1982, p. 485). In this dynamic conception, groups emerge from social interactions, when they have been constructed as a cognitive reality. Hence, they are submitted to constant reactualization

and reinvention *hic et nunc* (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 40). Social constructs, identities have no stability. They can only be grasped through the study of identification, i.e. the mechanisms through which a conception of identity is internalized and appropriated by the actors. The aim is to understand how, in a given social and political setting, a political movement is shaping a symbolic group through activities that communicate values, frame normative practices, and develop solidarity networks between members. And how, in return, members internalize and appropriate this universe of signification in their perception of their own social and personal self.

The choice to focus on the identification processes in order to understand political affiliation and the emergence of groups among Lebanese youth implies to underline the interactional dynamics existing in the Lebanese social settings. The necessity of the transition from the issue of identity to the question of identification was largely inspired by the observation of a vast range of exchanges that highlighted distinctive accommodations to situational changes in the interpersonal and intergroup relations. Encounters often appear as a subtle balance between permeability and distinction. Depending on the configurations, actors tend to underline some of the identifications with political, religious, or kin groups, while undermining others, in order to enable the interaction to work out while, in a way, maintaining tangible boundaries whether voiced or implied. This gives a mixed impression of at the same time labile but strongly anchored social distinctions.

### ***Reviewing previous studies***

Few studies have tackled the issue of youth politics in Lebanon. Most of them focused on the prewar turmoil, when the universities were themselves agitated by political and communal tensions. Two doctoral researches were written immediately before the outbreak of the war in 1975 and in the following years. One, defended by Ra'uf al-Ghusayni in the University of Stanford in 1974, concentrated on the determinants of collective action in each university, studied mainly from press data and defined in terms of structural strain and generalized beliefs. The other, written by Halim Barakat and published in a book subtitled "*Student Prelude to the Civil War*" (1977), used participant observation and a quantitative method to study the political behavior between 1967 and 1976. The author demonstrates to a double fragmentation of the student political scene, "across and within the different universities" (ibid., p. 181) and concludes to the political nature of the student conflicts he observed, analyzed through a Marxist frame highlighting a class-struggle. However, a contradiction arises as the data in itself shows that the students' attitudes are in fact determined by primary bonds – mainly family ties and communal belonging – rather than by social differences.

Decades later, new studies came to offer additional insights on student prewar politics. Makram Rabah's book, *A Campus at War* (2009) focuses on the case of the student council of the American University of Beirut. So does Gaëlle Le Pottier's Master thesis, prepared in 1998 in Oxford University. However one of the most complete and captivating work was Agnès Favier's doctoral dissertation (2004). Her study intends to deconstruct the emergence of a generation of student activists. This research not only demonstrates the constitution, through the mobilization of relatively unified practices and specific cognitive horizon, of a protestation cycle within the student sections of two parties, the Kata'eb and the Lebanese Communist Party, but also decrypts the inflections of the trajectories of the actors throughout the events occurring between the 1960s and the end of the Lebanese wars. Favier's work was inspired by the sociology of collective action and social movements and offered an almost exhaustive analysis of youth engagement from a renewed perspective. My aim is not to propose an "updated version" of her analysis, focused on the 1960 and 1970 decades. I propose to situate my own reflection "upstream" compared to hers, i.e. to focus more on the social construction of attachment rather than on collective mobilizations as such.

Even fewer studies have dealt with youth politics in the postwar era. It is possible to mention three doctoral theses recently completed in France. Two in sociology, defended in the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, and one in Political Science, prepared in Science Po Paris. The first two deal with popular youth in a Christian suburban district (Mazaëff 2010) and students' political experiences in the Southern Suburb of Beirut, stronghold of Hezbollah (al-Droubi Charaf 2013). The last one concentrated on the role of communal school in the construction of a Shiite political identity (Le Thomas 2012).

To study this rarely considered object, my intention is to introduce the narrative perspective and emphasize concrete interactional and cognitive processes. The objective is not to replace the existing analyzes of the Lebanese politics and society, but rather, more modestly, to re-examine some of the key concepts that underlie them through the mobilization of alternative tools. It supposes not to start from prearranged notions like sectarian groups, communal identities, primary bonds, or social-class. On the contrary, I propose to anchor the analysis in the universes of the actors themselves to decrypt when and how these conceptions eventually resurface. Hence, the words and stories of the Lebanese students I encountered are brought at the center of the analysis. This is how it started.



# “This is how it started”

## From encounters to hypotheses

*“It is indeed true that only the individual is capable of thinking. There is no such metaphysical entity as a group mind which thinks over and above the heads of individuals, or whose ideas the individual merely reproduces. Nevertheless, it would be false to deduce from this that all the ideas and sentiments which motivate an individual have their origin in him alone, and can be adequately explained solely on the basis of his own life-experience.”*

Karl Mannheim (1955 [1936], p. 2)

In the study of activism, the question of individual entry in organized collective action remains pivotal. Neither the once dominant methodological individualism focusing on the free rider paradox (Olson 1965), nor the structural approach were able to offer a convincing understanding of the social forms of individual engagement (Fillieule 2001, p. 199). The main weakness of both Olson’s model and structural determinism was to ignore how the practical transition between dispositions and engagement concretely operates. They also seem to implicitly consider activism as an achievement. Taking into account that engagement is a process rather than a fixed status, interactionism has stirred renewed analysis acknowledging the fluid nature of engagement. In particular, the notion of career proposed by Howard Becker in his study of deviance (Becker 1997 [1963]) has enabled the implementation of a dynamic analysis of activism (Fillieule 2001, p. 201; Dubar 1994, p. 227-236). In that perspective, it is considered that “we must deal with a sequence of steps, of changes in the individual behavior and perspectives, in order to understand the phenomenon.” (Becker 1997 [1963], p. 23) Such an approach necessitates understanding the significations that the actors themselves give to their engagement in order to deconstruct the social and cognitive conditions of collective action. Thus, instead of focusing on the organizational perspective, this work is concerned with individual cases. However, if the focus is primarily set on individual processes, these are not considered independently from the contexts and collective interplays in which they are inscribed.

Starting from the hypothesis that the interpretation of engagement and the meaning allocated to the political organization may considerably vary depending on persons, interactional situations, and social contexts, I went to meet Lebanese students to



collect records on their activism. During the four-year span of the fieldwork<sup>5</sup>, my introducing question was the same: “How did you start your engagement with the Free Patriotic Movement?” This is how this work and the stories of the students encountered along its pages started.

## 1. STARTING FROM ENGAGEMENT STORIES

Khalid came along with Jacques, my entry contact among Free Patriotic Movement students, with whom I had originally set an appointment. It was in November 2007 and my fieldwork had just started for a couple of weeks. The meeting took place in the *Water Lemon* café, inside “ABC” the principal shopping mall of Achrafiyeh, a very popular place for Beirut youth to hang out. Situated in the mainly Christian area of the Lebanese capital, the “ABC” is frequented by a very heterogeneous crowd, where rich tourists from the Gulf area cohabit with urban bourgeoisie and students, especially those like Jacques and Khalid coming from the Saint-Joseph University (USJ – from French Université Saint-Joseph), an established Jesuit institution. It was early in the night and the weather was still pleasant. The terrace of the *Water Lemon* café was teeming. After the greetings and reciprocal introduction, we started the conversation. I first asked Jacques, whom I already interviewed before, to remind me how he started. Then, I turned to Khalid:

*“Moi, je viens d’une famille qui a combattu avec Aoun. Mon père était dans l’armée avec lui lorsqu’il a combattu en 1990 contre les Syriens, mais je n’étais pas trop dedans...c’est-à-dire c’est en première année à l’université que j’ai rencontré deux ou trois personnes du CPL et ça m’a trop intéressé...le discours m’a trop intéressé. Je crois que c’est plus qu’un discours. En fait, être dans le CPL c’est une façon de vivre, c’est un caractère, soit tu l’es, soit tu ne l’es pas...soit tu es CPL, avec l’union patriotique du pays, ou tu ne l’es pas. Je devais l’être...”*

*-pourquoi est-ce que ça t’a intéressé ?*

*Je crois que ce qui m’a intéressé à cette période, c’est le rebelle en chaque personne. On disait non à toutes les choses qui menaçaient à la société, comme les Syriens, le confessionnalisme [tâ’ifiyeh], la corruption....toutes ces choses. Nous étions les seuls à les combattre. En tant que jeune, ça te marque forcément ! Alors que les autres disaient 'oui, les Syriens sont là, mais qu’est-ce qu’on peut faire, on ne peut rien changer', le CPL voulait faire quelque chose. Et puis comme je t’ai dit, tu ne choisis pas, tu es cette personne...on nous demandait toujours: 'pourquoi vous faites des*

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<sup>5</sup> Details about the realization of the interviews and the description of the sample are introduced in the section 3 of this chapter.

*manifestations, vous n'êtes que quarante ou cinquante personnes, qu'est-ce que vous allez faire ?' Nous, nous savions que nous n'étions que quarante ou cinquante, mais que nous allions faire quelque chose. Cette période était la plus riche pour nous, nous étions dans un état de refus..."*<sup>6</sup>

The first part of Khalid's answer immediately echoed one of the working hypotheses I drew from my Master thesis work conducted the year before with students from Hezbollah, another Lebanese party – probably the most internationally well-known. My assumption was that partisan belonging represents more than a political engagement, but is experienced as an identity, a label mobilized from the definition of the self. “*You are this person or not*”. The expression immediately operates in and by the discourse a double cognitive construction. First, that partisan affiliation is not a choice, but a mode of experiencing reality delineated by an organic link. Both the reference to his family, especially his father, and the characterization of the affiliation as coming from inside the person call for a definition of partisanship in terms of socialization experience and cognitive construction. In his story, the encounter with the discourse of the Party through its networks in the university seemed to have triggered the resurgence of a sense of belonging constructed in primary socialization.

Second, Khalid's account on how it started for him creates a perceptible division between an in-group and an out-group. The fracture between the two is rendered irreducible by the nature of belonging. The out-group is not only permanently excluded, but it is also envisaged in a violent confrontation with the reference of the 1989-1990 war against the Syrian army in Lebanon. However, the Syrians are not the only enemy figure. In the second part of Khalid's response, various adversaries are defined: those who didn't dare to confront the Syrian presence, sectarianism, corruption, etc. The discourse shapes a political platform but more overpoweringly unfolds a historically built experience of partisanship as the account seems composed at the interface of personal involvement and collective forces, Khalid shifting from “*je*” to “*nous*”. It illustrates the conditions in which action was situated (the war against the Syrians, the mobilization against Damascus' upper hand in Lebanon, the exclusion of the political scene, the organizational networks in the university) and the subjective meaning constructed in this experience as Khalid expresses it. It is the story of a rebellion, both individual and collective, reset in time from 1990 to the early 2000s. But the changing political conditions and the recent integration of the FPM within the partisan field seem to have shaken this construction of signification, as the

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<sup>6</sup> Khalid, interview with the author: November 3, 2007 [in French].

last sentence reveals. Engagement is therefore not a fixed reality but is defined in the dynamics of interactions in which both the actor and his group of reference are inscribed.

A similar convergence between individual and collective experiences is present in the story told by Elza a few days later. I contacted her on the advice of a young Lebanese researcher who had been involved in projects connecting students from various political organizations. He introduced Elza as a central character in the FPM youth activism. Aged 25 at our first meeting, Elza had already been active for 10 years within the movement. At that time, she was starting a Political Science Master program in the USJ after just finishing her studies in the public Lebanese University (LU), in the faculty of Information. In parallel, she was in charge of many partisan activities including the development of a political magazine for school children, and was working for the newly opened FPM TV channel, *Orange TV (OTV)*, and radio station, *Sawt al-Mada*. Elza presented herself as completely devoted to the Party, explaining that even her choice of study has been made in order to serve the FPM. Well integrated into the networks of the organization, she recalls her meeting with the *Tayyâr* as follows:

*“J’ai commencé à 16 ans avec le CPL...mais j’ambitionnais le travail militant depuis 8 ans peut-être...”*

*- C’était quelque chose qui venait de ta famille ?*

*Non, pas du tout. Personne de ma famille n’est militant, ni mon père, ni ma mère...ma mère était dans le temps dans les Phalanges Libanaises, mais c’était avant qu’elle ne se marrie...donc il y a longtemps. Il n’y a pas d’influence directe. D’ailleurs, mes parents ne sont pas politisés. Je me rappelle bien l’époque du général Aoun à Baabda, j’ai remarqué là que tout le monde montait pour des manifestations, mais pas mes parents. Moi, j’y suis allée, mais une seule fois, avec mes voisins. Je me rappelle de quelques images de cette période (...). Je suis née en 1982, alors en 1988 j’avais 6 ans et quand le Général a quitté le Liban, j’avais 8 ans. Mais je me rappelle bien du 13 octobre 1990, ça m’a touchée énormément, je ressens encore maintenant ce que j’ai ressenti ce 13 octobre 1990. J’étais au Metn<sup>7</sup>, dans mon village qui était déjà occupé par les Syriens, depuis 1975...je me rappelle que ma mère nous a réveillées le matin moi et mes sœurs pour qu’on descende chez les voisins. Ils avaient une petite cave et on devait se réfugier là car les Syriens bombardaient Baabda. Nous sommes restées jusqu’à 9h du matin. Alors notre voisin, qui était des Forces Libanaises, est descendu me dire: 'ha, ha, Aoun a laissé le pouvoir.' Et il s’est moqué. Moi, je ne le croyais pas. Je suis montée chez nous pour*

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<sup>7</sup> Metn is a Lebanese district situated in the north-eastern border of Beirut’s agglomeration.

*entendre la radio...je me rappelle bien que j'ai pleuré. Il y avait des Jeeps syriennes qui passaient dans le village et c'était la première fois que je me sentais tellement incapable de faire quoi que ce soit. Alors j'ai pris un caillou et j'ai jeté vers les Jeeps syriennes qui étaient très loin en plus...je pleurais, je pleurais. C'était vraiment décevant. Donc c'était le 13 octobre 1990. Pendant des années, j'attendais que le général Aoun revienne...mais après peut-être sept ans, il n'était toujours pas revenu, j'étais encore une fois très déçue. J'ai pensé que j'étais la seule aouniste encore au Liban. (...) Et puis quand j'avais 16-17 ans peut-être, les Aounistes ont manifesté contre la censure d'une interview télé du Général. Je me rappelle bien que quand je les ai vus, je me suis dit: 'ah, voilà, il y a d'autres aounistes...ils sont là [rires]'."*<sup>8</sup>

Contrary to Khalid, Elza's engagement is more described as a vocation justified by the reference to three moments. The first reference is an evocation of a time, when Lebanese crowds were gathering in front of the presidential palace in Baabda to support General Michel Aoun in his struggle against the Syrian forces and the militias. Instead of the division presented in Khalid's answer, her focus here is on unity and communion. In mentioning her occasional participation with her neighbors, she inscribed herself in the collective movement. The main story of her account follows, focusing on one specific event anchoring and harboring her sense of belonging and designed in her discourse as the explanation of her vocation for activism: the fall of Michel Aoun on October the 13<sup>th</sup> 1990. Her story continuously combines personal memories and collective fate. Narratively, it enables the projection of the self within the group's universe of signification. The elements echoing the history of the Aounist movement are highlighted and appropriated, generating a personalized recollection of the past and the materialization of what is presented as the common story of the group. Such construction of a collective perception of the past is also built by the use of the figure of the enemy, in that case embodied by both the Syrian military and the Lebanese Forces supporter. This last character illustrates by his physical proximity (he is the neighbor) the interactional nature of intergroup relations.

Elza recounts her experience of October 13 as the essence that prompted her desire to engage herself. But in the conditions prevailing in the Lebanese scene during the 1990s, her sense of belonging could not materialize in the insertion within sociability networks. It is only when the Aounist movement was able to emerge again in the end of the decade as a civil mobilization that she was able to participate in group activities. Then, the two dimensions of *groupness*<sup>9</sup> were completed. It is also understood that at

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<sup>8</sup> Elza, interview with the author: November 10, 2007 [in French].

<sup>9</sup> The concept of groupness has been defined by Rogers Brubaker and Frederik Cooper (2000). A notion derived from Tilly's work (1978), it refers to a strong sense of attachment to a group, i.e. a

this time, which constitute the third episode of her answer, Elza was old enough to become active, to finally be able to act and do something to change the political reality. Elza constructed her engagement story in a perfect mimesis with the FPM history, starting from the rise of the movement around the Baabda palace in 1989, passing by the trauma of October 13, and finishing with the civil protests against Syrian domination in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This is the story of a vocation, which is presented as a pursued fate born from a transcendental experience, but that can only be understood if the backstage, i.e. the social ordering devices that lay behind her personal experience and structure her modes of perceiving and narrating her experience, are deconstructed. As Charles Suaud demonstrated in his study of the recruitment of seminarians in rural France, vocation is more a collective construction than a personal experience, produced by specific social conditions as well as a work of imposition of signification realized by the agents of social institutions (Suaud 1976). It is therefore necessary to combine a subjective perspective with the analysis of the objective social conditions in which individuals are inserted. Starting from the stories, it is possible to induce the interpretative schemes, the argumentative layouts, and the construction of categories that enable to understand how the actors locate their sense of self-identity in broader, sense-making social orders.

The work of collective interpretation of reality relies mainly on social networks. The answer given by Laure one year later, in November 2008, offers an illustration. Laure was then a fifth year student in the Institute of Political Science in USJ. After a short discussion about our common acquaintances and the brief introduction of my work, the interview started:

*“Depuis mon enfance, j'ai sympathisé avec le général, parce que mes parents étaient militants. Mes parents, ma famille proche et même ma famille large. Donc, on allait à Baabda tu en connais la signification pour nous n'est-ce pas? Donc on y allait, j'étais très petite et je portais le drapeau libanais, je participais avec le général et tout. Et puis ensuite, quand il a été exilé j'ai continué. Parce qu'au début, j'avais été influencée par mes parents mais par la suite, quand j'ai commencé à vraiment écouter ses discours, son programme, à voir la différence entre lui et les autres hommes politiques, j'ai senti que vraiment cette personne concrétisait mes demandes et mes espoirs pour ce pays. Alors quand on me reprochait d'aimer le général, quand on me disait: 'Mais il a des défauts et de toute façon tu l'aimes à cause de tes parents', moi je refusais. Parce qu'en fait j'ai pensé que vraiment son discours faisait partie de ma propre conviction.*

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sense of identification, generally coupled with a concrete insertion within the social networks constituting the group.

*Ensuite, quand je suis arrivée à l'université, j'ai commencé à travailler avec les militants. (...) J'ai travaillé ici à la fac avec le CPL, notamment pour les élections. J'ai fait une année de droit puis cinq ans de science politique. Donc j'ai passé six ans à la fac durant lesquels j'ai toujours travaillé avec le CPL. Je me considère comme une militante et non pas seulement une sympathisante. Par exemple, quand il y a eu la vente des pommes, tu en as déjà entendu parler ? Alors oui, j'ai participé. Je suis allée faire la récolte et j'ai vendu et tout. Aussi, lorsqu'il y avait les manifestations, que les Syriens étaient toujours là et que tout le monde était avec les Syriens, on participait aux manifestations, on recevait des coups de matraques et tout.”<sup>10</sup>*

Laure's account on the beginning of her activism is clearly projecting a double sequence, comparable to the one displayed by Khalid's story: engagement is at first linked with a family experience, an heritage claimed to have been appropriated, before being concretized in collective action after the insertion within activists' networks met in the university. If she acknowledges the role of her parents and family in her sense of belonging, she also tries to distance herself from that legacy, probably because it is inappropriate to personify the role of activist. She wants to present herself as an actor of her engagement, not only as an agent. The second part of her answer focuses on her practical encounter with activism through the partisan networks established in the university and revived during student elections. As it was the case in Khalid's account, her experience of collective action is defined mainly in the contrasting reference to the Syrians and those Lebanese, not designated, who supported them.

But actually, the sequence constructed in the story can be seen as referring to a process of cognitive integration, which materializes in her addresses to her interlocutor (me). The questions on my knowledge about the signification of Baabda for the FPM and about the collective selling of apple organized by the activist in the late 1990s affirm her belonging to a community of shared meaning. It is the story of her socialization, i.e. in the sense defined by Berger and Luckmann, of the integration of a social reality (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 147). Laure's engagement story displays both her primary socialization, the dialectical acquisition of a cognitive frame built firstly on the model of the attitudes expressed by significant others (ibid., p. 14), and her secondary socialization realized among the partisan university networks. In addition, the collective actions described in her account appear as rituals insuring the transmission between the two phases of socialization. These rituals authorize her to claim a specific status, the one of activist, superior to the position of simple supporter of the Party. This construction of a separating line operated in her discourse reminds the idea of rite of institution proposed by Bourdieu: such rites, rather than constituting

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<sup>10</sup> Laure, interview with the author: November 4, 2008 [in French].

passages from one status to another, create arbitrary conceptual boundaries (Bourdieu 1991 [1982], p. 117). Participation in collective actions, more than acting as a gateway, emphasizes the distinction of those sharing particular experiences and representations. To understand engagement – the process of joining collective action, it is therefore necessary to question the means of integration of the cognitive structures expressed by the students but also to resituate these processes of internalization within their social conditions. It implies to consider the educational contexts prevailing at the individual level (in particular the influence of the family) and the socialization devices organized by the FPM, both formal (formation, trainings, political education, etc.) and informal (sociability, common behaviors, etc.) in situation. And because socialization is a constant transaction (Percheron 1993, p. 32), interactions should be at the center of the questioning.

At the time of our meeting, in May 2010, Malek was the coordinator of the FPM in the American University of Beirut (AUB), the most prestigious establishment of the country. The interview had been difficult to schedule as his political activities take most of his time. Malek was in his fourth year of computer-electronic Engineering. It was his first term as the head of the FPM student group in the AUB. After failing to convince a security guard from the university to let me enter the campus without filling a visitor form, he decided to guide me in through a less supervised backdoor. “The rules of the administration are sometimes onerous” he complained with a smile. We sat in an empty auditorium and, after I switched on the voice recorder, the conversation initiated. Malek was speaking with a composed and definite voice:

*“To begin with, it is a very politicized country. Everyone talks about politics and everyone knows the politics. In my family, my father is a general in the army. In the army, you are not allowed to talk about politics and even to me he wouldn't speak of his political views. The Syrians were in Lebanon. It was something very annoying for the people like me to pass on the road and stop at each Syrian check-point. It's not something right. You feel it. It's not your army, it's not...At first, this is how it started. We were children and it is how it started. (...) All politicians were saying that the Syrians were helping us – they didn't say that they were stealing and exploiting Lebanon, but in the end, it was still not our army. No matter what the excuses were. There was only General Michel Aoun who was in France at that time. He used to speak on TV at that time. I was a child, but he was speaking my mind. He was saying that the Syrians should be out. He was asking the students to protest. And he was clear that once the Syrians would go out, we will have the best possible relations with Syria. All the other politicians were lying (...). This is the main point: they wanted the Syrians to be here. We didn't. At first, this is how General Michel Aoun made most of the students follow him. (...) So this is how it started: General*

*Michel Aoun was speaking our mind and he was the only one to pushing us forward, saying that: "you should get your freedom". This is our freedom, we should get it. No matter what it takes, we should get it. This is it at first (...).*

*Then, I recall an incident. When I was a kid, I had a major surgery and I was in intensive care. I was in the room, I was dying from pain and every day I was waiting for the shot that relieved me from the pain. On day, there was an interview of General Michel Aoun. The nurse came to give me the shot, I told her: "I don't want the shot! Get me a TV! I want to listen to him!" We were crazy. We were really crazy. (...)No matter what I say, no word could describe how I felt, how people felt, how students felt. The guy was speaking everything you wanted to hear! So this is how it started."<sup>11</sup>*

The preliminary framing statement about the politization of the Lebanese society is explicated in an interactive and inter-cognitive perspective. Malek wanted to inscribe his answer within this particular context in which politics is discussed and integrated into the common stock of knowledge mobilized in everyday life. The importance of political references in the everyday life interactions certainly appears as a central condition of partisan identification. However, this initial statement is immediately counter-balanced by a precision regarding his family and his father's membership in the Army. The reference to the Army – and the fact that politics was not allowed in his house – is possibly presented in order to testify the genuineness of his engagement by refuting in advance any idea of heritage. Nevertheless, in the Lebanese context, it also stands as an identity claim: not only is the Army a non-sectarian institution, but it also the organization from which Michel Aoun emerged, and finally a group defined in opposition with the wartime militias and their descendants in the political field.

Once again, the Syrian presence in Lebanon is presented as a major determinant for engagement. The rejection of the domination imposed by Syria is manifested in everyday life experiences (the crossing of check-points), in moral judgment ("*it is not something right*"), and in emotions ("*you feel it*"). The silence of the Lebanese public scene in front of the Syrian supremacy is symbolized by the silence of Malek's father. The domestic experience is used as an image of the national political field. Facing the lies or the apathy of the majority, the character of Michel Aoun is introduced to incarnate the spokesman of the youth. This is the story of a hero – absent but still able to save the country thanks to his capacity of instilling the rebellion. In the words of Malek, Michel Aoun became the embodiment of the political refusal and a figure of identification.

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<sup>11</sup> Malek, interview with the author: May 26, 2009 [in English].



The climax of the account is reached with the final story. Malek preferred enduring a violent pain rather than not being able to hear the words of the hero. The anecdote enables Malek to mentally associate himself with the FPM activists who suffered from their engagement. The link with the leader is irrational, impossible to translate in words and difficult to understand for the others. The engagement appears here as a quasi-mystical experience of unity. An experience also situated in the context of a difficult relation with his father, which tends to transform the hero in a paternal figure. However, the sentence referring to Michel Aoun's will to establish good relation with Syria is only understandable not in the time of the story, but rather in the present of storytelling. It is the present stand of the FPM that Malek intends to justify here. This unique occurrence illustrates the composite nature of the stories collected in interviews, injecting present into past and past into present.

All these stories, and the others I collected, depict several fields that require to be taken into account to analyze both the conditions of collective action and its significations as expressed by the actors.

First, the social contexts in which both the construction of the cognitive experience and the practical activities of the group are elaborated have to be elucidated. This not only implies to reintroduce the social and political conditions that have prevailed in Lebanon since the creation of the FPM but more specifically to examine the interactional situations in which students are experiencing their everyday life. From the stories, it is possible to infer that university represents a time and space encouraging activism, because of the partisan networks implanted in the various campuses and the biographical availability for engagement of the students. Second, the engagement stories highlighted the importance of socialization and the construction of a shared cognitive order at the scale of the partisan group. This calls for an analysis of the relations maintained between the activists, the other members, the organization and the representations of social reality constructed within the Party. The study of the internalization of the collective universe of signification demands to consider also primary socialization as well as the potential other influences reinforcing or limiting the integration within the cognitive order elaborated during collective in-group interactions. Third, social frames organizing the understanding of the group in time have to be analyzed. The importance of past experiences, the reference to founding events such as October 13, and the centrality of the figure of the leader introduce the issue of collective memory and its construction from the diversity of individual biographical trajectory. These three dimensions will consequently structure this work.

However, beyond the three axes emphasized in the students' answers, remains the question of the nature of these accounts. Should they be considered explanations or

justifications? How overcome the “biographical illusion” (Bourdieu 1986) or possible falsifications of the past? One interesting way to envisage this issue is to consider the distinction established in interactionism theory between motives and motivations (Fillieule 2001, p. 204). Motivations represent the initial condition in which action was realized. Motives, on the contrary, are considered as an act of language, produced in the situation of interaction to justify behaviors. The stories produced by the students do not represent accurate reconstitutions of past experiments but they express the modes of interpretation of this past produced in the research encounter. It is in their reconstructed nature that it is possible to track and deconstruct the cognitive processes projected in the situation of interview: the recorded interpretations represent situational materializations of the continuous cognitive process through which actors experience reality. If engagement is considered as a process, it is obvious that these accounts do not relate the moment of engagement, because using a sequential model implies that the access to the movement is not defined by the passage from the out-group to the in-group but envisaged more accurately as a succession of dynamic exchanges in which the positions of the actor regarding the organization are evolving.

Therefore, the stories voiced by the students do not recount the history of their affiliation as such but rather illustrate the present of their relation with the group. They offer an intelligibility of engagement: the modes in which the meaning of activism is constructed in order to be publicly presented in a situated social encounter. To understand how these stories produced in interview are processed and therefore to be able to unfold the social significations embedded in these accounts, it is necessary to take them as they are: subjective reconstructions of experience offering the keys of the self-interpretation of the actors. Such a conception of the collected stories has a double consequence on the methodological level. First, it justifies the choice to rely mainly on biographical interviews. Second, it imposes to envisage the discourses produced in interviews critically, as constructions elaborated within the temporal and cognitive frame of the research interaction.

Starting from how it started thus offers an overview of the pieces constituting the data. My observations, past experiences of the milieu, and encounters with the actors offered grasps to plunge into a complex cognitive world. From such an immersion emerged an impression, a general pre-understanding of the social as it was observed and experienced. Of course, such an overall conception of “*what is going on*” remains at the same time very situational and deeply influenced by the researcher’s presuppositions. Many other ways of addressing the problem would have been conceivable. Like a kaleidoscope, the images displayed by the assemblage of all the collected stories are changing in function of the focalization (Martin 1992, p. 804).

The image that arose may remain incomplete and partial, yet it orientated towards certain questions and possible answers. This, in turn, fuelled my methodological exploration, exposing some elements of the problem to the light but also, it has to be acknowledged, bounding the possible outcomes of my work. Finally, the fabrication of hypotheses and their exploration completed the process, giving this work its specific focalization. Concentrating mainly on methodological issues, I will try to explain how this research has been imagined and constructed. To do so, it is necessary to explore in depth the implications, the perspective, and the limits of the framework that was chosen, of the methodology that was designed and concretely used, as well as of my own position as a researcher.

## 2. NARRATING IDENTIFICATION

This study emerged from encounters in contemporary Lebanese university spaces. Starting from narrated experiences, it is grounded in story-telling. Instead of discarding these accounts as simple language utterances, I learned with time to listen to their manifold embedded social voices. The literature on narratives helped to conceptualize the contribution of a perspective anchored in the social world of the students I met. Referring to Jean-Paul Sartre's words in *La Nausée* that "a man is always a teller of stories, he lives surrounded by his own stories and those of other people, he sees everything that happens to in him in terms of these stories and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it", Jerome Bruner suggests that "eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very "events" of a life. In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives." (Bruner 2004 [1987], p. 694) From the constructivist approach, it implies that "the mimesis between life so-called and narrative is a two-way affair: that is to say, just as art imitates life in Aristotle's sense, so, in Oscar Wilde's, life imitates art. Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative. "Life" in this sense is the same kind of construction of the human imagination as "a narrative" is." (ibid., p. 692)

During our encounters, telling stories is the primary means for Khalid, Elza, Laure, Malek and all the others to express their sense of belonging, to represent their self in the way they wish to display it. As literature has no mode of representation but narrativity (Genette 1969, p. 55), there is "no other way of describing "lived time" save in the form of a narrative" (Ricoeur 1984). The story form of experience is therefore

not an artefact but the very nature of human knowledge in and on the world. Contrary to the classic distinction between the dramatic and the narrative modes operated by both Aristotle and Plato, the two dimensions are inseparable in interactions as narration is at the same time telling a story and an act of representation. The art of representation (*mimesis*) is therefore equivalent of the art of narration (*diegesis*). Because narratives are at the same time an assignation of meaning and an action, the stories of rebellion, vocation, integration and about the hero offer interpretations of the sense of belonging exposed by my interlocutors – here to be understood in the double meaning of attribution of signification and role-performing (Farrugia 2009, p. 270). In that perspective, my position toward the accounts recorded in interview situations refers to the view of Paul Ricoeur who defines every narrative identity as one possible and situational interpretation of the self among potential others (Ricoeur 1990)<sup>12</sup>.

Thus, my first interest is not to know if the story told by Elza for example is true. Questioning the veracity of the account would be, to repeat Genette's formula, “as chimeric as asking how many children Lady Macbeth really had” (Genette 1969, p. 86). What matters is not the life of the character of the story in itself, but its author's. As Bruner puts it: “[a] life is not “how it was” but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold” (Bruner 2004, p. 708). Rather I want to understand how it is constructed and with which objectives: what elements are used, what kind of argumentation is elaborated, which background is necessary to explain that biographical account and why, in the circumstances of the interview, she chose to tell this precise story?

Striking parallels emerged from the engagement stories voiced by Khalid, Elza, Laure and Malek. The will to inscribe a personal life-story in a collective meaning is not the least of these similarities: patterns of living out activism, references to shared significations (e.g. “*Baabda*”), and quasi-mythical evocations (e.g. October 13) are all identifiable and call for an analysis starting from the individual accounts in order to access “from inside” the social reality (Balandier 1983, p. 8). For example, the autobiographical trajectories built in the accounts presented in the beginning of this chapter operate along a comparable storyline: a revelation during childhood, in the course of primary socialization among the family (Khalid and Laure especially) or/and

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<sup>12</sup> Because it acknowledges the competency of the actors to give sense through narrativity to their own actions and experiences, Ricoeur's view enables to go beyond the limitations implicated by the sociology of agency, for which agents are defined by an objective identity imposing itself and manifested in practice. Pierre Bourdieu for example opposes a one-and-only “practical identity”, fundamentally defined by the *habitus* and only accessible through a sociological analysis, to all the illusionary narrative identities voiced by the agents (Bourdieu 1986). For a comparison between the respective positions of Paul Ricoeur and Pierre Bourdieu on narrative identity, see Truc 2005.

in relation with a traumatic event (Elza, at a lesser extend Malek); follows a waiting period, perfectly illustrated by the story of Elza, before the effective engagement, arising with the encounter with the activists' networks, more often in the university spaces. Drawing on Ricoeur's argument about the emplotment of human experience (Ricoeur 1986), it is possible to argue that this model of trajectory is inscribed in a set of collective stories that exercises a formative influence on the individual being in society. In that perspective the life experiences, such as those recollected in the students' stories are posited to be "mediatized by social narratives that preceded the existences, perceptions, and representations of the individuals" (Farrugia 2009, p. 271) that produce and organize social reality. These social narratives work as frameworks or "conceptual devices of universe maintenance" (Berger Luckmann 1966, p. 122-134). The individually voiced stories are therefore understood as mimetic of "an array of spoken and written forms that provide culturally appropriate ways in which personal experience is shared, knowledge is transmitted, memories are enacted, and testimony is constructed." (Atkinson & Delamont 2006a, p. XXI) These cognitive models are what Paul Ricoeur calls the "social imaginary", which is constitutive of the social reality itself (Kerney 1989, p. 20).

When Khalid explains that belonging to the FPM is "more than a discourse, a way of life", when Elza tells about her memories about October 13, which still affect her today, when Laure refers to the collective meaning of Baabda, and when Malek argues that "Michel Aoun was talking our minds", it is possible to see how the social imaginary they expose to interpret their sense of the self is saturated with reference to the Party, understood as a social group and a symbol for identification. The weight of the political forces in the contemporary Lebanese society, as acknowledged by Malek, enables them to inject significations in social encounters, in public as well as private spaces through the presence of flags, photographs, etc., and in time by claiming a particular vision of history. In doing so, they play the role of identity mediators, shaping a collective narrative about the identity of their members. Of course, no political organization is able to create an identity narrative and to constitute a society *ex-nihilo*. Discourses about identity offer a framework through which members are invited to perceive the reality, but these guidelines can only be efficient if they are able to rely on social representations that already exist within the larger social order (Martin 1994). However, parties constitute "workshops" that construct collective identity narratives (Hastings 2001a, p. 22-23) aiming at reshaping the social context in which their members evolve. The question is hence to understand how the potential members acquire the interpretative frame elaborated through the identity narrative

shaped by the organization. How, in a word, the transition between collective identity narratives and individual identification operates to constitute the group.

Rom Harré's work about social and personal identity formation provides heuristic tools to conceptualize the dynamics of integration. Defining social identity as the self-perception deriving from the sense of belonging to a group and personal identity as the individual incarnation of social identity, he notes that identity construction is an interactive and sequential process in which four phases can be spotted: the *appropriation* of a public/collective identity i.e. an encounter with a social identity; the *transformation* of this collective identity made by the individual depending on his private experiences; the *publication* of his own private and individual identity i.e. the representation of his personal identity in the social order; and finally the *conventionalization* of personal identities that have been socially accepted, leading them to be integrated to the social order which is therefore perpetuated but in a version inspired by actors' own preoccupations. The newly built identity is now perceived as a social identity and can be appropriated again, in a perpetual and simultaneous process (Harré 1983, p. 84).

Introducing the narrative dimension of identity enables to make the model concretely operate. The concept of narrative identity (Somers 1994) includes the two aspects of *mimesis* and *diegesis*, also incorporated into Harré's theory under the lexes "display of identity" and "realization of identity". More precisely, the concept of narrative identity refers to the idea that "social identities are constituted through narrativity, social action is guided by narrativity, and social processes and interactions – both institutional and interpersonal – are narratively mediated" (Somers 1994, p. 621). This, Somers continues, "provides a way of understanding the recursive presence of particular identities that are, nonetheless, not universal" (ibid.) Because social identities are inscribed into "social imaginaries" they rely for their diffusion on collective identity narratives providing models for the attribution of meaning of the selves and the determination of social behaviors. These collective narratives work as text in the sense defined by Bakhtin i.e. a "coherent complex of signs" (Bakhtin 1986, p. 103), ordering knowledge in use in the partisan society of the FPM. Drawing on the various histories at their disposal within the group, the engagement stories are illustrating the processes of transformation and publication of these collective identity narratives as the young activists selected elements of their personal biography and linked them with the collective narratives populating their social imaginary. Telling their story is already organizing their experience, selecting among its innumerable features and transforming it (Riessman 1993, p. 10).

The model proposed by Harré enables to understand how individual stories are constructed from collective identity narratives but also, in return, how personal accounts ensure the continuation and the progressive transformation of the social order. The concept of narrative identity shifts the focus from narrativity as representation to narrativity as social ontology: “it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities.” (Somers 1994, p. 606) Hence, it is actually the people’s activities that shape the group’s identity narrative as much as the institutional discourse (Lagroye 2006, p. 65). To paraphrase Vygotsky, the narratives produced by the students exist twice: on the social level and inside the person (Vygotsky 1978, p. 57). The passage between the two is realized by internalization and manifested by the act of storytelling. In narrating their sense of identity, the students realize in interaction the passage between the two levels of experience, collective and personal. Interview situations represent one particular example of this process of storytelling, but of course not the more habitual in the everyday life. Storytelling occurs in fact in most of the social interactions in which it takes various forms and uses different procedures. In everyday life situations, narratives are often allusive, partials, or incomplete. Displaying a tattoo, putting up a partisan flag, singing a political song, or mobilizing specific and identifiable lexical expressions can all be considered as fragments of narratives as they contribute to the inscription in a collective story. Argumentations used during the frequent political debates erupting between students in universities, perceptions of the Lebanese politics expressed in the daily conversations, or evocations of past experiences between neighbors represent more elaborated forms of storytelling, which procedures are therefore not always direct but rather rely on signs and symbols mobilized in given situations. Narratives remain central in the apprehension of the social reality, “crucial in persons’ experiences of different dimensions of power, history and social identity” (Gilsenan 1996, p. xii).

This has two consequences. First, it is understood that all identity narratives are collective works, as are all texts in the vision of Jorge Luis Borges: not only they have no individual author, but also they are already written and perpetually reinvented (Genette 1966, p. 125). Following this track, the aim of the analysis is to expose the language of the personal narratives, to uncover the various collective trails on which they are elaborated. As Bakhtin notes, narratives are all polyphonic: they carry many embedded social meaning beyond the storyteller own voice (Bakhtin 1981 [1930]). Each word has a history that the researcher needs to study in order to decrypt the dispersed social voices behind the narrator's discourse. Second, considered in its

narrative form, identity loses its categorical stability. Cognitive representations turn out to be more significant than clear-cut attributes such as sectarian affiliation, membership, class, etc. Instead of using *a priori* attributes to interpret action, it is now possible to concentrate on contingent narratives of meaning defined in the situational specificities of the storytelling interaction. To adopt the narrative perspective on identity thus enables to concretely implement the objective of this study to consider the constructed and interactive nature of groups. Thus Narrative identity is inseparable of the interactional setting in which it is manifested. Some authors even suggest that narrative constructs the self because of their interactional function (Bamberg 1997). “Autobiographical narratives might partly construct the self because, in telling the story, the narrator adopts a certain interactional position – and in acting like that kind of person *becomes* more like that kind of person (...).” (Wortham 2006 [2000], p. 141) Consequently, it is essential to locate actors' social narratives in temporal and spatial configurations of relationships. To do so, “we need concepts that will enable us to plot over time and space the ontological narratives of historical actors, the public (...) narratives that inform their lives, as well as the relevant range of other social forces – from politics to demographics – that configure together to shape history and social action.” (Somers 1994, p. 625)

The objective of this study is precisely to understand in situation how narratives arrange the structures of human experience – understood as the rules and resources organizing social interactions and their allocated meanings (Giddens 1976) – and how this process fuels the dynamics of identification. My aim is to comprehend how narratives enable the actors to express “an I that is We, a We that is I” (Hegel 1977, p. 110). The concept of narrative identity is essential in this project as it works as a bridge between the social and individual levels of analysis. Collective identity narratives and personal stories produced during social interactions are interlinked constructs. Starting from the latter enables to access the former and to understand how the links between the individual and the group are constituted: as it is possible to infer from the engagement stories, narrating personal experiences denotes how the actors interpret social interactions and position themselves accordingly, how they refer to shared meanings acquired at various stages of their socialization, and inscribe themselves in the course of what they present as a collective history and memory.

This narrative approach represents, of course, only one possible way to question group construction and the processes of identification. In spite of their heuristic implications, narratives “do not (...) need endorsement any more than they deserve to be neglected. (...) While narratives are important forms of action and representation, we do not seek to privilege them by claiming for them any unique or special qualities.”



(Atkinson & Delamont 2006a, p. XXVI) Nonetheless, because the possibilities it opens remain largely unexplored in the Lebanese context – at the notable exception of the work of Michael Gilsean – the narrative perspective imposed itself in the course of this study. In order to understand how it was implemented, it is necessary to carefully describe the research process. This is the aim of the next section.

### **3. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DATA**

The theoretical path that has been followed was, at the same time, fuelling my methodological exploration and resulting from it. My progressive inclination toward the narrative model kept in path with the methods I used to conceive and gather data. However, these practices of investigations were also designed and rearranged in order to enable the exploration of the concept of narrative identity. Both methodological and theoretical progression went therefore hand in hand during the research process. In this section, I will try to present the main features of the successive steps of my method and to objectify their impact on the creation of the material I used, starting from the conception of my fieldwork tools, then proceeding to the phase of data collection, and finishing by the highly precarious process of writing.

#### **A) Forging some tools**

Departing from the willingness to analyze accurately the identification processes, this research has adopted a phenomenological method (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 34) i.e. a method that is both empirical and descriptive allowing the perception of the systems of representations used by the actors in a two-dimensional perspective: cognitive (that focuses on subjective perceptions, beliefs and values as expressed by the actors) and sociological (that considers the configurations of the social order in which actors are evolving). It aims at understanding how in a certain situation objectively defined, subjective construction of identity is taking place. This approach enables the re-building of the universes of significations through which actors experience their life and to point out the influences of the ongoing socialization processes within partisan societies. Because representations can only be understood in their practical manifestations through an immersion into the studied field (Balandier 1967, p. VIII; Martin 2002 p. 39), it has been chosen to focus on *comprehension*. Concretely, the set of analytic methods elaborated to apprehend the materialization of identification processes and shed light on the practical impact of representation in

everyday life relations is organized around two main tools: semi-directive interviews and fieldwork observations (Martin 2002, p. 42).

Because observations are closely determined by their concrete conditions and without underestimating the theoretical issues at stake during such phases of the research, I discuss them in the next section focusing on the practical realization of fieldwork to concentrate on the question of interviews. Potential benefits and drawbacks implied by the use of interviews in social sciences have been largely discussed. In spite of the persistent risk of both inequality and asymmetry of the relations between interviewees and researchers (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, Passeron 1983, p. 61; Bourdieu 1993, p. 905), interviews remain the most adapted tool to study representations (Demazière & Dubar 1997, p. 15; Duchesne 1996, p. 190). Through the use of interviews, my aim was to gain an access to both interviewees' trajectory and the significations they give to their everyday life interactions. To do so, I finally chose to employ a double-interview process: a first interview was devoted to the life course of the actor while a second concentrated on his representations of different events and figures presented as central in the symbolic universe of the Party<sup>13</sup>. During the first encounter, people were asked to describe their social situation (family, studies, social background...), their political and moral opinions, their career within the Party, their motivations, their values, their activities, etc., with few guidelines. Rather than precise questions, my frame for interview was constituted of various themes that were to be tackled with the interviewees. It enabled me to remain flexible and adapt my questions to the developments made by the actors. The second encounter was dedicated to a special questionnaire, based not on oral interrogations but on a set of photos and dates.

The first round of interviews aimed at understanding the order in which an individual meets the socially defined representations and properties that constitute him (Passeron 1991, p. 199). The methodological guideline used is provided by the sequential analyze model in terms of trajectory (Strauss 1992, p. 143; Becker 1997, p. 22-25). As already noted, this model offers a dynamic approach that enables to take into account the influence of socialization, social situations and past that shape the potential evolution of the actor's trajectory. It is concerned with the restitution of the contexts of signification as they are experienced and ordered by the actors through their narrative. It also allows locating the importance of the political adhesion within the life course of an individual (Fillieule 2001). However, this model requires to re-situate the narrative in the objective present circumstances of its production, and so to

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<sup>13</sup> By that, I here refer to the dates commemorated by the Party, the persons or events highlighted in official documents edited by the organization, but also the most cited references employed by the activists and Party's officials.

take into consideration the interference of the researcher (Schwartz 1990, p. 55) as well as the objective conditions in which the subjective phenomena are taking place (Suaud 1978, p. 9-10).

The implementation of this classical type of interview was inspired by the “life course” approach, a model that necessitates some clarifications as the biographical perspective is often characterized by a “utopia of completeness” (Passeron 1989, p. 5). Drawing on Bourdieu’s famous comment about the “biographical illusion” (Bourdieu 1986), many have pointed the limits of the use of life narratives in interviews: the semblance of transparency in the information, which can lead to the undermining of the sociological analysis of the discourses (Passeron 1989; Pudal 1994), the tendency of the actors to make up their stories in the light of what they perceive from the objectives of the researcher (Peneff 1994; Bidart 2006), the uneven story-telling capacity of the actors (Poliak 2002). Another issue is the difficulty to balance the analysis between a model inspired by structuralism and focusing only on the macro elements determining the life course of the actors on the one hand, and on the other hand an impossible model in which everything would be considered and nothing would be judged insignificant (Passeron 1989; De Connick & Gopard 1989). Yet, the reconstructed nature of the life narrative voiced by the interviewees is precisely what gives the force of that method. Because the biographical constructions operate hand in hand with the identity formation of the actors (Damamme 1994; Redman 2005), because the individual life stories are marked by socially built scenarios and models of temporality (Coffey & Atkinson 1996; Bamberg 2007; Bruner 2004; Passerini 1989), studying biographies offers inestimable insights on the interactions between individuals and society at work in the social construction of reality. From the social tenets that organize the story-telling practices<sup>14</sup>, it is possible to reach the logics of signification shaping the perceptions of the actors.

Drawing on the narrative model, the interviews realized during the second encounters were more directly aiming at the production of stories. The frame for the interviews was composed of a series of photos and dates evoking major events and figures of the partisan group<sup>15</sup>. Photographs and dates have been chosen after a round

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<sup>14</sup> These principles can be identified through the study of parallelisms in narratives’ forms and/or content across cases as well as within a single case, the recurrence of specific references, expressions or symbols, etc.

<sup>15</sup> The events are: 1) “Baabda” (the presidential palace), 2) 14<sup>th</sup> of March 1989 (the beginning of anti-Syrian “liberation war” by Michel Aoun), 3) the signing of Taef Agreement in 1989 (that ended the civil war but was rejected by Aoun mainly because it legalized Syrian presence in Lebanon), 4) 13<sup>th</sup> of October 1990 (Aoun’s defeat against Syrian army), 5) 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2001 (repression of a student mobilization organized by the FPM), and 6) 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2005 (return of Michel Aoun after 15 years in exile). The pictures are: 1) Michel Aoun (the leader of the Party), 2) Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah (leader

of exploratory interviews – noting the events and characters spontaneously described by the actors – and in reference to the official discourse produced by the Party about its history, the history of Lebanon and, beyond the organizational structure, the history of the social groups that compose the movement since its origins. The selection was not easy to achieve, especially since the various trajectories of the actors seem to highlight different path of analysis. When I was able to infer from the first interview that specific events or characters play an important role in the universe of signification of the person I met, I usually prepared a special slide to echo those particular poles of interests. Although it can be seen as introducing a breach in the standard of the method, it was made in order to favor the spontaneous inclinations of the actors and to valorize the inter-relation by showing my attention to his or her preoccupations.

One possible bias is that my selection of characters was mainly centered on Christian figures. However, it seemed logical as the interviewees repeatedly reported the coherence of the proposed slides. Only twice this inclination toward Christian personages was noticed and questioned by my interlocutor. In both cases, the remark came from students stressing their secularist views. It remains that no one ever refused to comment on any photo or date. I also made sure of maintaining the possibilities of interaction as open as possible, especially by asking the interviewees in both encounters about other figures that might be important for them. I also introduced new slides to balance this aspect in the last phases of my fieldwork<sup>16</sup>. Undoubtedly, my selection was inspired by many free discussions I had on the ground but also reflected a certain interpretation of the reality I observed as my focus on Christian characters certainly refer to the idea of the anchoring of identification in the past memories of the mainly Christian social groups in which the students of the Free Patriotic Movement are inscribed. I nevertheless noted that particular personages particularly fuelled the story-telling processes, and all of them were indeed Christian leaders<sup>17</sup>.

In using this technique, my idea was to record the actors' own interpretations of these various referents in used within the group and to confront individual with

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of Hezbollah) with Michel Aoun (a photo taken during the signing of the agreement between the two parties), 3) general De Gaulle (comparisons are often made between these two figures), 4) Rafiq Hariri (former Prime minister), 5) Bachir Gemayel (former Christian militia head and Lebanon President, assassinated in 1982), 6) Kamal Joumlatt (Druze and progressist leader) and Yasser Arafat (leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization) shaking hands, 7) Samir Geagea (his main Christian rival), and 8) the former Maronite Patriarch, Msg. Nasrallah Sfeir. Photos number 4, 6, and 8 were introduced in the last phases of the fieldwork, from October 2009.

<sup>16</sup> See the previous footnote.

<sup>17</sup> The three figures were Michel Aoun, Bachir Gemayel, and Samir Geagea. For an analysis of these characters in the students' narratives, see Chapter Six.

collective perceptions in order to note possible gaps, the convergences and divergences, the adaptations and negotiations, which composed the narratives voiced by the students. This method offered a tool at the same time flexible (everyone could describe the photo as she/he wanted) and systematic (the same photos were shown to all)<sup>18</sup>. In the first try-outs of the method, the slides mentioning events and the photos were submitted to the interviewees directly at the end of the discussion. But it turned up that after discussions that often lasted for more than two hours, interviewees were likely to simply qualify these events and characters with a few words. Therefore, the method has been then used in a subsequent encounter. This enabled to enhance the results of the interviews and also to give a concrete basis for a second meeting, allowing the strengthening of the relations with the actors on the field. However, it required seeing every interviewee twice, which was not always easy as many of them had started new demanding jobs or had left the country to work.

The idea to use photographs and dates was inspired by a triple advantage noted by Marie-Claire Lavabre whose study of the memory of the French communist party relied partially on photos: first, it enables to leave more liberty to the actors who are able to comment on any theme they consider related to the picture; second, the succession of photos creates the impression of a “family album”, populated by recognized figures and important episodes; third, images (as well as dates in the case of this research) build link between past and present, generating a discourse on memory (Lavabre 1994, p. 297). Besides, such a method proved to be adapted to the blurred boundaries delimiting political groups in general and the FPM in particular on the field. Contrary to direct questions about membership, which can be judged offensive by the actors in a society where identity labeling is constant, the use of photos and dates easily reveal the level of inscription within the partisan order, or/and encourage the evocation of past memories and family experiences. This method offered a large panel of possible identifications and story-lines for the interviewees beyond the practical cleavage between members and non-members inoperative as such. Because in the partisan societies, envisaged as perpetually reimagined groups, the question is about identification rather than status (Mermier & Mervin 2012, p. 24), the flexibility of the selected tool was useful to tackle the process of internalization and adaptation of collective elements.

Beyond the efficiency of the method during the fieldwork, one remaining issue is the nature of the material produced through the use of such interviews. Many

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<sup>18</sup> Although new slides and pictures were progressively introduced, most of the data were collected through the use of the same version.

researchers, especially those who adopt an ethnographic approach regard data produced in interviews as artificial and prefer using material obtained by the observation of everyday life interaction<sup>19</sup>. It is forgetting that interviews are interactional events like any other encounter. “The interview is a form of conversation. Someone asks a question and another person responds. It is an activity steeped in our cultural codes (...). With the research interview, conversation has been transformed into a research tool.” (Gudmundsdottir 2006 [1996], p. 220) Thus, “the fact that narratives are elicited does not, per se, mean that the stories produced in interview will be artificial and will be told without any real social objective, but simply that the interactional rules and social relationships involved are different from those of ordinary conversation and other environments” (De Fina 2009, p. 237). The status of the data is determined by the context of its production, but none of the interactional situation in which material is found is more “natural” than others. Rather, using data collected through interviews may enable to avoid the illusion of spontaneity and immediacy suggested by ethnographic observations (Tedlock 1983, p. 302-311). It is clear that narratives are interacted and negotiated, co-produced between the participants in the conversation (Bamberg 2004; Mishler 1991). Interviews are not monologues, but multi-voiced productions oriented by the questions of the researcher, the place of the meeting, the eventual audience, etc. What kinds of relations were tied with the interviewees? What were the expectations implicitly shaping the encounters? How participants negotiated their respective positions? Those parameters inevitably affected the course of my interactions with the actors and impose to resituate as much as possible the various narratives in their contexts of production.

## **B) Staging the encounters with participants**

The delimitation of the observation sites as well as the selection of the participants were directed by considerations both practical and theoretical. The first choice was to confine fieldwork exploration to Beirut. It of course hugely facilitated data collection but the decision was also made because of the specific status of the Lebanese capital city. Historically, Beirut has been the center of the university world and two of the main universities in terms of heritage and prestige are situated there. Although many universities have developed in other regions since the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, many students still come from peripheral area to study in the main university centers. It has to be kept in mind that Beirut’s agglomeration also concentrates nearly half of the Lebanese population. A vast number of families originated from various

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<sup>19</sup> On the discussion about “natural” and “contrived” data, see for example Speer 2002.

parts of the Lebanese territory have settled in the city, especially during the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Khuri 1975). Besides, the small size of the country enables many young to join campuses in the capital. Focusing on Beirut then didn't limit the diversity of geographical origins and even, at a lesser extend though, of living areas of the students.

Three universities were chosen: the American University of Beirut (AUB), the Saint-Joseph University (USJ – from French: Université Saint-Joseph), and the Lebanese University (LU). The first two are private institutions both created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>, and have played a central role in the influence of the Lebanese educational system in the region. The AUB particularly took an active part in Beirut's cultural centrality in the Arab world, while the USJ has trained most of the state officials since the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Favier 2004, Chapter 1). Beyond that historical and prominent weight, the AUB and the USJ strongly impacted the rise of the student mobilizations in Lebanon. Indeed, at the eve of the civil war, the AUB had become a major site of political struggle (Barakat 1977; Le Pottier 1998; Rabah 2009), while USJ latter appeared as a center of the contestation against the Syrian rule in Lebanon in the years 1990s and the early 2000s. Concerning the USJ, whose premises are split between several locations<sup>21</sup>, I precisely chose to concentrate on the specific campus of Social Sciences situated in Huvelin Street – in Eastern Beirut – for its importance in the student protests against the Syrian military presence in Lebanon in which the young supporters of the Free Patriotic Movement played a central role<sup>22</sup>.

The selection of the Lebanese University was also due to its historical impact on the student movements in Lebanon (Favier 2004). Moreover, it proved to be necessary in order to limit a possible bias in the data regarding the socio-economic conditions of the students. Contrary to the AUB and the USJ, the LU is a public university, administrated by the state. While tuition fees are comprised between 6,000 and 19,000 US dollars a year in the USJ and the AUB<sup>23</sup>, they do not exceed 200 US dollars in the

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<sup>20</sup> The AUB was founded in 1864 as the Syrian Protestant College. The USJ was founded in 1875 by Jesuits originated from France.

<sup>21</sup> In Beirut, the various USJ campuses are scattered in the Christian eastern part of the city: the campus of Medical Sciences, the recently opened campus of Sport and Innovation as well as the campus of Human Sciences in Damas Street, the campus of Social Sciences in Huvelin Street, the campus of Sciences and Technology in Mkalles (in the near eastern suburb) including the Engineering School ESIB (Ecole Supérieure d'Ingénieurs de Beyrouth), and the university headquarters in Monot.

<sup>22</sup> As an illustration of the central role played by the campus of Huvelin in these protests, it is possible to mention the Lebanese movie written by Maroun Nassar and directed by Munir Maasri entitled "Rue Huvelin", released in Lebanon in 2011.

<sup>23</sup> In both cases, the amount is determined by the studied major and the number of academic credits. In the AUB, newcomers who wish to enroll during the 2011-2012 academic year have to pay between

LU<sup>24</sup>. Such dissimilarities in the cost of the studies have of course an impact on the profile of the students in these three universities (Al-Amine 1997). In order to take these differences into account, it was necessary to consider as well young studying in the LU. My hypothesis was that socio-economic background did not drastically affect the processes of identification, and that consequently, the mechanisms of affiliation narrated by the various students would be comparable whatever their financial situation. After the realization of the interviews, this hypothesis was confirmed but altered: if socio-economic conditions do not seem central in the construction of affiliation, the relations with the group is affected, although less by a deprived position in terms of financial resources than by the academically marginal position of the LU compared to the AUB and the USJ.

The segmentation of the LU into regional branches made it impossible to study on a general basis. I therefore focused on faculties belonging to the branch II, corresponding to the mainly Christian Eastern part of the Beirut region. The choice was made because of the FPM strong implantation in this region. However, due to material limitations, I was not able to concentrate on a specific campus. The students I met were belonging to different institutions situated in various locations: the Faculty of Sciences and the Faculty of Information in Fanar, the Engineering Faculty in Roumieh, the Faculty of Management in Achrafiyeh, and the faculty of Political Sciences in Jal el-Dib<sup>25</sup>. Apart from the campus situated in Achrafiyeh, in the central part of Beirut, the other faculties of the branch II are all situated in suburban areas. The remote location of some of these institutions, especially the Faculty of Engineering in Roumieh, as well as the absence of public transportation made the fieldwork conditions much more difficult. If reaching the faculty in Roumieh from Beirut was rather easy – although quite long – thanks to the use of “services”, the Lebanese collective taxis, the return trips were much more improvised. I learned in particular from some students the “art” of hitchhiking from the small isolated campus situated in the first slopes of the Mountain above Beirut.

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13,726 \$ and 19,176 \$ for the complete year depending on the faculty. See: <http://www.aub.edu.lb/main/admissions/Documents/Tuition-2011.pdf> [August 2012]

In the USJ, during the academic year 2009-2010, the basic formation (Bachelor Degree – 180 credits) in the majors taught in the campus of Social Sciences (Management, Law, Political Science, Economics) cost 20,340 \$ for three years (113 \$/credit), i.e. 6780 \$ a year. See: <http://www.usj.edu.lb/pdf/guide09-10.pdf> [August 2012]

<sup>24</sup> For example in Law, the cost for registration is 195,000 Lebanese Pounds, around 100 Euros. See: <http://www.auf.org/bureau-moyen-orient/actions-regionales/filieres-de-formation/licence-en-droit-universite-libanaise> [August 2012]

<sup>25</sup> A doctoral student from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences in Fanar is also part of the main material of this research.



The observations made in the various university settings were mainly realized during special events, like student elections, strikes, meetings, etc. I also practiced observations during ordinary days in the different campuses, especially in the AUB, Huvelin Street and the LU campus in Achrafiyeh since they were the more accessible sites. Besides these situational observations, I also participated in students meetings outside universities, generally with the FPM groups. Those were in most of the cases organized within the main office of the Free Patriotic Movement, first in the Queen's Plaza building in Jdeydeh el-Metn (North-Eastern suburb of Beirut), then, from 2009, in the Mirna Chalouhi Center in Sinn el-Fil, East of the capital. I also joined in several meetings, demonstrations or gatherings of student branches from other political groups, such as the Lebanese Communist Party<sup>26</sup>, Amal and Hezbollah<sup>27</sup>. Participation in student activities such as demonstrations, festivals, conferences, socialization camps needed the establishment of stable and trusted relationships with student groups and required a long-term presence on the field, which was achieved concretely through the conduction of several trips, lasting between one month and 10 months: from October to December 2007, from April to May 2008, from October to November 2008 and in March 2009, from September 2009 to June 2010, from October to December 2010 and finally from March to April 2011.

During these fieldwork periods, participants were selected among students – or former students – involved in different ways in political activities inside and/or outside their universities through the use of a kind of “snowball sampling” (Glaser & Strauss 1967). This sampling method was used due to the absence of quantitative data concerning party membership among students. There are no complete data about the number of adherents in the political organisations such as the Free Patriotic Movement, especially in the case of the students as many of them have not reach the minimum age (20 years old) to legally join the Party. Therefore, it is hardly possible to realize a comprehensive sociology of the political organisations considered due to the lack of reliable data concerning the number, origins, occupations, etc. of members. Are taken into account in this research students who label themselves as activists or

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<sup>26</sup> Beside meetings organized in the Lebanese Communist Party center in Western Beirut, I participated in two gatherings in November 2008 celebrating the foundation of the Party, the main one being held in the Unesco Palace in Beirut (on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November), as well as in one demonstration organized against the high prices of electricity in front of the Lebanese Electricity Company building in 2009 (November 23).

<sup>27</sup> I participated in a gathering organized by the Amal Movement in the LU main campus in the Southern suburb of Beirut (March 11, 2009), in memory of the Imam Nassim Sadr, the founder of the party who disappeared in Libya in 1978. I also observed, among other anterior or smaller activities, an exhibition (*ma`rad*) set up by Hezbollah students to promote the Resistance waged by the military wing of the party (March 2009).

sympathizers, who engage in activities with the partisan group in or outside universities, and/or who are part of the party's social networks. One of my aims is precisely to study how different degrees of engagement can produce distinct form of identification, commitment and construction of the self. Moreover, snowball sampling enabled to highlight the networks that constitute the sociability of the activists' groups or define the inter-personal relations existing among politically active students. I concentrate mainly on students identifying themselves with the FPM, although, as previously mentioned, not all have officially joined the Party. The fact that they identified themselves with the group and took part in some of its activities was sufficient to define a potential research participant. Snowball sampling also implies that the three sites of observations were discovered in turn, although starting the investigation in one university did not end the frequentation of the others. I first focused my attention on USJ, before opening a comprehensive study of the FPM group in AUB from the spring 2010. Finally, the last months of my fieldwork were more devoted to the LU.

In the end, a main sample of 44 students active in the FPM was constituted using this technique and a large majority of them underwent the two interviews. Besides, other participants were selected among students supporting other political groups, and interviews were also organized with former activists, party officials (especially those in charge of the political socialization), and various experts (researchers, journalists, social workers, etc.). Such interviews offer a perspective on the Lebanese society as a whole but also on the strategies deployed by parties to socialize students – and more generally all members<sup>28</sup>.

The core sample reflects the variety of observation sites as well as the diversity of the profile coexisting in the FPM student groups<sup>29</sup>. Academically, it is constituted by 14 students from the AUB, 17 from the USJ, and 13 from the LU. A vast majority of these students are males (36). This may reflect in a way the general image of relative female absence from political activism; however such an interpretation would be inflated as many girls appeared to take part in the various activities of the FPM groups in the three considered universities. If active male students are undoubtedly more numerous, their over-representation in my sample may be due to two biases. First, as I will discuss later, many contacts were given by an official of the FPM student committee who tended to introduce me to the students in charge in the various faculties I investigated, and only one of them was a female, in the LU Faculty of

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<sup>28</sup> See the list of all the interviews held for this research, appendix.

<sup>29</sup> Tables that summarize the profiles of the core sample are available in the appendix.

Information. So the under-visibility of women might be a sign of their relative deprived position in the structure of the organization. Second, being a man myself, contact has probably proved easier with male student. Due to the length of my study – which stretched over 5 years – and to the variable academic advancement of the students I met, their age range is comprised between 19 and 33 years old. Two main age groups are apparent: those born in the early or mid-1980s, and those born in 1989 and 1990. As I will demonstrate later, this affects their perception of reality and their identification with the collective memory of the FPM<sup>30</sup>. Remarkably, students of the core sample come predominantly from Christian families (41) rather than Muslim families (2) or mixed families (1). Finally, the geographical distribution of students' living places and regions of origins is echoing the national implantation of the FPM as demonstrated by the national elections held in 2005 and 2009: most of the students from the core sample are originated from central Mount Lebanon (25) – Metn (10), Kesrwan (4), Jbeil (2), and Baabda-Aley (9). Other geographical origins are found in the *Mohâfazât*<sup>31</sup> of South Lebanon and Nabatiyyeh (6) – especially the region of Jezzine (3); North (3) – all in the Christian area around Batroun, Tannourine and Zgharta; the Beqaa valley (5) – in particular Zahleh (3); Beirut (1); and finally the Chouf (4). As to the living locations, they are concentrated in Beirut (10) – mainly Achrafiyeh-Gemmayzeh (9) – or its close Northern and Eastern suburbs, corresponding respectively to the districts of Metn (18) and Baabda-Aley (6). The remaining students live in Kesrwan (8), Damour (1), and Jbeil (1).

The general outline of the core sample offers an impression on the global social shape of the FPM youth. However, it should not mask the biases of the snowball sampling technique, which for instance is likely to reinforce the sameness between interviewees due to their proximity and to possible phenomena of inter-influence (Dechezelles 2006, p. 53). Snowball sampling may also affect the relation with the researcher when hierarchical networks have been employed to enter in touch with participants (Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot 1991, p. 123). In any case, my methodological approach implied that the corpus was not elaborated in order to be representative of the entire studied population. Nevertheless, it does not prevent from producing scientific hypothesis as the non-representative nature of one case compared to the potential entire population concerned does not mean that the processes revealed within this

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<sup>30</sup> For an analysis of the generational gaps, see Chapter Four.

<sup>31</sup> The *Mohâfazât* represent the administrative provincial divisions of the Lebanese territory. There are six officially recognized (Beirut, Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon, Beqaa Valley, South Lebanon and Nabatiyyeh), while two others have been approved but not yet implemented (the district of 'Akkar in the far-North and the district of Baalbeck-Hermel in the North-East).

single case cannot be used to generate valid conclusions (Grojean 2008, p. 311). Focusing on individual trajectories does not impede to shed light on more global social processes as the indices of the socially constructed systems of representations can often be revealed by micro-analysis centered on personal level (Michelat 1975, p. 130), provided each case is always evocated in relation to its own context. This research is not concerned with a global analysis of the partisan milieu as such – which would be based on the construction of a representative sample among the youth mobilization units of FPM – especially since quantitative data on that matter simply do not exist. Nonetheless, even without a statistically representative sample, it remains possible to demonstrate from a limited number of interviews (Beaud 1996, p. 252) in which configurations young students are susceptible to engage themselves in partisan activities, what significations it has for them and how those significations are themselves the social product of their implication within the partisan group.

Beyond theoretical issue, the construction of the sample and the realization of interviews were primary constrained by practical matters. Several field entry techniques were employed, not always with success. The main failures of my fieldwork concern the incapacity to build a genuine comparative study. At first, at following the completion of my Master thesis on Hezbollah students, I envisaged analyzing both the FPM and Hezbollah student. In spite of past connections established with Hezbollah officials of the youth mobilization unit, as well as ties with some students belonging to the party, the situation following by the 2006 Israeli attack on Lebanon impeded the continuation of my research in favorable conditions. Both the rising tension in the national political field between Hezbollah and its rivals and the fear of Israeli intelligence activities led the party to strengthen its control on research activities. From the end of 2006, it was necessary to obtain a permit to interview any Hezbollah officials, including students. Getting the permit was not easy task<sup>32</sup>, and my several attempts remained unfruitful. Clearly in such cases, a research program does not weight much in front of completely different matters. After I realized that the inquiry would be extremely difficult, maybe impossible, I decided to change my plans as I refused to work without the approval of the organization. Nevertheless I did occasionally meet with some students from the student committee of the LU main campus situated in Hadath, in the heart of the *Dâhîyeh*. It is widely known that

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<sup>32</sup> First, you need to go to an inconspicuous office in the Southern suburb of Beirut, Hezbollah's stronghold. There, a photocopy of your passport is taken and you are requested to describe your project, name the people you would like to interview and list the questions you will be asking. After you completed this, you are told that someone will eventually contact you. In most of the cases, it never happens.

Hezbollah students are dominant there, and I had established bonds with some of them during my previous studies. This at least enabled me to draw on occasional comparisons between the FPM and Hezbollah youth.

Another following failure also proved the precariousness of improvised field entry technique based on personal relations. As I was aiming at developing my insertion within other youth political organizations, I established close links with a representative of the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) in the party's youth council of Beirut. Although the LCP lost most of its national influence, it remains an organization with strong societal roots. Moreover, its extensive socialization program for the youth was of my interest. I thus decided to participate as much as possible in the activities of the communist youth, thanks to the help of my friend. I joined in a number of meetings and demonstrations<sup>33</sup> but my efforts soon failed short as a major internal strife arose within the party. It appeared that my young friend was one of the leaders of an attack against the direction of the organization, accusing it of immobilism. The case of the LCP in itself is very interesting as uprisings of the youth against the old *apparatchiks* seem to outburst on a regular basis<sup>34</sup>. However, I was not able to study the crisis further. Being associated with one of the rebels, I was rapidly banned from all gathering and activities. After having promised to accept me during the formations organized for students, the head of the youth socialization unit, who remained loyal to the direction of the party, stopped answering my phone calls.

My relations with the FPM, although not without periods of tensions, were more functional. My insertion within FPM student groups was facilitated by an earlier encounter. During my Master studies, I met Jacques, the *Tayyâr*'s coordinator in the USJ campus of Social Sciences in Huvelin Street. I contacted him again when I started my doctoral research and he introduced me to some of his fellows. Like Jacques, most of them were born in the early or mid-1980s and had been active in the movement since the first years of the 2000 decade, when the FPM was still an unauthorized association fighting against the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Jacques and his comrades Alain, Elza or Tayeb were all finishing their studies in the USJ and obtained positions within various FPM committees, including the office of Youth and Student Affairs (*al-Shabâb wa al-Shu'un al-Tâlabiyya*). During the first months of my fieldwork, I benefited from their respective networks among the student groups on the ground and within the movement structures. I was then able to draw on these interconnections to

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<sup>33</sup> See footnote 18.

<sup>34</sup> Agnès Favier describes in details the struggle mainly organized by students within the Lebanese Communist Party in the 1960s and 1970s. See Favier 2004, chapter 3.

get accepted by the FPM students in the USJ and widen my interconnections among them. Social networks were exploited, every encounter offering new potential participants. I used the same technique to meet with party officials, always making use of interpersonal connections.

However, employing this technique did not mean that I was freed of the organization's influence. First, I was required to obtain the Party's approval each time I wanted to observe a meeting or gathering. For example, I was authorized to monitor meetings between university students but not to survey any formation session, on the account that instructors refuse to be exposed as FPM sympathizers in front of outsiders as it might have impact their professional careers. Second, research participants were in most of the cases selected by representatives of the FPM Student Affairs or by fellow activists<sup>35</sup>, which of course affected the profile of the interviewees. I was oriented toward those considered in the group as legitimate models of FPMers. When practicing such fieldwork techniques, distortions of this sort are impossible to avoid at some point. But it is necessary to take them into account when interpreting the data.

Before describing my overall interpretative choices, a last word should be said about the locations and conditions of the interviews. To collect interviews inside the universities was submitted to the acceptance of the administration. For this reason, I rarely did so and generally interviewed the students in cafés or other public/open places. Access to the different campuses was variable. Both the AUB and the USJ impose a strict control at the gates. I was nevertheless able to enter using different strategies. Concerning the USJ, it was possible to buy a library card as external researcher. Equipped with such a card I was able to come in and out without problem. In the AUB I usually met one of my contacts at the gate and went through the security with him or her. When this was not possible, I could use some professors or staff members informed in advance as references to enter. The problem was much more acute during the university elections as fear of violence between political rivals prompted universities to prevent the entrance of any outsider. In was therefore necessary to negotiate my presence in advance with the administration. In the USJ, I was finally authorized to follow the voting in 2008 and partially in 2009. In the AUB, I was granted access in for the 2010 elections after I was able to find a professor as surety and underwent an Internet course on research Ethics.

In order to affine my knowledge of the universe in which students were evolving, in most cases I used to let them choose the place of the interview. During the first times of my fieldwork, I noticed that FPM students form the USJ used to meet in a

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<sup>35</sup> On the impact of this bias, see the following section.

particular café, *Water Lemon*, situated in the ABC, the main mall of Achrafiyeh. At that time, the rival group of the Lebanese Forces were said to have their favorite meeting place a few meters away, in the *Starbucks* café of the Sassine Place. However, this implantation shifted with time, the next generation of FPM students selecting different venues, including the previously mentioned *Starbucks*. Some students with a deeper insertion within the Party were also likely to organize our meeting in the premises of the FPM. Many of the interviews were consequently held in the FPM central office in Sin el-Fil. Among students, none invited me to make the interview at their homes. Beyond my externality, there are, I think, several reasons to that. First, their homes are in all cases, the house of their parents. On the contrary, several older FPM officials greeted me at their own place. Second, from their description of their activities, they appeared to spend a very small amount of their time at home, at least during the week. Between day hours at the university, political meetings and time in the cafés, many of them complained that they have usually no time left to see their families. Third, as I mentioned, many of them were living in the great suburb of Beirut, especially in the Metn region. They may have assumed that it could be more difficult for me to find their home. Besides, being in Beirut for their studies during the day, it might be also more practical for them to set a meeting place in the city center. I myself never requested to visit their houses. I did not use a formal type of informed consent, but rather discussed and agreed the terms with each participant before the interviews. Some asked anonymity, others did not. Some wanted only a few details to be concealed. Most of them agreed that the interviews would be recorded, but two refused – one of whom changing his mind after contemplating me struggling to write down his comment. In other more improvised cases, interviews were not recorded due to the lack of time (for instance when a conversation had already started spontaneously and I did not want to interrupt it or neither to risk to change the interactional rules by pulling out my recorder) or the absence of the adequate material.

The last important issue is related to the language used in the interviews. Most of interviewees were perfectly fluent in French or English, often in both, and spontaneously talked to me in those languages when they knew I was French. Only one was held completely in Arabic. In that case, the participant decided on her part to bring a friend from her university – whom I already interviewed – to assist me in case of trouble. Such a situation has to be put in relation with the existing educational system in Lebanon. They had studied in either French or English from their childhood. Those registered in the LU had at least a minimum number of their courses in French or English while the others were studying in English speaking (AUB) or French speaking (USJ) universities. This does not mean that change in the language had no

impact. It certainly affected the research relations as well as their capacity to express themselves. When some of them had troubles, they used to switch back to Arabic. My basic knowledge of the language enabled me to understand their references, but also to introduce myself during the first contacts, especially in the last parts of my fieldwork.

In some cases, the fact that interviews were held in French or English also proved profitable: a brutal change of the language is usually the sign of a strong and deep impact of heard slogans, previous conversations, mutually shared formulas. Some of the most famous sayings of Michel Aoun were systematically pronounced in Arabic, even if the narrator was perfectly fluent in French or English. In that sense, switching the language was a good indicator of the inscription of group references within the universe of signification voiced by the actors. It was especially the case with dates. Many students were confusing some of the events but often noticeably recovered when presented with the date in Arabic – either if I told them or if they pronounced it out loud as a help to stimulate their remembering<sup>36</sup>. Without the noticeable switch in languages, I would not have been able to note the difference between normal conversation and the symbols of specific slogans and formulas strongly rooted in the students' minds.

### **C) Returning from the fieldwork**

The data processing approach chosen *a priori* was inspired by the model derived from the “grounded theory” (Glaser & Strauss 1967): fieldwork was started without well-structured hypothesis. Observations and interviews produced the frame of analysis which has been sharpened through confrontation with existing literature. In total, more than one hundred interviews<sup>37</sup> and many observations have been accumulated. Generally speaking, they were processed using a narrative approach focusing on “the ways in which social actors produce, represent, and contextualize experience and personal knowledge through narratives and other genres” (Coffey & Atkinson 1996, p. 54). Trying to understand the actors and find significations in the narrative of the interviewees can easily lead to over-interpretation (Olivier de Sardan 1996). Such an approach relying on empathy and decryption of signification is all but simple (Dubet

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<sup>36</sup> This tends to prove the significance of living oral memory and therefore of transmission and socialization in the constitution of the group's references. Events appear as symbols circulating within the group.

<sup>37</sup> An approximate total of 150 interviews were realized since between October 2007 and March 2011. Moreover, data include around 30 more interviews held in 2006 mostly during my Master thesis fieldwork. See the list of interviews in the appendix.



1987, p. 429). However, interpretation is a needed risk (Lahire 1996, p. 86) especially when concentrating on representations (Duchesne 1996, p. 204).

In the narrative perspective, the three main problems induced by the interpretation as summarized by Catherine Riessman are the following: 1) How to transform talk into a written text and how narrative passages are selected? 2) What aspects of the chosen narratives constitute the basis for interpretation? 3) Who determines the meaning of a narrative? (Riessman 1993, p. 25)

### ***The selection of narratives***

Considering the choices and delimitation of the narrative passages, it is first necessary to explain how narrative is technically defined in this research. There is no conventional conception of narrative (Riessman 1993, p.17). In *Poetics*, Aristotle describes a narrative as having a beginning, middle and end. Although this general view is widely favored, many disagreements remain, essentially due to the various disciplinary uses of the concept. While socio-linguists use a very restrictive and formal definition centered on structural analysis of stories understood as the accounts of past experiences in a sequential order (Labov & Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972), others scholars consider that although sequence is necessary, it is not sufficient to define a narrative. Some privilege consequential sequencing (Young 1987), even over chronological order whereas others insist on thematic sequencing (Michaels 1981). At the other extreme of the scope, anthropologists often take entire life stories completed with meticulous observations as narratives (Riessman 2008, p. 5). My position in that matter is intermediary as I will consider narratives composed of extended accounts of personal experiences. This material unfolds several levels of stories, from the general stories designed by the collectivity as expressed across the various interviews of all the participants, via the individuals' life narratives reconstituted over the course of the double interview, to much smaller and more circumstantial accounts voiced as anecdotes by the participants.

Before the selection of extracts, all interviews were transcribed. Transcribing a discourse is already an interpretative practice driven by the theoretical framework. Alternative transcription displays provide different bases for possible interpretations (Mishler 1991). Because my work is more concerned with a sociology of knowledge than with a linguistic analysis, I chose to preserve readability by not systematically indicating intonation, pauses, stress, in the text unless if they are particularly marked. In order to enhance the restitution of the data, the quotations in French are presented in their original language. Only short French sentences and Arabic quotes are transcribed

into their English translation. Significant expressions in Arabic highlighted by the narrators are also conserved in their original language.

The selection in itself was inspired by the research question and the method. My focus being on the identification processes and the continuous exchanges that construct both the individuals and the groups, I highlighted extracts that in my view underline such patterns: extracts that inspired my hypotheses or that can be seen as incarnating an ideal type. A research is made of choices, some more difficult than others. The decision to present particular episodes rather than others were made in the light of their demonstrative force, keeping in mind that all forms of representing experience are selective and partial (Riessman 1993, p. 15). In several occasions, during the course of the interaction with participants or during data processing significations seemed to arise, striking with the strength of obviousness. Sometimes however, once represented on paper, these interpretations looked much less convincing. The writing process is often confronted with what Genette calls the “deception of the fixation of the meaning” (Genette 1966 p. 146). Signification is contextual and necessarily imperfectly restituted. Interpretation is all the more difficult since participants, because of the complexity of human experience, are not displaying a perfectly clear and coherent image in their interviews. Several indices were used to identify important or meaningful passages such as the repetition of similar narratives in the same interview or across various cases, the clarity of particular stories or observations, and the emotions attached to specific passages, although this emotional dimension has to be objectified during the analysis (Kauffman 1996, p. 78).

### ***The interpretative approach***

The various elements have been studied through detailed analysis and impregnation with the data. Interviews were transcribed, read, summarized, re-heard and re-read several times. This process intended to generate the hypotheses by immersion within the material and reconsideration of the previous interpretations (Kauffman 1996, p. 75-102).

My turn toward the concept of narrative was, as I explained, more motivated by the potential and unexplored possibilities it seems to offer in order to analyze the Lebanese society. The narrative perspective is considered in this research as a heuristic tool. Therefore, making use of the plasticity of the narrative methods, I developed my own conception of the narrative analysis. Departing from the theory of Berger and Luckmann, I added the narrative perspective to reintroduce the discourse within the sociology of knowledge and thus enable, as Reiner Keller explains, to analyze the collective production of reality and the circulation of knowledge without falling into

abstraction or reductionism (Keller 2007, p. 296). Inspired by the hermeneutics, the author suggests developing an analysis of the discursive production of the social structures and symbolic orders (ibid, p. 298). In that perspective, a narrative is interpreted as a structured and structuring structure to paraphrase Bourdieu's definition of *habitus*. What matters is less the utterance of the language practice, but its collective and typical dimension. The focal point must be on the relation between a particular narrative voiced by a participant and the social narratives in which it is embedded.

To do so, it is necessary to question the symbolic vision of reality expressed by a narrative. This construction of meaning relies on structures of knowledge. However, this does not mean that social structures are imposed on individuals, because if the actors are not directly the authors of these structures, it remains that knowledge is produced by social practices (Berger & Luckmann 1966). As in the duality of structure discussed by Anthony Giddens, the collective structures of knowledge work as a resource and a constraint for the actors who can only exist in relation to the structure. As language is structured by grammar but also leaves room for interpretations or the creation of completely new words, agency is structured by the stock of knowledge available in a given social context but uses this frame to develop specific interpretations (Giddens 1984).

My objective being to understand the processes through which identifications are elaborated, transmitted, maintained and transformed, my interpretation concentrates on the ordering principles and sense-making devices produced by the narratives. From the structure and the salient themes in the selected extracts, I intend to explore two major elements in the construction and the display of *groupness*: the identity claims and the social narrations through which the actor mediates the inscription of their biographical experiences within the wider social structures. It aims at:

Understanding the ways in which the participants are identifying themselves and are being identified by the various components of the narratives they produced.

De-constructing the backstage i.e. the social ordering devices that lay behind their personal experiences and structure their modes of perceiving and narrating their identity.

To tackle these two dimensions, the interpretative demarche relies on the study of four interlinked elements (Keller 2007, p. 300-301)<sup>38</sup>: 1) the interpretative schemes or

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<sup>38</sup>To construct this analytical guideline, Reiner Keller was inspired by the notion of "*interpretative repertoire* of a discourse", coming from the work of Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell. The two authors proposed a cognitive discourse analysis characterized by a triple emphasis: on the content/meaning of human experience, on communication as the basis for shared social understandings, and on the constructive processes through which reality is built (Potter & Wetherell 1998, p. 139).

frames on which the students' narratives are based, i.e. the symbolic systems, historically and socially situated, that constitute the main frames sustaining the actors' stories ; 2) the classifications of reality produced by a narrative, i.e. the production of categories and the allocation of their significations, including the auto-representation of the self and the drawing of the in-group/out-group boundaries; 3) the aspects of reality narratively constructed as real, referring to what Mannheim defined as "*Aspektstruktur*" (Mannheim 1955 [1936], p. 265-266), or phenomenal structure; 4) and the *emplotment* or narrative structure organizing the speech, i.e. the principles ordering the significations within the students' narratives.

### ***The question of authorship***

The third and final issue has a double implication: ethical and analytical. On the ethical side, the question is to know who is entitled to create the meaning presented in the research. The analytical matter refers to the focus point of the interpretation.

Is the researcher authorized to interpret the signification of the narratives he heard? The question presents an important ethical dilemma concerning the role of the scientist: is it right to impose meaning on the voice of others? Is any interpretation of their narratives a form of betrayal? In spite of such interrogations, it is necessary to go beyond the illusion that "data speaks for itself" and therefore to accept the inherent risk of interpretation provided data production and processing are realized in accordance with the shared commitments of the scientific approach. There are two possible ways to pass these ethical doubts. The first one is inspired by the view of Pierre Bourdieu described in *La Misère du Monde*, when he presents the researcher as an "*a midwife of the minds*" ["*accoucheur*" de l'esprit] (Bourdieu 1993, p. 919). In this sense, the researcher is the one who enabled the interviewees' speech to arise and the one who uncovers the reality of the social signification of the person's existence. For my part, I would like to follow a somehow related but different perspective. Indeed, because of Bourdieu's position about the *biographical illusion*, his argument seems to underestimate an essential aspect: a person is a self-narrating organism (Gergen & Gergen 1988; Polkinghorne 1991) that has acquired a memory and a temporality of the self, implying that the narrative time is not linear but turns back on itself through the processes of cognition (memory) and sociality (interactions with others cognitive subjects). As a consequence, because the self is all the time interpreting itself through the process of cognition and recognition, the person that the researcher meets is necessarily "*an already interpreted person*" and the data collected is also already an interpretation (Maines 2006 [1993], p. 124-125). It means that the sociologist is not exposing the unique interpretation of the person but only one

possible version of it. Nonetheless, Bourdieu is right to point the creative role of the researcher whose presence and skills generate a specific interpretation of the self from the participant. It is precisely because he co-produced the interview material that the researcher is not dispossessing the interviewees from their minds when interpreting their narratives.

Concerning the choice of an analytical level to determine the meanings of the collected stories, one of my main preoccupations was to find the right focal point. The question is to know whether to concentrate on the agent or on the social structure when allocating the meaning of the narratives. The problem is best illustrated by the bus metaphor adopted by Schumpeter to describe the concept of social class<sup>39</sup>. Drawing on this metaphor, Jean-Claude Passeron proposed a perspective to jointly understand the biographical orders and the social structure based on the theory of interactionism (Passeron 1989, p. 19-20). To articulate the levels of significations is precisely one of the main issues of the sociology of activism (Sawicki & Siméant 2009, p. 13). In order to join the study of individuals in interactions (micro-level) to the histories and structures of the social groups or organizations (meso-level), as well as to more general socio-economical transformations and generational changes (macro-level), I propose to complete the interactionist approach suggested by Passeron with the narrative perspective. Indeed, one of the main limits of individually based interviews is to create distorted images by magnifying personal experiences at the expense of the exploration of a more global social meaning. For that matter, narrative analysis offers an ideal starting point as narratives, though individually expressed, are intrinsically collective acts (Maines 2006 [1993], p. 138) since “autobiographical talks are accomplished not only through individual creativity, but through the use of social conventions and *topoi*” (De Fina 2009, p. 254). Because narratives are at the same time the expression of individual experience, group structures and social institutions, their study enables to go beyond what Bourdieu denounced as the false antinomy created by the debate between micro or macro analysis (Bourdieu 1988) and to empirically tackle the issue of interpenetration between multi-layered phenomena as Bourdieu enjoined us to do (Wacquant 1990, p. 684).

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<sup>39</sup> The dilemma is to choose between describing the omnibus or its passengers. If the focalization is set on the bus, the risk is to analyze a social structure without taking into consideration the persons who constitute it. Thus, the researcher will be unable to point alternations in the composition of the group (such as generational changes): the passengers would have changed without that transformation noticed. The opposite problem would be to describe a passenger in all its specificities but deprived of the frame represented by the bus (Schumpeter 1966 [1927], p. 126).

### ***Limitations and precautions***

The selected method imposed to remain aware of biases induced by the focalization on discourses: the plasticity of meanings and representations that forces the researcher to take into account specific significations associated with particular terms or references in the studied group; the tendency of the interviewee to answer in accordance with what is perceived as the researcher's aim; and finally the unequal storytelling capacity of the different participants which might indirectly incite the researcher to focus more on the better-structured accounts. It was precisely to tackle this last bias that I decided to concentrate on young students. Indeed, in most cases, the studies about individual activism tend to highlight profiles of experienced intellectuals or party officials (on Lebanon, see for example Favier 2004; Dot-Pouillard 2009) who master narrative skills and are able to organize their life stories in accordance with a specific and coherent emplotment (Strauss 1992 [1959], p. 153). Young students, because they are situated in an early stage of their life course globally appeared less at ease with the techniques of narrativity. Although the stories voiced by more experienced activists sounded more structured and perhaps more pleasant to listen, I focused on less sophisticated accounts to enlarge the focalization and adopt a renewed point of view on narratives about activism and identification.

It remains that “narrative truths are always partial – committed and incomplete” (Riessman 2008, p. 186; see also Clifford 1986, p. 7). Interpretations are necessarily circumstantial, distorted by the methodological perspectives and the researcher's views. Verifying the accuracy of the narrated episodes is not only impossible, but also inappropriate. In interpreting students' speeches, my focus is not on historical or factual truth but rather on the ways they intend to create and allocate significations. The aim of this study is to understand how the group is constructed by a specific interpretation of the reality. Validating the facts is therefore less important than understanding the construction of meanings for the individual and the group in question (Riessman 2008, p. 187). It does not mean that it was never attempted to check the veracity of the narrated stories, especially through the confrontation between various accounts or the use of newspapers as well as scientific literature. But the verification, when possible, offers more an opportunity to understand better how signification is elaborated from the interviewees' point of view than a tentative of tracking the forgeries of their stories.

Clearly the major precaution to take is to cautiously examine how the encounter between an individual seeking for answers and the participants he meets – understood as a situated social interaction – imposes limitations. It necessitates questioning the very conditions of the investigation and, more precisely, as Bernard Pudal strongly

encourages following de Certeau's request, to reintroduce the question of the speaker in the analysis (Pudal 1994, p. 24). This project implies to contradict the misconception of the data as a reality produced by a unique author, what Gérard Genette commenting Paul Valéry denounced as the realistic illusion of the narrative (Genette 1966, p. 259-260).

#### **4. DATA IN INTERACTIONS**

The processes that have been observed during the fieldwork periods were not the reality, but a reality exposed by specific questions, a given methodology and my own position as a researcher. As Jerome Bruner puts it, "knowledge is never 'point-of-viewless'" (Bruner 1991, p. 3). Not only the researcher's position regarding his object is determinant, but so are the conventions in which academic theorization and writing are inscribed. As all narratives, the scientific discourses are shaped by genres, codified forms for encoding and expressing particular ways to organize experience and knowledge (Bauman 2004, p. 6; Daiute & Lightfoot 2004, p. ix-xx). From the classical realistic genre emphasizing objectivity and thus understating the subjectivity of the researcher, the standards seem to drift more and more towards a confessional genre highlighting the personal reflections of the writer or an impressionist genre focusing on glimpses of lived fieldwork experiences (Van Maanen 1988). Yet, the representation of the author of the text goes beyond the introduction of different narrative conventions.

Often claimed as an epistemological choice or an ethical preoccupation, the need to position the researcher remains principally a methodological necessity (De Sardan 2000, p. 422-425)<sup>40</sup>. This human influence has an implication during two successive steps of the scientific process. In the relations that the researcher builds with the participants on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in the ways he objectifies his position on the data and controls his impact on the outcomes. The first aspect implies to deal with my integration in the fieldwork. The second requires not only to assert the dialogic nature of the material produced in this work, but also to determine to what extent my own position must be reintroduce to serve the study without shifting the main focus of the research.

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<sup>40</sup> Such a requirement is due to the very nature of the social sciences in general, and of fieldwork in particular as the human factor infers at a triple level: first because the strategies, the affect, and the interests of the researchers are not without influence on their studies; then because social sciences are deprived of experimental ways to develop and test their models; finally because the fieldwork experience is primarily a human experience (De Sardan 2000, p. 425-426).

### ***The fieldwork interactions***

The fieldwork interactions are characterized by a double gap or distance: on the one hand, the researcher is an outsider embodying otherness while his relations with the participants, on the other hand, are also marked by inequality. The position of outsider necessitates questioning the access to the field and its impact. Inequality refers to the power relations at stake during the interactions (Bonnet 2008, p. 57). Both dimensions are at work simultaneously during the research interactions, but not systematically in a unique direction.

Being an outsider had inevitably problematic consequences on my relations with the FPM activists. One of my first contacts, Alain, who had progressively risen in the hierarchy of the Student Affairs Committee used to be my main key to enter the field. The strong relation developed with him affected my status on the ground. He was orienting me toward some students and served as a guarantee when I participated in student activities. If he was present himself, our relation was demonstrated in front of other students, proving my insertion within partisan networks. When it was not the case, I was able to use his name as a reference. Of course, such a system was vulnerable. It was especially the case in the USJ, during tensed time, particularly in student elections' periods. In 2008-2009, the FPM group in Huvelin Street seemed to have experienced some internal troubles. From my observations, it corresponded with a relative vacuum in the leadership triggered by a generational change among the members. This led to disorganization and disappointing results in the electoral competition in USJ, which, in turn, impacted the perception some students had of my presence on the field.

Tension was most noticeable in October 2008, during the USJ electoral campaign. My main contacts in the FPM group had already left USJ and I didn't benefit from strong relations with any of the leading student activists. My closest contact was a first year student and although Alain had granted me access to the pre-election meetings, I still perceived queries about my unusual presence. Students were asking themselves in whispers if I was a journalist of some sort. I thought the problem was solved when I attended the next gatherings. Students had already seen me and I introduced myself as often I possible, clearing some doubts about my activities. However, I could note reservation from some of the group members who, in several occasions, were discretely monitoring what I was doing, what papers I had a look at, and what people I was talking with. Then, during the last days before the elections, the main rival of the *Tayyâr* in the competition, the Lebanese Forces, had learned one of the tricks FPMers were trying to keep secret. At first, I didn't feel concerned. But the same night, while I was observing the pre-vote meeting in the FPM office in Jdeydeh like almost every



day since one week, Alain came to tell me that although he I have nothing to do with that, he does not want his superiors to question his decision to allow an outsider in the meetings, and that, therefore, it will be better if I do not come to the next gathering, because it's just before the elections and the most secret plans are scheduled at this moment.

Here, the conjunction of otherness and power relations both within the organization and between me and my contact is obvious. The lack of information on my presence associated with the sensitive context and the possible internal disagreements highlighted my outsider position with a clear limit to my integration. However, such position is not immutable but negotiated in the course of the research process. The power relations at various levels are certainly playing a decisive role in that matter. More than my status of outsider, my presence might have served as a possible expediency for several actors to influence power trends in their favor. Because the expected results for the upcoming elections were not good, others might have had interest in designating an external cause of trouble. More likely, given my proximity with Alain, other members in competition with him in the organizational field might have tried to use my outsider status in a tentative of contesting his supervising position. Echoes of internal rivalries within the FPM student committee regularly surfaced during my fieldwork periods<sup>41</sup>. This could be inferred from Alain's argument when he asked me to leave. Beside, Alain being confronted with this situation might have used it strategically to set a limit for my observations and therefore regain control and assert his power in his relation with me. With his reaction, his position has been strengthened, at the same time in front of the outsider (me) and of his internal challengers.

A comparable situation arose later with my investigation lasting in time. At first, my stays usually did not exceed a couple of months. During the academic year 2009-2010 though, I lived permanently in Beirut, which led to a redefinition of my techniques of inquiry. In response to the direct contacts I kept on establishing with university activists, Alain informed me that the FPM Committee of the Student Affairs wanted to clarify my situation and, to put it in a nut shell, to know better what I was doing. He added that he had just been appointed as head of the external relations within the student committee. He was therefore the person in charge of that kind of issue. We made a clear agreement that from that moment, I was not to call anyone without his approval. The last phases of my fieldwork centered on the AUB and the LU were therefore organized a bit differently than my study of the USJ groups. Alain

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<sup>41</sup> See for example one article published in *Al-Akhbar* newspaper: October 1, 2009.

nevertheless gave me a large margin of maneuver so the process did not radically change, except in the early stages. When planning a fieldwork trip, I emailed him my plan and used to call him on my arrival to inform him of my wishes: usually new contacts in given universities or the permission to see once-interviewed students again for a second meeting. He always agreed, giving me the permission to see anyone I already interviewed and providing me with key contacts to meet new participants in the universities I chose. I was then free to use these contacts for further connections. The fact that Alain himself underwent the two phases of my method of interview inevitably helped as he perfectly knew what kind of information I was looking for. Personal accounts are not so sensible material for the Party, provided you meet the “right” persons, one who is judged as an acceptable public image for the group.

Beyond the obvious boundary between in-group and out-group, lies the complexity of research relations. The ties and forms of cooperation are never plain but instead are inscribed within power structures and marked by fluidity. Knowing that I had not much choice but solicit his collaboration, Alain could display his domination both in our personal relation and in my institutional links with the FPM. Whether on the request of the FPM student body or not, he demonstrated his influence by making it clear that nothing was going to happen without his support. But at the same time, he easily accepted a compromise that authorized me to continue my work. By doing so, he might be described as winning on both sides, performing his power and maintaining my gratitude. The manipulation of my otherness clearly illustrates the strategies at work in the research relations and their direct impact on the interviews I conducted as during my fieldworks on the AUB and LU, my initial contacts were made only with students recommended by the FPM Student Affairs – although I was then free to meet other activists encountered through snow-ball sampling.

The social distance operates in a comparable pattern during the interviews themselves. In their narratives, the interviewees are strategically<sup>42</sup> playing on the gaps separating them from the researcher. In some occasion, they tried to adapt to the level of knowledge I possessed on the group and its history. The engagement story of Laure presented earlier offers a good example of this. Twice in her account she inquired of my familiarity with elements of the FPM imaginary. The story she voiced is therefore shaped by my reaction to such cues. In other occasions, interviewees underlined proximity to stress their arguments, or on the contrary, played on geographical and social distance to discard the legitimacy of the researcher to interpret some parts of

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<sup>42</sup>The term is employed in the perspective of Erving Goffman. It does not imply an idea of intentional falsification or manipulation, but rather the fact that actors are able in situation to mobilize various positions in order to support their stances. See Goffman 1959.

their accounts or to justify postures that might contradict previous stands or stories they voiced during the conversation. For instance, when asked about the origins of her political affiliation, Caroline, a classmate of Laure, answered as follows:

*“Ah, mes parents aimaient depuis toujours le général Aoun! A l’époque de 1990, ils montaient à Baabda et ils nous prenaient, nous les enfants, avec eux. Je ne suis pas très consciente de cette époque, je n’avais que cinq ou six ans, donc je ne me souviens même pas d’être montée avec eux. Mais bon, tu sais ici au Liban quand la famille – je veux dire le père et la mère – sont avec Geagea par exemple, les enfants sont avec Geagea.”<sup>43</sup>*

Caroline states what she presents as a rule in Lebanese politics, both the centrality of the leadership and the familial dimension of political affiliation. It can be labelled as an explanatory device directly addressed to me: in her views on our interaction, I may typify an outsider trying to understand the Lebanese context. Caroline, who was raised in a westernised and French speaking milieu, makes this remark in order to explain the fact that she shares her party affiliation with her parents. She knows this situation does not correspond to the rational individualistic vision of political activism I, as a French student, might have and which she herself advocated for in the interview. Consequently, she negotiates her status by stating what she presents as a general sociological rule that may re-qualify her as authentic party-member in the course of the interaction. Interestingly, she uses Samir Geagea as an example of familial political heritage and not Michel Aoun, suggesting that the Lebanese Forces might be more “traditional” compared to the FPM, which defines itself as a modern party, built on the Western model. With this example, it is possible to understand how distance between the researcher and the interviewee is mobilized to shape a narrative about the self. Caroline tried to reassert who is entitled to interpret the story and to reframe the general understanding of the context in which her narrative should be viewed.

### ***Positioning the researcher***

As the one requesting participation, I was myself working on the gap separating me from my interlocutors. My main objective was in most of the cases to reduce the distance in order to generate an atmosphere of confidence and my acceptation as a legitimate conversational partner. Such an effort was deployed into three directions. First, I learned to enhance my knowledge of Arabic, in order to be able to contact potential participants in their everyday life language. This also enabled me to better understand references when Arabic formulas were used during interviews and to

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<sup>43</sup> Caroline, interview with the author: October 31, 2008 [in French].

demonstrate my ability to comprehend the Lebanese context. Second, my preliminary work on the FPM history as well as my accumulated knowledge and experience about Lebanon and its society proved useful to interpret allusions in the course of the conversation. Mobilizing such skills can help to demonstrate that I embodied a reliable interviewer, to whom participants can express themselves without the risk of being wrongly understood. Third, the many encounters I made during fieldwork offered possible resources to call up in order to testify the seriousness of my work and my reliability. Before interviews I was often questioned about the other activists who participated in my inquiry. Being able to name several persons recognized within the FPM partisan society was an important basis to support a confident interaction.

However, of course, the distance cannot be annihilated. On the contrary, it was sometimes helpful to underline a certain gap. The techniques exposed might have in particular occurrences occasioned more bad than good: showing a great understanding of the Lebanese scene and of the partisan networks might generate suspicion about the real aim of my work. Besides, and more fundamentally, my familiarity with some of the activists and their symbolic universe favored a kind of intergroup interaction in which references were not explicated at all anymore. Assuming that I knew what they were talking about, their discourse became atrophied. As my method relied on encouraging the actors' self reflection and favoring the narration of their experiences, distance had also a central role in the process as it implies that participants explain themselves in order to be understood. The elimination of the distance is thus not only illusory but also prejudicial.

The narrative approach helps to go beyond the vision of a fixed gap or an artificial proximity. The exchanges during the conversations, the points of rapprochement as well as the manifestations of distance are interactively constructed and shape the stories. As Bakhtin argues, narratives are made of dialogic intentions between the participants (Bakhtin 1981 [1930]). Participants' performance was affected by the manner they identified me, and beyond myself, the possible "ghost audience" they were addressing through the research interview. Storytellers constructed themselves by defining their own position regarding their audience in the interaction. At the same time, my questions and prompts oriented the conversations, fueled by my own understanding of the situation. Both parties hence acquire the capability to listen and to address the other. For the researcher, the aim is to "learn to get behind the words and silently translate the informants' language so that we understand using their dictionary rather than ours, supplying their images and references as much as possible, and trying to approach their world for just a moment" (Gudmundsdottir 1996, p. 301).

Such a capacity to “translate” derives from the experiences and observations of the social settings but also from the theoretical tools employed. For that matter, it is necessary to consider my own position regarding the issues explored in this study in a few words. The aim is not to present some biographical anecdotes, but, as Bourdieu urges, to resituate the social conditions of the relation between the researcher and his object (Bourdieu 2003, p. 44), and thus surpass the illusion of what would become an “author evacuated text” to show the intersubjective nature of the data. To complete this presentation, I would like to evoke two dimensions: the trajectory of this work first, in order to present the motivations that inevitably impacted my ways of considering the situations I observed and experienced, as well as my reactions in the contexts of interviews; second, my position in the academic field during the research process.

This study, I said, emerged from encounters. My discovery of the Lebanese society is of course determinant as I experienced life in Lebanon in 2002-2003, long before trying to analyze it. It is not, I have to say, the feeling of a form of exotism that urged me to devote my time to the social analysis of the reality I was in contact with, on the contrary. I spent at this time one year as an extend student in the French speaking section of the faculty of Law in the public Lebanese University. Being the only outsider, I did not engage in foreigners' sociability and activities: it was not before the next summer, at the end of my term, that I started to visit the “musts” of Lebanese tourism. Rather, I used to hang out with my classmates, at their homes with their families or in the cafés young Lebanese affectionate. So, despite the specificity of the decor – from the shells of the destroyed buildings dating back to the civil war to the noticeable presence of luxury cars in the city – and the fact that I did not understand Arabic yet, I had the tendency to emphasize similarities rather than distance between my friends' way of experiencing human relations and my own. The complexity of the Lebanese society imposed itself by successive touches, when behind familiar forms of experience appeared very different reactions: the effervescence of student elections, the implications of an invitation, the revelation made by one of my friends that behind apparent unity our classmates were sitting split between Christians and Muslims in the classroom, the complexity of envisaging matrimonial projects, my sudden exclusion from certain conversations. In a word, my learning of the Lebanese society was made by the flux and reflux of correspondence and dissimilarities, of permeability and boundaries.

This paradoxical experience of otherness encouraged me to consider societies in fluidity, and “Others not as ontologically given” because cultures are “zones of control or of abandonment, of recollection and of forgetting, of force or of dependence, of exclusiveness or of sharing, all taking place in the global history that is our element”

(Said 1989, p. 225). This pressed me to learn the social devices at work in the Lebanese context, as I was especially interested in the situation of the generation of my former classmates. This learning was realized in parallel with my academic trajectory: first in 2004, with a Bachelor thesis focusing on student elections in the American University of Beirut, which was in a way my academic introduction to Lebanon, and then in 2006, with a Master in comparative politics concentrating on the student section of Hezbollah. It was during this last work that I elaborated the general vision from which this present study emerged.

Having been proposed the subject of Hezbollah youth by one of my professors in Aix-en-Provence, I started to consider the complexity of personal activism and its interrelation with personal experiences. While most of the work focusing on Hezbollah insisted on its emergence (e.g. Hamzeh 2004), its ideology (e.g. Saad-Ghorayeb 2002), or its social network of institutions (e.g. Harb 2005, Le Thomas 2009), all starting from the organizational perspective, I decided to apprehend the group from the individual level in order to deconstruct the pre-conception of the unity of the party. The prism of political Islam and the image publicly orchestrated by the group could mask, in my views, a greater variety in the way of experiencing membership. Although in the limits inherent of a Master thesis written in one year, I highlighted the imbrication between personal trajectories and sense of belonging. The social experiences of the political community were multiple, in spite of the active socialization and the high degree of control within the organization (Lefort 2006). This provisional conclusion was the starting point of this research.

My objective was first to confront Hezbollah model with a non-religious party in order to test the relevance of the ideology in the construction of *groupness*. The FPM seemed to offer the perfect comparison point. First, it is a secular movement but influential among Christians. It was therefore ideal to compare the social elaboration of sectarian affiliation in two parties developing distinct approaches on the issue and thus to analyze religious commonalities not from a structural but from a constructivist perspective. Second, it was a newly formed party that wanted to implement an ambitious socialization program comparable to what was already functioning within Hezbollah. The comparison between the model and the apparatus in construction was stimulating. This is how I started to study the FPM. Paradoxically, while my fieldwork among FPM students developed, my investigation in the Hezbollah milieu had to stop. However, this project of questioning the pluralistic dimension of adhesion, the focus on personal experience and memory marked the research process. The approach developed here aimed at exploring these perspectives. My questions and the way I

have insisted on some aspects during interviews and data processing were consequently dominated by such issues.

The entry through Hezbollah is in a way symptomatic of the academic field specialized on Lebanon as the Shiite organization concentrates much of the attention of researchers in social sciences, especially in political science. However, my own relations to the academic field were dominated by my peripheral situation, resulting above all from my mobility. Started in Aix-en-Provence, my academic trajectory rapidly shifted as I settled in Tampere, dividing my time between Finland and Lebanon. During my stays in Beirut, I integrated the French Institute for Near-East Studies (IFPO) where I benefited from the advices of the experienced researchers and participated in the scientific activities of the center, while encounters with fellow doctoral students working in the region expended my academic horizons and considerably enriched my fieldwork experience. Certainly, the centrality of fieldwork-based studies and anthropological approach on political parties dominating in IFPO influenced my choices. My mobile trajectory may have resulted in a tendency to multi-disciplinary insights and integration of distinct sociological traditions in the core of this work.

Exploring these dimensions abstractly, in the opening chapter of this work, is an attempt to tackle it with the constant objective to exemplify that the hero of this work remains the theme of the study (De Sardan 2000, p. 440). Moreover, in spite of its necessity, the objectivation of the influence of the researcher is impossible to fully complete. The subjectivity of the participants, both the interviewer and the interviewees remains pluralistic and difficult to decode properly. As Pierre-Olivier De Sardan notes, “the personality of a researcher, the multiple realities of the field, and the interactions between the two are too complex to be controlled through fragments of testimonies, memories, impressions, or stories...” (ibid., p. 438). The evaluation of my own weight in the production of the data is impossible. I tried nevertheless to present the probable main influences and the conditions of creation in order to highlight some of the dynamics of this work. In the forthcoming chapters, I will mention each time the interpretative choice makes it necessary, without falling into the trap of the “study of the study”.

Reaching the end of this methodological detour, through which I wanted to argue the affinities between the accounts recorded with research participants and this final written work, both being multi-voiced narratives, and produced in dialogic relations, it is now time to focus on the structure of this study.

## 5. VISUALIZING THE HYPOTHESES

Starting from encounters with students and their stories about their engagement with the FPM, I highlighted the three fields opened by the experience of activism as well as the incumbent narrative nature of the accounts collected in interview. The characteristics of storytelling impose to consider the narratives of the students as construction of meaning emerging from dialogic environment and as performance accomplished with an audience in mind – beyond the direct auditor embodied by the researcher. The expressive nature of the narratives and the complexity of their significations call for the examination of the multiple voices that contribute to generate and interpret the stories about identity I collected. As Plummer writes, “stories and narratives depend upon communities that will create and hear those stories: social worlds, interpretative communities, communities of memory” (1995, p. 145)”. It is around this triptych already underlined in the opening engagement stories that this work is going to be structured: the social worlds in which students experience reality, the community of interpretation in which signification is produced and the collective memory in which the group is rooted.

The analysis of these three dimensions provides the working hypotheses to puzzle out the main research questions organizing this study. What does it mean to be a student activist in the Free Patriotic Movement in contemporary Lebanon? How is the group constructed among students? How is the Aounist link – and beyond the social link it builds – internalized, appropriated and possibly transformed?

The hypothesis I formulate is that the joint construction of the self and of the group work as the elaboration of a community of interpretation, understood in the double meaning of attribution of signification to the experienced reality – and especially to the history and the memory – and of interpretation of a role – or of a position – in social interactions. The Party as a community of interpretation manifests itself in a triple perspective:

The group is first constructed by positioning in situational interactions – before everything in the university contexts in which students are inscribed. Collective as well as personal identity narratives create boundaries and support concrete allocation of positions in the time and space of social interactions. Identification with the FPM is primary positioning the self as a member or a supporter of the group, which in turn has material consequences in terms of insertion within partisan networks.

The group acquires then the form of an interpretative community, i.e. “a community that lives according to shared narratives” (Shenhav 2009, p. 213). The inscription within social networks and the process of intra-group socialization generate a shared perception about the meanings of social experience. This construction of joint



significations is structured by collective narratives about the group, its boundaries and its founding stories. Building on the primary socialization of the adherents, which it transforms to unify the conception of the group, this process of allocation of meaning relies on collective narratives that come to shape stable forms of interaction among members, a specific “group style”.

Finally, the internalization of a mutual interpretative order leads to the insertion of the personal experiences within the multivocal collective memory of the group. This social memory is itself a construction of meaning built through the indexation of multiple experiences inherited from the social groups composing the Party within the partisan identity narrative. Starting from the fabricated occurrences of this collective memory voiced by the students, the multiple components are archaeologically deconstructed and reveal an imbrication of multiple scales of social times.

The three working hypotheses reveal a gradation in the construction of *groupness*. The first level is the most immediate and concrete, as well as the more collective as it depends on direct interactions, the second is intermediary and the third the most personalized and the deepest, because it refers to the fabrication of the self through the narrative procedures. This work therefore traces a dynamic move toward the internalization and individual transformation of the FPM identity in the definition of the self.

The structure of this work follows the gradual path designed by the hypotheses. The first part deals with positioning in university contexts, examining the processes and consequences of interactions in the construction of identity narratives and the allocation of group identification. Exploring the fragmentation of university spaces and the time of political mobilization in the campuses, it aims at demonstrating how the personal perception of situations is at the same time given by and shaping the social contexts of interactions between groups.

The second part concentrates on the construction of the FPM “group style”. Focusing on in-group interactions and socialization processes, it intends to present how a shared definition of reality is acquired but also how this definition is relying on a specific version of a collective identity narrative. The relative positions of the various members regarding this special definition of the group strongly impacts the possibilities and the nature of identification, and thus the reproduction of the group in time.

Finally, the third part is concerned with the collective memory understood as an identity narrative, organized along a pre-arranged historical plot with heroic figures. Serving as template, the collective memory is appropriated by the members through the voicing of a personal narrative incorporating the key elements of the collective

history, thus enabling the projection of the self within the group's universe of signification. The resulting new stories combining organizational and personal elements participate in the materialization and the diffusion of the partisan order beyond individual cases. It is from the narrative interpretation of the event that *groupness* emerges.

The exploration of FPM engagement among students is intrinsically outlined by the specific nature of the object itself. Political activism in university displays particular forms and features, due to its transitional type. The biographical availability of students for engagement as well as the implantation of political forces such as the FPM in the Lebanese campuses strongly encourages one form of activism, which is often intense but volatile. The entry in working life frequently alters engagement and many of the students I met have seen their relations with the Party distend after the end of their studies. However, their trajectories incline to think that they have been durably marked by their experience of extreme identification with the group. Moreover, the immersion in university politics appears at many points characteristic of the socialization process in general and of the political socialization in particular the present-day Lebanese lived through.

Due to the influence of the partisan forces in the construction of the political experience in Lebanon, their study constitutes a crucial element in the analysis of the Lebanese society (Mermier & Mervin 2012, p. 23). In spite of its own specificities, the FPM in itself, as a political organization, is exemplar of several trends defining the political scene existing in Lebanon today. It has in common with other current political forces an ostensible willingness to institutionalize, which in practice remains uncertain. Even more fundamentally, it shares with most of the partisan groups a strong anchorage in the wars of Lebanon (1975-1990). Besides, although the FPM – like all other political parties – conserves territorial strongholds, it is, from its origins, above all a nation-wide party. In that sense, the FPM may also have been precursory of in the recently observed nationalization of the Lebanese politics, in which exclusively local political affairs advocated by confined formations tend to relapse in favor of national issues (see e.g. Catusse & Mouawad 2011). Analyzing engagement within the FPM is therefore also questioning the construction of the Lebanese politics as it occurs today.

Many are the obstacles in the understanding of the intricate processes at work in the Lebanese society. The persistent issue of sectarianism or the often asserted uniqueness of the Lebanese coexistence formula are not the least problematic. Starting from the stories of individual political activists is also an attempt to tackle such highly debated questions from below, without constructing them as *a priori* axes of reflection

but rather in examining how such themes surface in the subjective experiences of the actors. Such a perspective confers an exploratory dimension to this study, which, without seeking exhaustiveness, aims at contributing to the examination of the Lebanese society through renewed paths and alternative focuses.

# **PART ONE**

## **Positioning in University Landscape**



Identification is intrinsically situational. As all social processes, it includes conversational as well as introspective activities (Halbwachs 1997 [1950]; Harré 2004). The settings in which the process of group construction is located are built in interrelations and informed by the actors' perception of the situations. It is in an ongoing exchange between the social configurations on the one hand and the meaning individuals allocate to these circumstances on the other that contexts of interactions are produced, in accordance with the principle of duality of structure enunciated by Anthony Giddens: the social structures are constituted by human actions but at the same time stand as the very medium of this construction (Giddens 1976, p. 121). Social structures set up conditions and consequences of social interactions, constituting the rules and resources that actors mobilize in encounters. They do not appear as external impositions on the actors but are rather inscribed in their social practices. Understanding the engagement of students supposes therefore to consider the construction and reconstruction of the structure at work in the university settings, understood as the spatially and temporally situated social systems in which structure is recursively realized (Giddens 1984, p. 25).

In this first part, my aim is to study the dynamics of the social settings prevailing in the Lebanese university spaces, starting from the subjective experience of the actors in order to describe the construction of the social structure as both the condition of possibility and the results of partisan identification of students with the Free Patriotic Movement. Contrary to the traditional design of academic work, in which context is often presented *a priori*, my objective is to focus primarily on the actors in order to transpose concretely the duality of structure in the analysis. If the social settings are not the simple sum of individual experiences, the subjective representations of the actors are nevertheless essential in order to understand how a given context is interactively elaborated and how it operates in mutual actions. Such representations are interlinked with collective identity narratives available in the considered social settings that constitute the basis for identification.

In Lebanon, the plurality of university spaces provides a vast range of interactional settings. The contexts produced by such diversity reflect of socially constructed territories, i.e. territories defined by mutual knowledge produced in encounters and routinized social practices, in which identification processes operate. Joining a university means entering in the region of a specific social system defined in time as well as space. These territories offer relatively stable (but not immobile) background in which activities are performed, inducing a certain degree of institutionalization – defined as the process “incipient in every social situation continuing in time” (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 73). Immaterial institutions such as routinized behaviors or

representations embedded in specific university settings play a central role in the diffusion of identity narratives.

The main hypothesis examined across the two following chapters is that the fragmentation of the university landscape and their domination by political networks generate interactional settings in which partisan identification is highlighted. In-campus interactions are at the same time produced by and reconstructing a structure that strengthens references to competing political forces. In a word, the collective identities available to be mobilized in interactions are primarily governed by partisan labels. As a consequence, in the dynamics of encounters, participants have access to political repertoires to interpret the situations, as well as rights and duties inherent to these repertoires. The social systems elaborated in the university settings therefore provide the actors with positioning informed by partisan collective identities. Positioning is here defined as the dynamic and relational construction of identification in social interaction, in relation with the other participants (Davies & Harré 1990). The notion of positioning was created in contrast with the concept of role, in order to give it more fluidity. It focuses on the dynamic aspects of interactions whereas the idea of role highlights a formal and stable dimension (*ibid.*, p. 44)<sup>44</sup>. Positions locate the various interacting individuals in terms of cognitive categories and a specific story line, a more or less “conventional narrative that the people positioned are in the process of living out.” (Harré & Moghaddam 2003, p. 8)

Drawing on this notion of positioning and using it as a backdrop to understand the relational processes of identification, I intend to demonstrate how the actors’ interpretation of the interactional settings as highlighting partisan categories is at the same time a cause and a consequence of the importation of specific collective narratives within the universities. This phenomenon constructs and reconstructs the legitimacy of political forces such as the FPM as the main providers of narrative identities available for students in interactions. Of course, the importation of partisan categories does not provide an integral definition of inter-student encounters: it does not impose itself permanently and does not affect all the individuals. Nevertheless, the implementation of the “partisan story lines” sustains situations in which the perception of the social settings is dominated by the construction of intergroup boundaries. Therefore, this first part is concerned with this construction of the legitimacy of the

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<sup>44</sup> Like roles, positions encompass a range of duties and rights available for the actors, but those are labile and ephemeral, recursively reconstructed and negotiated between participants. The notion of position is closer from the idea of “footing” developed in Goffman’s late work. Footing refers to an evaluation of the situation by the actor leading him to adopt the behaviour he thinks match with a particular context. It highlights the conversational dynamics in the elaboration of one’s footing and the negotiation of “alignment” between participants (Goffman 1979).

political forces as institutions shaping the university contexts. More precisely, it deals with the shaping of the identification with the FPM as a resource and a determinant in social encounters between students.

Chapter one presents the fragmentation of the university spaces and the influence of the partisan networks in the universities selected in this study to illustrate how the elements of collective narrative identities are informing the definition of the reality experienced by the actors. The construction of each university's landscape appears a function of this perception, but it is made available by the concrete long-standing implantation of the political forces on the ground.

Chapter two deals with student elections, defined as the spatially and temporally defined pinnacle of partisan influence in university settings. I consider demonstrations related to these elections and their rhetoric as positioning rituals: they work as elements of maintenance of the divided social structure as they ensure year after year the reaffirmation of partisan identity narratives within the campuses.

Two additional precisions are required. First, the focus is not set on the causes of engagement among FPM students in university settings but rather on the conditions of their identification with the party. Following Howard Becker's request, the question asked is not "why", but "how" such identification is made possible (Becker 2002 [1998], p. 105). Second, although the exploration of positioning is presenting in the first part of this study, it does not mean that this dimension of identification is the first experienced by the students. Regarding the chronological order, the situations are multiple, some students being already strongly linked with the FPM before their arrival in the university while others initiate the construction of their sense of belonging in the interactions set on the campus. However, the cognitive and practical location of the self as affiliated with the FPM in university encounters provides the most sensible and immediate indication of the processes of identification of individuals with the party. To sum up, in the dynamic model adopted in this work, the positioning hypothesis represents the first analytical step, not necessarily the first temporal movement toward *groupness*.





## Chapter One

# “Politics is part of the university”

## Entering fragmented territories

*“La guerre qui a ravagée Beyrouth pendant seize ans a territorialisé les groupes, les identités et partant les institutions, c’est-à-dire qu’elle les a contraints à tenir compte d’échelles territoriales moindres que le territoire national et à faire de ces espaces fermés des espaces à défendre absolument.”*

Nabil Beyhum (1991, p. 31)

Fanar – Ascending from Saint-Thècle roundabout (*Mustadîret Mâr Teqlâ*), which approximately separates Bouchriyeh from Jdeydeh in the Eastern margins of Beirut, the road bypasses a large camp of the Lebanese Army. Eclipsed by the imposing faculty of Sciences that dominates the landscape, the much smaller FID – Faculty of Information and Documentation, appears behind the College Notre-Dame du Mont Carmel. The small alley leading to the building is jam-packed with parked cars. Inside, a massive placard on the wall greets students and visitors: *“Welcome to the Faculty of Information and Documentation, the base of the Lebanese Forces”*. A corridor stretches from the entrance door. Signaled by Lebanese Forces tags and a photo of Samir Geagea, the leader of the party, stands the room harboring the activities of the student committee. No doubts are permitted regarding the social force that prevails on the faculty’s territory. It is in this setting that interactions between students unfold.

The stories of the faculties I visited were those of a fragmentation that went too far, as described by the Lebanese scholar Nabil Beyhum (Beyhum 1991). The historical path drawn by the progressive implantation of educational institutions in Lebanon, as well as the struggle for the appropriation of territories during the Lebanese wars (1975-1990) strongly imprinted this fracture. However, their internalization and recursive actualization in the perceptions of the Lebanese youth play also a decisive role. Lived space experienced by the students fully contributes to the construction of the local systems in which identification operates, by designing the positions available for the actors. The arrival within a setting saturated with partisan signs and networks necessarily affects the definition of inter-student relations and, thus, of the self. Welcome to the faculty.

The atmosphere of the faculty was thoroughly depicted to me in December 2010, when I met a third year FID student, Aida, then aged 19. She had been working for four months in the radio *Sawt al-Mada*, earned by the Free Patriotic Movement. First recruited as a trainee, she was then offered a short-term contract. Although she is a fervent supporter of the party, she described her choice as “strictly professional”. “*I want to be a journalist*” she exclaimed, “*to have my own TV show like Oprah one day!*” For now, she has to settle for an archivist work. “*I need to learn to express myself more distinctly. My boss here in the radio station told me that it was impossible for me to go on air with a voice like mine!*” she later explained, in a hasty tone. The discussion was held in her office at the radio station premises, on the third floor of the Mirna Chalouhi Center in Sin el-Fil – the same building that hosts the FPM main office.

Coming from her village in the caza of Baabda, she moved to the Beirut agglomeration four years before alongside her family. Together, they settled in Jdeydeh so that her brother could continue his studies at the faculty of Sciences of the Lebanese University in Fanar. She herself entered the Faculty of Information one year later. Her discovery of the university settings came out as one of the main focuses of our interview. The narrative she produced on her entrance in the faculty illustrates how collective representations are informing the definition of the reality experienced by the actors, and defining their relative positions in interactions. It also highlights essential issues in the contemporary university life in Lebanon:

*“Politics is part of the university. (...) Our faculty is messed up. I think it is the most messed-up faculty in Lebanon, and even maybe in the world! If you buy something from the store, the expiration date is over, it smells and stinks and you still have to eat it. I should describe it so you can understand the mess in which it is (...). When I entered the faculty after the entrance exam, I said to myself: 'Oh no, the Lebanese Forces are here!' So I decided to focus only on my studies. But then you can't stay silent while you see wrong happening all the time everywhere. I felt guilty about my studies and my faculty, and even my country...and the reputation of the education in my country. If you are guilty, you shouldn't stay silent and I didn't. So I joined the FPM students and we are working today on many things to prevent the wrong from happening. (...) When wrong is happening, you have to say no.*

*- Can you tell me about the wrong things you saw?*

*The LF party is acting like it owns the faculty. No, it is owned by all the Lebanese students. We are all citizens here, we should respect each other! Maybe I won't love you, but I will respect you, you are a person! And you have to respect me. You may not like me, you may think I am a stupid person, but you have to respect me, unless I*

*don't respect you! They are not respecting us! They think that we shouldn't be here, but yes, I should be here: I worked hard to pass the entrance test in the university. If I would run the student committee, I wouldn't do that. This is the faculty for all the Lebanese, and even for some foreigners.*

*During the exam to enter the university, the student committee collaborates with the director in the faculty who is...I can't say the word but he is a dirty person. I cannot just look at him for more than ten seconds. We tried to sue him for all what he did but the leader of his party – the LF – supported him. So, the student committee and the director are working in collaboration, they try to pick the LF members and make them enter the faculty! Even though I have better grades and I deserved to enter...maybe if I am at position 30 in the competition, they picked other people. You understood what I am explaining? Why do they do that? Because when elections come, they will win. It is a typical thing, everybody knows that. But no! I would like that FPM students come here so we can win the elections but it is not good, you do it for you, not for your country. If the Lebanese Forces liked their country, they would do the best for their country and ensure they can train great journalists.*

*(...)They think they own the entire faculty! (...) The logo of our faculty used to be a pen, because as journalists, a pen is our weapon. But they created a new logo looking just like the LF logo – you know how it is with the red circle and the cedar tree that we all love. The faculty logo used to be a pen...but they withdrew it: we don't need a pen, we just need the Lebanese Forces here! So they made a red circle around 'FID' the name of our faculty in green, and so when you see it! You understand? They are trying to make the sign of the faculty just as the LF flag. I mean, I am not an idiot, I can see it! C'est inadmissible, tu ne peux pas rester comme ça comme une idiote [she switched from English to French for this sentence]!*

*- What about admission results?*

*I will tell you my own experience. I went to the admission competition (...). There were three thousand students. I said my God, I hope I will be chosen from all these. I did the translation test and all the tests. I went home hopeful that I will enter. I went back when they said that the results were out. I went to the faculty. I saw a guy before I saw the results. He told me: 'Hi, what's up? Do you want to know your result?' I said: 'Please of course I want to know, this is my dream!' He said: 'Ok, what is your name?' I told him. 'One minute' he said. He looked for my name in a paper, I asked what it was. He said: the waiting list. They picked, from the 3000 students, 75 students who are sure to enter the faculty. (...) They stick to 75 people even though they actually accept more than one hundred. My name was the fifth name on the list. So I am student number 80 out of 3000 students. So I am sure I deserve to be here, even though I am on the 'waiting list'. I deserve to be here, without his*

*permission or your permission! But he brought me with him and we entered the student committee and I felt like I was inside a political base or their political committee. Waw, it is my faculty! He didn't ask me the question [about my political beliefs] directly but asked me: 'where are you from?' I told him. 'Where do you live?' he continued. I said that I need to know if I enter the faculty. He said: 'OK...do you like our...' I said 'yes' – he was talking about their leader. 'May I know if I am admitted in the faculty?' He said: 'Oh, yes of course you are'. I didn't say anything bad or anything good... I just wanted to enter the faculty. He picked up a phone, and called the director. He said: 'we have a name, please'. He told my name and he hanged up. He was trying to make me believe that he is the one who made me enter the faculty so when the election comes I will be grateful and vote for him. Now, I am in the third year, and I know that this list is a big lie! They do accept 110 students but they make this list to allow the student committee to check the new students so when the elections come, they will vote for them. 'No honey, I won't vote for you and I would have entered with or without your help!' So this is my personal experience, which I share with you, this is a proof that they are not doing right things.*

*I will give you another example: the leader of the LF is from Bcharri. And if you look at the students who are entering the faculty, you see that they are all from families from that region. My God, all the clever people in Lebanon are from the Bcharri district! Come on, we are not idiots. First the logo, then the competition for entrance and finally the people from Bcharri (...). Could you stay silent if such things happened in your faculty? Of course not! (...)"<sup>45</sup>*

Presented as the personal experience of her discovery of the territory of the faculty, Aida's account is inescapably built on a political repertoire. It is a function of the physical implantation of partisan forces in the faculty, of the issues of their present competition, and finally of the representation of their power relations in the eyes of a young FPM supporter. From her activist position, she arranges the storylines sustaining her report on an identity narrative organizing the opposition between the Free Patriotic Movement and the Lebanese Forces. The former is introduced as a force of change while the latter is predominantly labeled in terms of its militia past. Here, the faculty is described as a territory under the hegemony of a partisan group, the LF, and more generally submitted to a political system built on clientele networks, illegal deeds, and symbolic violence. The setting displays vertical power relations in which the partisan grouping uses its agents – the director, the administration, and the student committee – to rule the territory at its own benefit, in reference to the war economy of the militias. In Aida's reconstruction, the scene illustrates the relations between

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<sup>45</sup> Aida, interview with the author: December 9, 2010 [in English].

territory and power in the university setting. Space is read in terms of domination and control over the population. In return, the Lebanese Forces are themselves associated with a territorial basis – the region of Bcharri – thus echoing a similar conception of space as partisan stronghold and endorsing the vision of the invasion of the city by clans coming from remote mountain areas (Hourani 1976).

This backdrop serves Aida to position herself in regard to the classifications produced by her narrative. Opposing her to the agents of the hegemonic force, it also distances her from the passive students – a silent majority – whose lack of reaction enables the perpetuation of the domination. She depicts herself at first as retreating to the sole academic dimension of university life, a kind of capitulation, only to contrast this attitude of renouncement with her sense of morality and duty. The various anecdotes mobilized in the story aim at legitimizing the clearly-cut distinctions between the groups, revealing the central importance of exclusive categorizations in the process of identification (Turner 1982, p. 17-18). Aida also uses different kinds of cues<sup>46</sup> to produce her positioning and validate it in the interview interaction. First, she uses specific words to denote the various characters in terms of a moral stand. The director is “*dirty*”, the students from the committee “*lie*” and “*are not respecting*” the others, while the behavior of those who do not react in front of the situation is compared with the posture of an “*idiot*”. On the contrary, Aida defines herself as feeling “*guilty*” for her country or hardworking, like the other members of the FPM as she introduces the group at the beginning of her interview. Second, she relies on quoted speech and reported dialogues as a means to exemplify the various categories and lively reproduce the course of interactions. Third, she affirms her prevalence as the legitimate interpreter of the situation she describes. The account is clearly framed as the telling of an occurred event, mainly by opposing her lived “*personal experience*” – a “*proof*” – to the status of the one being told the story, an outsider, myself. Thus, she uses her audience to endorse the group boundaries produced in the story.

Through the narrative, both the positions allocated to the characters and the frames underlying them construct the university territory as function of the fragmented reality. The anecdote of the results of the entrance exam perfectly illustrates the prevalence of divisions in the perception of the social world. The questions of the student committee’s member echo the typical quest hanging in many Lebanese interactional settings<sup>47</sup>, in which participants intend to classify their interlocutors. In the story, the

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<sup>46</sup> The notion of “cue” is used to identify the means through which positioning is mediated in conversational interactions. See Wortham 2006 [2000], p. 146-147.

<sup>47</sup> A comparable phenomenon has been analyzed in the case of Northern Ireland. Franck Burton uses

questions asked to Aida supposedly aimed at divulging her probable political and sectarian ascriptions. Implicit in the dialogue, the articulation between the two dimensions originates in the parties' gradual inscription into the sectarian power-sharing. Throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the constitutional system generated an affinity between newly created political groups and the sectarian delimitations. In order to adapt, most of the parties were thus organized along pre-existing social lines: clans or family ties, socio-economic classes, local norms, etc. (Favier 2005) The articulation has further been strengthened during the 1975-1990 wars and in particular the construction of sectarian strongholds under the domination of political forces that claimed to represent religious communities (Picard 1994, p. 158). In the general emplotment elaborated by my informant, the inquiry also implies the hegemonic project of the militia-like LF, underlined in the group's pretension to "own" the faculty. The distinction is made in terms of values and Morale, highlighting the social dimension of the boundaries between the rival groups. Aida's subjective perception of the LF sets up the conditions for her interactions with other students in her faculty.

The voicing of this narrative about territorial domination and struggle against the supremacy of the practices inherited from the militias relies on a political perception of the university space, which enables Aida to compose her own partisan position. The story does not simply represent a depiction derived from her engagement: it is constitutive of the relations deployed between groups and of the experience of social systems. Rooted in the coexistence and rivalry of groups in disputed territories, Aida's narrative seizes an essential component of the interactions in university settings and beyond in Lebanon. To fully understand the conditions of emergence and the force of this account, it is necessary to appreciate how partisan identity narratives become legitimate story lines to construct university settings, how the elements of collective

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the concept of "Telling" to define "the syndrome of signs by which Catholics and Protestants arrive at religious ascriptions in their everyday interactions" (Burton 1978, p. 4). The Lebanese in general, and the students considered in this work in particular, often express their habit – and their rejection – of such interactional process: "[We campaign for] a country where all the citizens from all sects would be equal, where no one would ask you your name any more to guess from which sect you are" (Kamal, interview with the author: December 6, 2010 [in French]). A form of social decency impedes to directly question someone's sectarian affiliation, but inquiring about the name, living place or region of origin work as a substitute. Famous jokes also testify of the importance of this practice, for example one in which a father desperately tries to classify the fiancé of his daughter, who happens to have a non-identifiable name, to live in a mixed area and to come from an undetermined region. During my fieldwork, I was myself often inquired about my own religion. I also experienced a bizarre scene: once invited in the family mountain house of a notorious figure of my Christian neighborhood, I was methodically asked the names of my friends. Presuming that I could not understand them, my hosts then debated among each other of the probable sectarian affiliation of my comrades and seemed perplex that I could have Muslim or Druze friends.

narrative identities are informing the definition of the reality experienced by the actors. These collective narratives also constitute a resource in interactions for students such as Aida, because they do not represent mere abstract references but define available positions for the actors, limiting some opportunities and opening others.

Starting from Aida's account of her arrival in the faculty, major themes of analysis surface: the occupation of the place by political movements first, then their competition for appropriation of the territory, and finally the significations injected through distinctive storylines to define space, as well as the groups living on it and her sense of self in the local setting. From there, using the story as a backdrop, my objective in this first chapter is to examine the interplay between objective conditions and subjective perceptions in the affirmation of partisan identities in the university settings I observed, in order to understand the construction of *groupness*. Resituating the actors in the configurations – i.e. labile arrangements – of their spatial environment, I intend to present how the students concur in the actualization of a divided structure and how this influences their possible positioning, which might in the end allow me to propose a more refined understanding of Aida's story. To do so, I rely mainly on Henri Lefebvre's notion of "lived space". In his model, space is seen in three dimensions, according to an analytical triad: space is perceived, conceived, and lived (Lefebvre 1991 [1974], p. 33). The first dimension is concerned with physical seizure of space (real space), the second with space as a mental construct (imagined space), and the third with the way space is invested with symbolism and meaning, building a space of representation, at the same time real and imagined (Elden 1998). Political domination materializes as a central power in the social definition of space. "There is a politics of space because space is political" (Lefebvre 1976, p. 33). And its political nature is at the heart of its production as it is from the relations between social forces that space emerges (Lefebvre 1991 [1974], p. 190).

Using this framework, I first introduce a more detailed exploration of the fragmentation prevailing in university contexts to examine the symbiosis between the physical division and the representations born from partisan imaginaries in the production of the lived space, my aim being to point out the consequences of this production of space on the perception of the self (1). Then, I intend to describe the partisan networks existing in the various territories of the studied universities, and demonstrate how partisan groups like the FPM surround their territories of implantation to maintain the preeminence of their definition of the reality. It entails the scarcity of student mobilizations in regard to the prevalence of intergroup discord in university settings (2). Not only the constant actualization of boundaries impedes alternative groupings to emerge but the domination of partisan interpretative schemes



also leads to the possible translation of different aspirations into the partisan universe of signification as the case of Aida acknowledges (3).

## **1. FROM PERCEIVED TO LIVED SPACE: FRAMING AND LABELING UNIVERSITY TERRITORIES**

Space is the setting of the identification process. From the encounters it hosts, it provides a sense of identity. The Lebanese university landscape is characterized by its institutional, geographical, and political fragmentation. Entering in a faculty or a campus means to step into a specific local arrangement of relations. Perception and experience of this interactional setting stands pivotal in the formation and actualization of groups. My objective is here to analyze the social production of space and its consequences in the collective and personal identification. I claim that local conditions of coexistence and the identity narratives mobilized to interpret them represent the main producer of the definition of the space and of the actors interacting on it.

Physically, university spaces in Lebanon are composed of a myriad of faculties and institutes, some of which host no more than a few dozens of students<sup>48</sup>. As a whole, the Lebanese higher education sector is composed of forty-three institutions, most of them being recent, established after the end of the Lebanese wars in 1990. In 1991, Lebanon totaled seven universities and fifteen institutes. In the year 2000, there were twenty-four universities and nineteen institutes<sup>49</sup>. Apart from the national Lebanese University (LU), all of these are private institutions. Operated in a field already characterized by the divisions between the multiplicity of private – and often communal – schools, this extreme fragmentation originated mainly in a political will inspired by the successive governments headed by Rafiq Hariri in the 1990 decade.

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<sup>48</sup> Complete figures on the number of students registered in all the institutions of higher education are available for the academic year 2007-2008 produced by Lebanese Center for Educational Research and Development, depending from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (cited in the report of the Central Administration of Statistics, *Statistical Yearbook 2008*, p. 911-912). Online figures are also available for the academic year 2005-2006.

See: [http://www.localiban.org/IMG/pdf/Effectif\\_des\\_Instituts\\_Enseignement\\_Superieur.pdf](http://www.localiban.org/IMG/pdf/Effectif_des_Instituts_Enseignement_Superieur.pdf) [August 2012]. However, these statistics have to be considered with caution. First because the method used is not detailed. Second, because some students are sometimes registered in several faculties at the same time, especially in the Lebanese University where the inscription is almost free of charge. Consequently, they may have been counted more than once.

<sup>49</sup> See the report by Zoeter, Nasr & Basbous (2002): “L’enseignement Supérieur au Liban” realized for the Tempus project sponsored by the European Union.

See: <http://www.ciep.fr/evquameda/www.evquameda.org/Liban-EnseigSuperieur.pdf> [August 2012]

Higher education seemed then considered as a merchant good like another, some institutions being suspected to be more concerned with commercial exploitation than with educational standards (Davie 1997, p. 9; Zoeter, Nasr & Basbous 2002, p. 11).

However, the division of the university spaces goes beyond the multiplication of educational institutions. The situation in fact underlines the continuous setback of the Lebanese state in the field of education facing the influence of private and communal forces<sup>50</sup>. The 1961 law organizing the activities of universities warrants the liberty of education for the various communal forces, consecrating a constitutional principle and maintaining a situation well anchored in the history of the country<sup>51</sup>. In fact, along with the sectarian definition of personal civil status, freedom of education stands as the pillar of the Lebanese consociational system (Messara 1994). Educational networks have worked as one of the main instrument of the religious, social, and political construction of communal preeminence in the Lebanese scene. Taking advantage of the weakness – and even, during the 1975-1990 wars, the breakdown – of the state in Lebanon, and exploiting the permeability between religious and political spheres, sectarian and partisan actors used schools and universities as a means of consolidation and mobilization<sup>52</sup>. This historical process, associated with territorial divisions, has constituted universities into strongholds for political or communal forces.

### **A) The Lebanese University: a broken mirror of divisions**

December 2010 – Nader and Patrick greet me at the door of their university, the LU faculty of Management in Karm al-Zeitoun, in the center of Achrafiyeh, Beirut's Christian heartland. These two FPM activists are respectively in their third and second year of study. They offered me a tour so I can see how the building hosting their everyday life interactions looks like. From outside, the edifice seems in an advanced state of decrepitude. The interior is worse. Nader insists to show me everything dysfunctional, from the broken bathrooms to the dozens of rusted old chairs packed on

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<sup>50</sup> For more details on the structuration of the Lebanese educational field, see Favier 2004, p. 59-99.

<sup>51</sup> Article 10 of the revised Lebanese constitution of 1990 – originally adopted in the 1926 constitution – states that: “Education is free insofar as it is not contrary to public order and morals and does not interfere with the dignity of any of the religions or creeds. There shall be no violation of the right of religious communities to have their own schools provided they follow the general rules issued by the state regulating public instruction.”

<sup>52</sup> The case of the Shiite community is remarkably exposed by Catherine Le Thomas (2008; 2012). The author demonstrates how education and school networks were at the heart of the strategies of empowerment of the religious and political actors emerging from the community. These strategies were made possible by the enhancement of the social conditions of the Shiite populations and their resulting growing willingness to pursue secondary and higher education.

the balconies. This building is no exception. In Beirut, many faculties of the LU are situated in habitation apartments ill-adapted to the requirements of higher education. In the district of Unesco, the old faculties of Literature, Pedagogy, and Information are dispatched between several of these buildings. I also remember that the faculty of Law in which I studied during my first stay in the country was itself located in one such construction. The year following my return to France, the second floor balcony on which we used to spend our breaks collapsed. A young girl died.

*"- Is there anything dangerous?" I asked Nader and Patrick.*

*Nader: "Yes, electricity. And toilets are in very bad condition...no water. We have nowhere to drink water. You can only buy water bottles. LU is for poor people, and poor people cannot live in this university, so we need funds but we don't have funds. (...) The government built a new campus in Hadath, and they put all the money in it."*

*Patrick: "They forgot us..."*

*Nader: "Yes, they forgot us completely in the faculties of the branch 2. (...) The dorms, the exams to enter the university, are all in Hadath. They privilege the Rafiq Hariri campus and forget the other faculties and campuses. And economy [choices in the government] does not give importance to the Christian sectors and the Christian areas (...)."*

*- And you, would you accept to go to Hadath?*

*Nader: "No, I won't accept this. But I cannot do anything about it." (...)*

*Nader: "There is only one political group beside Tayyâr that talks about this problem of the Lebanese University, it is the Kata'eb. They held a conference in the Faculty of Law and Political Science in Jal el-Dib, and they explained many things about that, the problems of the branch 2 – that we are in bad conditions and that the government should help us to build a new campus for Christians. But the Lebanese Forces control the faculty in which we are now in Achrafiyeh, and they don't want us to move to any other place like the new faculty in Fanar. [Because] They built a new building for the faculty in Fanar, next to the faculty of Sciences [Kulliyet al-'ulûm], and the FPM controls this faculty. So the LF, they don't want us to go either there or in Hadath in order not to lose the university, their control and their influence on it. Because the faculty of Sciences [in Fanar] is more important and under the control of FPM. So if we leave and go to Fanar, the majority will be with the Tayyâr."*

*- What does it mean that the Lebanese Forces control your faculty?*

*Nader: "They control the faculty! They control the director, they control the board of administration, they control the secretary, and they control the student council..."*

*Patrick: "For instance now the president of the LU tried to change the director of the FID, which is in Fanar too, and he named a person from the Tayyâr, but the LF refused."*

*Nader: "Yes, and now they make many problems about that. They would do the same here, and even much more. They think that the faculty in Achrafiyeh, and especially here in Karm el-Zeitoun, is a castle for them. It is the most powerful castle they have in all Lebanon, in the whole LU and all the universities."*

*Patrick: "Because it is in Achrafiyeh and Achrafiyeh belongs to the LF!"*

*Nader: "That's it. And if Tayyâr takes [control of] this university, it would mean that we really defeated them...we defeated them in their city."<sup>53</sup>*

The central themes of the conversation are again the division of the university, inter-partisan competition for the control of territories and the symbolic role of space in the definition of the groups. To fully understand the interpretative schemes used by Nader and Patrick, it is necessary to analyze the practical and public resources, socially organized, that enable them to attach significations to their situation. Interpretation is, in a word, contextualized and realized in relation with the stock of available knowledge (Gubrium 1988, p. 15). My objective here is therefore to understand how the students construct a social production of the university space.

As a whole, the Lebanese University regroups more than 70,000 students<sup>54</sup>, split between five territorial branches (*furûʿ*)<sup>55</sup>, sixteen faculties (*kulliyât*) or institutes (*ma'âhed*)<sup>56</sup> and many more campuses. Alone, it counts for almost half of the total 167,165 student population in Lebanon. Organized in 1959<sup>57</sup>, the public university was

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<sup>53</sup> Nader and Patrick, interview with the author: December 4, 2010 [in English].

<sup>54</sup> The latest figures available, for the academic year 2007-2008, indicates 74,176 students (24,309 males and 49,867 females). Source: Lebanese Center for Educational Research and Development, published in the report of the Central Administration of Statistics, *Statistical Yearbook 2008*, p. 911. As already mentioned, these numbers are certainly overestimated, due to the frequent inscription of the same students in several faculties. For a brief analysis of the statistics concerning the LU, see Favier 2000b, p. 88. For a complete statistical overview of the five branches (as well as the main other universities), see Al-Amine 1997.

<sup>55</sup> The five regional branches are: 1- Western Beirut; 2- Eastern Beirut; 3- North; 4- Beqaa; 5- South.

<sup>56</sup> See: <http://www.ul.edu.lb/faculte/faculties.aspx> [August 2012]

<sup>57</sup> Already in October 1951, the government established the "Ecole supérieure des maîtres", which would become in 1967 the faculty of Pedagogy of the Lebanese University. Some have therefore considered 1951 as the original date of the creation of the national university. However, it was not before 1959 that official decrees (in particular decree n° 2883) organized the LU and created the faculties of Law and Literature, and the Institute of Social Sciences.

inscribed within the movement of reinforcement of the state structures initiated by President Fuad Chehab after the brief civil war of 1958. Its creation was also a response to student mobilizations in favor of a public sector in higher education (Favier 2000b, p. 91). However, after a promising start that suggested the possibility of a formation of a new nationwide identity, the institution rapidly became the symbol of the vanishing national unity. Indeed, the geographical division of the LU dates back to the beginning of the civil war: the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1977, the minister of Education, Camille Chamoun – a former president of the Republic and one of the leader of the Christian nationalist front, or “Lebanonist” as they were called – signed a decree authorizing the creation of faculties in the Eastern part of Beirut, officially for security reasons<sup>58</sup>. The aim was to allow the students originating from this mainly Christian area to continue their studies despite the military escalation of the crisis. It inducted the formation of other regional branches, which rapidly fell under the control of the militias dominating their respective areas of implantation. After the collapse of the central government, militias consolidated autonomous sectarian territories through a three-stage process between 1976 and 1983 (Picard 2000, p. 11): the forced unification of population into a unique homogenized communal territory, the expulsion of population belonging to other sects, and the solidification of the borders dividing the sectarian forces. “*As the state retreated, the partitioning of Lebanon among militias reproduced the old Ottoman divisions of military and fiscal domains (iqṭā‘), each with their borders and customs checkpoints; Bateer or Monteverde for the PSP [Progressive Socialist Party – Druze], the Awali north of Sidon for the PNO [Popular Nasserist Organization – Sunni], the Qasmieh bridge for ‘Amal [Shiite], and Barbara for the LF [Christian Maronite].*” (Ibid.)

During this process of territorialization, the main militias established de facto governance over the branches or faculties they controlled. They directly nominated the heads of the institutions and deeply infiltrated their administration<sup>59</sup>. At the end of the Lebanese wars, the state validated the division of the LU while the absence of reform led to the maintenance of the partisan control over the various faculties and the sectarian fractures (Favier 2000b, p. 93-94). Branch 2, in which Nader and Patrick are

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<sup>58</sup> Decree n° 122 (30-6-1977).

<sup>59</sup> Decree n° 810 adopted January 5, 1978 established the positions of branch directors, which were occupied by members or clients of the various militias, in their respective zone of influence. This implied a radical change in the management of the LU. The university rapidly fell under total control of the militias. In the 1980s, no nomination was anymore adopted in accordance with the official legislation organizing the functioning of the institution – in particular the 1967 law defining the academic, financial and administrative independence of the LU. See Favier 2000b, p. 89.

studying, has always been headed by a Christian since 1990<sup>60</sup>. In spite of the formal reconstitution of the university council in June 1995<sup>61</sup>, sporadic mobilizations of teachers and students, and the creation of a new campus supposed to regroup many faculties<sup>62</sup>, the system inherited from the war was perpetuated. The student populations of the various branches remain largely homogeneous in terms of regional origins, suggesting a relative uniformity in the sectarian affiliation (Al-Amine 1997). The description made by Nader and Patrick, as the one by Aida considered earlier, reveals the importance of the partisan control over a faculty, but it also highlights the competition between the two main political forces in the Christian districts in Lebanon.

As a result, the various campuses and faculties of the LU are clearly identified politically and in sectarian terms. In their account, Nader and Patrick associate their faculty with only one dominant political force, as if cohabitation was not possible. In their words, the right of property on a territory sounds exclusive. A political group is either dominant or invisible. Besides the affirmed logic of stronghold in the definition of space, already embedded in Aida's story, the consensus expressed by Patrick and Nader about the ties uniting the district of Achrafiyeh and the LF is striking. Although they both come from modest extraction, the political background of their families is different. Nader's father fought with the LF during the early phase of the civil wars whereas Patrick's family was linked with the Lebanese Army and the National Liberal Party (NLP) of Camille Chamoun, known as the *Ahrâr* [the Liberals]. His grand-father was killed by LF fighters during the conflict opposing the two groups in 1977. Nevertheless, they express the same representation of space illustrating the public/collective dimension of the activity of allocation of meaning.

Their shared views are inherited from the past and framed by present power relations between political forces: during the war, the LF imposed itself against its

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<sup>60</sup> For example, an attempt to designate a Muslim director of the branch 2 met a general opposition from all Christian political and communal forces, forcing the government to withdraw its decision (Safi 2002, p. 370-371).

<sup>61</sup> The decision was adopted in 1991 (decree n° 1658 - September 5, 1991) but demanded four years to be enforced, illustrating the incapacity of the government to limit political intervention in the LU (Favier 2000b, p. 94).

<sup>62</sup> It is the Rafiq Hariri campus in Hadath, in the Southern Suburb of Beirut. The campus, opened in 2005 on the site of the faculty of Sciences of the branch 1, has the vocation to reunify most of the LU faculties of the Beirut branches (1 and 2) and to provide them adapted premises. However, the process remains largely incomplete. Only medical faculties were grouped: the faculty of Pharmacy, the faculty of Dentistry, and the faculty of Medical Science. Besides, other marginal faculties are grouped, but not in the main campus: the faculty of Agronomy (in Dekwaneh, a Christian district in the outskirts of Beirut) and the faculty of Tourism (in Bir Hasan, in the Southern Suburb).

rivals like NLP to control Achrafiyeh and then managed to maintain its grip in the 1989-1990 wars against the Lebanese Army of Michel Aoun; since its return on the political scene in 2005, the former militia has also been able to ensure its electoral domination on Achrafiyeh along with its allies of the March 14 coalition<sup>63</sup>. Besides, the LF activists ensure an important visual presence of their formation in the landscape of the district, relying on symbolic figures like Bachir Gemayel or Samir Geagea, religious symbols, and slogans, all echoing the identity narrative of the group. Through the perceptions of students like Patrick and Nader, the strength of the representations of the relation between territory and identification is projected within university settings.

Finally, Nader's early explanation about the issue at branch 2 introduces another dimension. If within the faculties of this LU branch hostility lays between FPM and the LF, at a wider scale the opposition seems to shift toward a religious fracture dividing Christians from Muslims. The incapacity of the government to address the issue of the LU since the end of the fighting in 1990 (Favier 2000b) has sustained the sectarian division of the university territories. Abandoned by public authority, the LU continued to live in an era where political and social dissensions bore a sectarian declination. The community remains the go-between linking the absent state and the individual as the evocation of a "*new campus for Christians*" acknowledges. The fact that the new campus is situated in Hadath, within the predominantly Muslim part of the city induces an indirect claim about the unfair treatment given to Christians at the national level<sup>64</sup>. Of course, material conditions such as accessibility to the campus count in the refusal to envisage regrouping in Hadath, however symbolic definition of space plays also an important part as inferred from the reference to Christians – in opposition to Muslims who already have *their* new campus.

The simultaneous presence of sectarian and political references in the expression boundaries and social meaning of territory exemplifies the contingent nature of

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<sup>63</sup> It was the case especially during the 2009 elections in which a reshaping of electoral circumscriptions in Beirut opened the door for a harsh competition over Achrafiyeh. The March 14 coalition succeeded in winning the three parliamentary seats at stake against the FPM and its allies. Although none of the successful candidates were from the LF, the party nevertheless contributed in their electoral campaign.

<sup>64</sup> Here, it is possible to see how the division of the LU in general and the choice of Hadath as the location of the main campus in particular are also exploited by partisan forces. The LU represents a possible tool in order to address wider political agendas. For example, Hezbollah was, during the crisis it faced in the aftermath of the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, using the reference to the Lebanese University as the "University of the People" in order to enhance its integration within the national political scene (Lefort 2006, p. 25-28). For several years, the Kata'eb Party has also strongly referred to the situation of the LU in order to raise its main theme of mobilization: the deprivation of the Christians and their demand of better integration within the state.

identification as well as the intricacy of partisan and sectarian dimensions in the perception of the self, owing to the absence of alternatives. With no state to build the LU as a symbol of trans-group citizenship, with few sectorial mobilizations to promote the cause of the university, the student territory remains under the watchful eyes of the only collective actors present on the ground: partisan forces. It has to be noted that the Hadath campus being situated in the Southern Suburb of the capital, it is under the political influence of Hezbollah (Lefort 2006), a political ally of the FPM. However, for Nader and Patrick, it seems to make no difference. The division therefore goes beyond present political arrangements to relate more on the past antagonisms that led to the fragmentation of the LU. It typifies the closure of the LU in antagonist segments. Nader's comment moreover offers a glimpse at the factionalist nature of the opposition between the FPM and the LF. Indeed factionalism implies a dual antagonism but has to be read also in relation to a third player (Rivoal 2004, § 4), here the Muslims. In his views, the competition between the FPM and the LF, both perceived as Christian groups, acquires all its meaning only in the context of the wider strife between the two main religious groups sharing power in Lebanon.

The definition of space thus changes depending on the considered local systems of interactions. Territories acquire signification only in intergroup terms, in relation with their milieu and the various coexisting groups. Resulting from the insertion within the LU of the sectarian and the interlinked partisan divisions, and participating in their maintenance, strong partisan representations relying on collective identity narratives in university settings prove to be pivotal. The speech acts I recorded inform local systems of identification based on a fragmented vision of space, in which groups compete to impose their hegemon. Territorial bases serve as the foundations for the inscription of the collective groupings in the society. In the perceptions of FPM students like Aida, Nader, and Patrick, the faculties of the LU – branch 2 remain strongholds that need to be protected or captured<sup>65</sup>. The trope of the *castle* employed by Nader demonstrates the facet of power and violence in the intergroup relations. Success in gaining control of faculties formerly ruled by a rival through victory in student elections is celebrated as a military triumph<sup>66</sup>. This competition is constructed through the diffusion of concurrent identity narratives and occupation of the corresponding positions: Aida

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<sup>65</sup> In April 2007, a student representative of the Lebanese Forces declared in the press: “*The faculty of Humanities has belonged to the Free Patriotic Movement for a number of years, and the faculty of Law has belonged to us for a number of years too.*” (*The Daily Star*: April 20, 2007)

<sup>66</sup> After a defeat in an USJ faculty that had been once labeled a FPM fortress by the leader of the Party, Michel Aoun, a disappointed student told me: “*now they can claim that they destroyed the fortress*”. Conversation with the author: November 7, 2008 [in French].



opposes the story of domination of the militia to the supposedly law-abiding profile characterizing the FPM – the militia versus the state, the *za'rân* [thugs] versus the *âwâdim* [honest people], a rhetoric that structured the 1990 war between LF and Michel Aoun's army.

The shift in Nader's argument from intra-Christian competition in the branch 2 to inter-religious split on the national scale suggests that representations of the space and the resulting positions available for the students depend on the configurations prevailing in the different contexts of interaction. To illustrate this point, a look at the situation of the American University of Beirut is noteworthy.

## **B) The American University of Beirut, an image of Lebanon?**

At first sight, the situation of the American University of Beirut differs radically from the one in the LU. The former, contrary to the latter, is constituted of one unique campus, grouping all the faculties and also including dorms, sport facilities, and a library. In contrast with the devastated public institution, it exposes its luxurious facilities as a symbol of the Lebanese two-tier society.

Virgil, former coordinator of the FPM in AUB and an active member of the Committee of the Student Affairs of the Party presented me with a description of the university matching the opinion I often heard from students or observers. This irreligious young man – one of the few who openly declared himself atheist – explained me in May 2010 that:

*"L'AUB c'est une université assez représentative de la société libanaise. Déjà, parce que toutes les communautés libanaises sont représentées de manière conséquente. Comparé à l'USJ qui est à majorité chrétienne, à la LAU-Beyrouth qui est à majorité, disons, sunnite, encore plus que musulmane. L'AUB est mixte. Cela veut dire que dans notre manière de travailler nous ne sommes pas limités par la nature de la société dans laquelle on évolue. On doit rester ouvert. D'autre part l'histoire de l'AUB et sa place dans le mouvement étudiant au Liban date de cent ans. La plupart des grandes manifestations pro-palestiniennes des années 1960 ont été fomentées à l'AUB. Il y aussi disons, que l'AUB a une inclinaison plutôt de gauche par rapport aux autres universités. Les étudiants de l'AUB sont, par nature, plus laïcs. Notre travail en matière de laïcité est plus facile là-bas qu'à l'USJ qui est à dominante chrétienne."*<sup>67</sup>

This account presents many interesting developments, associating the history of the university, its geography, and its population to a political definition of its territory. The

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<sup>67</sup> Virgil, interview with the author: May 14, 2010 [in French].

assumption that AUB is a micro-model of Lebanon demonstrates that the sectarian divisions and the afferent partisan distinctions stand for Virgil as the main issue at stake in the Lebanese social system. Socio-economic differences remain untold, illustrating the idea of narrative silence contrasting with the dominant perspectives. Indeed, as AUB remains a privileged institution, its student population is evidently not representative of the entire national population. The level of instruction and the cost of studies imply that the students recruited in the AUB belong to the upper class as statistical investigation unsurprisingly demonstrates (Al-Amine 1997)<sup>68</sup>. Its 7,000 students also include a vast number of foreigners (around 1,000)<sup>69</sup>, a large majority of whom Arabs, while its elitist character indeed attracts high-class young Lebanese from all regions and sectarian groups (Al-Amine 1997).

Virgil's point also highlights the relations constructed between the territory of AUB and the political groups. The history of the establishment undoubtedly plays a role in the claim of its similarity with Lebanon. Created in 1866 under the name of Syrian Protestant College, the AUB is the oldest university of the country. Conceptualized on the model of the US universities, it was thought to stand as a city in the city (Beyhum 1991, p. 31). Progressively, AUB became intrinsically linked with its neighborhood, the district of Hamra in West Beirut, symbol of the cosmopolitan modern lifestyle in the Lebanese capital. AUB largely participated in the reputation and growth of Hamra (Davie 1997, p. 4): its status of best university in the Arab world, its international student population, and its culture of excellence proved influential in the abundance of culture and the prosperous commercial exchanges that characterized Hamra in the sixties (Beyhum 1991, p. 32). The university and its neighborhood were also the theater of a flourishing political life. Already before World War II, AUB witnessed the foundation of the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP)<sup>70</sup>, created in 1932 by Antoun Saadeh, which has played an important part in

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<sup>68</sup> In my own limited snowball sampling, the occupations of the parents illustrate the same fact (see tables of interviews in the appendix). Even in the four cases studied in the following pages, three of the students have a father general in the Lebanese Army.

<sup>69</sup> The exact number for the academic year 2007-2008 is 7,078 students (3,521 males and 3,557 females), including 1,172 foreigners. Report of the Central Administration of Statistics, *Statistical Yearbook 2008*, p. 911.

<sup>70</sup> Originally named Syrian Nationalist Party (*al-Hizb al-Qawmî al-Sûrî*), the party is today designed as Syrian Social National Party (*al-Hizb al-Sûrî al-Qawmî al-Îjtimâ'î*) or, more simply, "the nationalist party" (*al-Hizb al-Qawmî*). Its secular ideology advocates the union of all the people living in the territory of "Greater Syria" – made of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Kuwait, and Cyprus – independently of religious divisions. Nonetheless, the party recruits noticeably in the Greek Orthodox sect, from which Saadeh was originated. Today, the SSNP is allied with the March 8 coalition. It remains active in the resistance against Israel with the support of Hezbollah. During the summer 2006 war, militants from the SSNP participated in the fighting against the Israeli invasion, especially in the

the Lebanese modern political history. AUB was also influential in the emergence of the Arab Nationalist Movement (*Haraket al-Qawmiyîn al-'arab*) constituted through an AUB literary association. Figures like Constantine Zurayq<sup>71</sup> and George Habbach<sup>72</sup> count among the students who went down in the political history of the Arab worlds.

Hotbed of Arabism, the AUB campus had been from the 1950s more and more mobilized in support of the Palestinian cause. Groups like Fatah prospered, all the more since they could count on the numerous foreign students mainly coming from the Arab world (Le Pottier 1998). The weight of the Palestinian presence in the troubled national context progressively led to contestation from students supporters of the Lebanese nationalist option – in particular the sympathizers of the Kata'eb party and those of Camille Chamoun. The confrontation between the two sides escalated, leading to open battle between “Arabists” and “Lebanonists” (Favier 2004, p. 130-134; Le Pottier 1998). Armed clashes even erupted at the eve of the 1975 war. This dynamics of conflict has led numbers of scholars to consider the AUB as paradigmatic of the wider strife ripping the country (Barakat 1977; Rabah 2009). Once the microcosm of a territory much wider than Lebanon – the Arab nation (*al-Watan al-'arabî*) – AUB was then caught into the war and downsized to its location in West Beirut. The administration of the university eventually opened an “*off-campus program*” beside the demarcation line in the capital, so that students from the Eastern regions – mainly Christians – could attend courses (Beyhum 1991, p. 35).

At first victim of the struggle between “Lebanonists” and “Arabists”, then of the transformation of the conflict into sectarian strife, American University of Beirut also witnessed the emergence of alternative movements in the late 1990s. At that time, economic difficulties and political deadlock started to trigger more and more demands from an emerging civil society which had progressively recovered from the war period (Karam 2006). While the students were sporadically mobilized against the Syrian presence or for more sectorial causes – especially in December 1997 (Favier 2000a) – AUB saw the advent of new forces, mainly defending secularist positions. The group *Bilâ Huddûd – No Frontiers* – established itself as the prominent incarnation of this renewal. Composed of former communists and leftists from diverse horizons, the

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Christian areas of the Western Beqaa, in the South-East of the country.

<sup>71</sup> Constantine Zurayq (1909-2000) was an intellectual, born in Damascus in a Greek Orthodox family. He is considered a pioneer of Arab nationalism. See: <http://www.menafn.com/menafn/1093476961/The-American-University-of-Beirut-Arab-Nationalism-and-Liberal-Education> [October 2012]

<sup>72</sup> George Habbach (1926-2008), a Palestinian, was the founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Palestine (PFLP). He became one of the most prominent figures of the Palestinian revolution.

group played a pivotal role in AUB politics until 2005. The so-called “Cedar revolution” however led to the progressive dislocation of the group. Many activists decided at that time to join a new political party, the Democratic Left (*al-Yasâr al-dîmuqrâtî*), a split from the Lebanese Communist Party which allied with the March 14 coalition. But the evolution of the coalition toward a bloc defending the interests of Hariri’s Future Movement and its rising opposition with March 8 and the FPM weakened the Democratic Left. The party, as well as many in the leftist movements, fell trapped into the resurgence of sectarianism in the national political arena triggered by the clash between the two leading coalitions. Confronted with increasing polarization, *No Frontiers* started to lose its influence in a university dominated by the struggle opposing March 14 to its adversaries. Today, the student group tries to reorganize itself but remains a marginal actor in front of the supremacy of the political parties. In that sense, more than a model of Lebanon, AUB seems to echo the fate of the student mobilizations in the country, paralyzed in time of crisis by the strength of the partisan divisions.

Because of these specificities, the ways identification with the FPM is experienced and manifested by the students in the territory of the AUB are altered compared to their LU comrades. “*Here, it’s Gharbiyyeh [West-end], a territory that was out of our control during the war*” a LF representative told me during my first visit on the campus back in 2003<sup>73</sup>. Is such a view informed by the war-time demarcation predominant among the FPM students coming from the Eastern regions when they reflect upon their arrival at AUB? How do they depict their own insertion in regard with the environment of the university?

- Example 1: Tino. Born in 1990. Originated from a Christian village of the region of Aley, at the confines of the Chouf Mountains, an area populated by Druzes and Christians. His parents do not manifest any sharp political preference but his paternal uncles engaged in the 1975-1977 war in the Kata'eb militia to fight the Palestinians and the Lebanese National Movement under the command of the Druze leader Kamal Joublatt. Several of his family members died during the fighting. Maronite, he was educated in a Christian Catholic school situated in Gemmayzeh (East Beirut) before joining AUB. His arrival at the university was retold as follow: “*You meet other people. My school counted 80% of Christians. In the university, on the contrary, you have*

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<sup>73</sup> Paulo, interview with the author: November 14, 2003 [in French].

*Palestinians, Syrians, and everything...so you can't stay stubborn like the Lebanese Forces*"<sup>74</sup>.

In Tino's words, the diversity in AUB, whose student population is both multi-sectarian and international, is revealed through the prism of uniformity of the confessional school he frequented. In that perspective, entering the AUB campus induces a radical change in the interactional settings experienced in his everyday life. Notably, Tino refers to Palestinians and Syrians rather than to Lebanese Muslims or to any partisan affiliation as embodiment of "the other". This may indicate that those two collective identities are associated with what he views as the figure of alterity and potential enemy: the Palestinians because of his family experience dating back to the 1975-1977 war, and the Syrians because of the grievances they concentrated during their domination over Lebanon, especially in the kind of milieu Tino was inserted in: a family who supported Lebanese nationalist options and a socialization in a dominantly Christian environment (school, friends, etc.) in which the Syrian presence was commonly contested.

However, Tino places the major differentiation between him – identifying with the FPM – and the Lebanese Forces. Once again, the relevance of the fracture dividing the Christian political scene emerges. In the diversity of the university, identification with the FPM supposes a different response than the one perceived as characteristic of the LF. The position taken by Tino as FPM activist encompasses reference to a story line that refuses sectarian fragmentation. Being a Christian supporting the FPM in a plural environment, the significant cleavage is for Tino the choice between what he associates with a LF posture defined as exclusively Christian-centered and the position offered by the collective identity he mobilizes to define himself. The FPM position – by contrast with the LF position – offers him access to a repertoire of acceptance of the diversity in encounter.

- Example 2: Robert. Born in 1989. Originated from Damour, a Christian coastal village south of Beirut that witnessed one of the most infamous massacres of the Lebanese

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<sup>74</sup> Tino, interview with the author: May 21, 2010. The original statement was in French: "(...) *tu rencontres d'autres gens. Mon école est à 80% chrétienne. Au contraire, à l'université il y a des Palestiniens, des Syriens, etc. Donc tu ne peux pas rester borné comme les FL.*"

wars<sup>75</sup>. Raised in a family supporting Michel Aoun and the FPM (his father being himself a general in the Lebanese Army), Robert lived in Baabda before moving back to Damour several years after the end of the hostilities. He went to the Catholic Notre-Dame-de-Jamhour school near Baabda. According to him, his arrival at AUB explicitly exemplifies the question of positioning in the university settings: “*My engagement dates back to school, before university. (...) When I arrived here, I continued, because I couldn't lie. I was directly asked: 'What are you?' So I answered that I was with the FPM, because I couldn't lie, contrary to some others who claim to be neutral during elections but who are in fact with another party. Besides, I also took the FPM card-member [when I got 20]. I took it against the will of my parents who advised me to stay free. But I took it because I wanted, because I love the FPM.*”<sup>76</sup>

Besides the moral claim suggesting that positioning oneself as FPM member implies to demonstrate a perfectly honest behavior, Robert's story reveals how the implantation of political forces and the diversity of the university population generate processes of identity assignments in the course of interactions. We can make the hypothesis that the experience of confessional plurality in contrast with his school in Jamhour, which remains a heavily Catholic environment, enhanced Robert's sense of identification with the Party. The injunction of his parents to “*stay free*” has in my views also to do with the issue of positioning: once identified with the party and recognized as such, the strength of imposed identity is increased and the individual's margin of maneuver in the encounter is reduced.

- Example 3: Nassim. Born in 1989. Originated from a Greek Catholic family of Jezzine, in South Lebanon, he has always lived in Baabda. His father is a general in the Lebanese Army and also a supporter of the FPM. Educated like Robert in the

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<sup>75</sup> On January 20, 1976, fighters of the PLO, the Saiqa [a pro-Syrian Palestinian militia], and the Lebanese National Movement invaded and destroyed the Christian coastal city of Damour, South of Beirut. The attack caused the death of 584 people, while more than 5,000 people fled the town (Fisk 2001 p. 99-100). See also Picard 2012a (Online): <http://www.massviolence.org/La-guerre-civile-au-Liban?artpage=4-12> [December 2012]

<sup>76</sup> Robert, interview with the author: May 17, 2010. The original statement was in French: “*Mon engagement date de l'école, avant l'université. (...) Quand je suis arrivé à l'université ici, j'ai continué. Parce que je n'ai pas pu mentir. Directement on te demande: 'tu es quoi?'. Alors j'ai répondu que je suis avec le CPL, parce que je ne peux pas mentir, contrairement à certains qui pendant les élections disent qu'ils sont neutres ou qu'ils sont ci ou ça mais en fait sont avec un autre parti. Et d'ailleurs, j'ai aussi pris la carte du CPL. Je l'ai prise contre l'avis de mes parents qui me disaient de rester libre, mais je l'ai pris parce que je le voulais, parce que j'aime le CPL.*”

prestigious Notre-Dame-de-Jamhour, he joined AUB in 2007: “*When I entered AUB...OK, you are with the FPM but you cannot enter politics in AUB because the AUB is in a Muslim region...it’s the first impression, you know how it is in Lebanon. But when you come here, you realize that no, it’s normal. You can work in politics. Another image arises. But some people say: ‘you go into a Muslim area there are tensions between Sunnis and Shiites. In AUB, it’s the Beirut environment, so don’t work in politics’. But actually, it’s not the case. When you enter and you start working day after day, first on events and then during elections, you see the atmosphere. You can participate in the elections, and then you realize that you can give more, and you go for it...that’s what I did.*”<sup>77</sup>

Nassim’s account highlights the sectarian prejudices attached to territorial location and partisanship. In what is constructed as a collective prejudice, FPM is associated with Christians while AUB, being situated in West Beirut, refers to Muslim populations. My interlocutor rejects these preconceptions but in doing so, he also demonstrates their persistence. His attempt at justification toward me (“*you know how it is*”) only reinforces the endurance of these perceptions. Defining himself as a FPM member is, according to his story, to refuse one’s own prejudice and engage in action. The position of FPMer supposes to revoke sectarian definition in order to adopt political and practical – i.e. built in action – perceptions of a university world characterized by its pluralism.

- Example 4: Malek. Born in 1988. Like Nassim, he is originated from the South and his father, a FPM supporter, was a general in the Army. Representative of the FPM in AUB at the time of the interview, he expressed fervent secular views, although he was educated in the Catholic school of the Antonine Sisters. His description of AUB at his arrival depicts in a critical way the sectarian fractures existing on the campus: “*When I*

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<sup>77</sup> Nassim, interview with the author: May 18, 2010. The original statement was in French: “*Quand je suis rentré à l’université...bon OK, tu es avec le CPL mais tu ne veux pas trop entrer dans les choses politiques parce que l’AUB est dans une région où il y a des musulmans...la première impression, tu connais au Liban. Mais quand tu rentres ici, tu te rends compte qu’en fait non, c’est normal. Tu peux travailler [politique], au contraire. C’est une autre image. Mais avant, les gens te disent : « oui, tu vas dans une région musulmane, il y a des problèmes sunnites-chiïtes. À l’AUB, tu as les milieux des Beyrouth, alors tu ne vas pas travailler politique... ». Mais en fait non. Quand tu entres et que tu commences jour après jour à prendre part aux événements, puis aux élections, tu vois l’ambiance. Tu veux participer aux élections, tu participes et après ça, quand tu vois que tu peux donner plus, tu te lances...et c’est ce que j’ai fait.*”

*first entered AUB, there was a major sect cleavage. The Sunnis would seat together, the Christians, the Shiites and the Druzes too. It was disgusting. Especially since I was raised in a family in which we make no difference. I spent much of my time with my father, at his work. In the army, you always go with a Sunni, a Shiite, anyone, without even asking the question. I was really astonished that here at AUB, one would ask you if you are a Christian, a Sunni or a Shiite. It was disgusting. One would seat with you if you are from his own sect... it was very annoying to me (...) and to many others too. Because this is not how we were raised. (...) I hope that someday, there will be no more problems with the sects in Lebanon (...) through everything that we do: when we do a protest, it's not a protest for Christians, not a protest for Muslims, this is a protest for students.*<sup>78</sup>

As was the case in the three previous accounts, Malek's story reflects a political stand. To identify with the FPM means to position oneself against the sectarian divisions that supposedly tear the AUB students apart. The diversity is indirectly associated with the potential for conflict and segregation. To reconstruct such a confessional cleavage within the territory of the campus enables Malek to affirm his own concurrent vision of reality. His perceptions originate in a shared culture more than in a political organization *stricto sensu*: the assertion "*this is not how we were raised*" implies at the same time a collective experience ("*we*") and a socialization process realized in relation to family figures ("*raised*"). It demonstrates the anchoring of *groupness* in both social ties and collective perception of reality. Finally, in the last part of his account, the problem of sectarianism as represented in AUB is transposed to the scale of the entire Lebanon. Here, his story merges with the political program of the FPM. Therefore, identifying with the FPM amounts to positioning oneself in a specific locus regarding the fragmentation of the university space and of the country.

The perceived space of the AUB and the imagined representations attached to it define the conditions in which the sense of belonging to the partisan group is constructed. AUB is lived as a space of coexistence. Because of its plurality and its localization, the FPM activists cannot lay claim over its territory in ordinary circumstances. While the presence of the others may reinforce the partisan positioning, the definition of the self as a group member implies a certain conception of the life in

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<sup>78</sup> Malek, interview with the author: May 22, 2010 [in English].



common, inspired by the public identity narrative of the Party which insists on national unity, shared citizenship, and inter-religious harmony. The pluralistic nature of AUB thus imprints the ways how identification with the FPM is experienced.

### **C) Entering Huvelin: positioning in a sectarian environment**

To better understand the impact of the social production of space on the individual positioning of the students and their construction of the self, I propose to digress from the sole case of the FPM youth and consider a case I encountered during my Master research. It provides, I think, a remarkably sound example of how positioning and party identification work together in the specific circumstances designed by the settings prevailing on a campus. It also demonstrates clearly how personal positions are not only constructed by the actors themselves but rather result of social interactions through which they are negotiated and sometimes strongly imposed.

In 2006, as I was studying the student section of Hezbollah, Mehdi was designated to me by an USJ professor as the leader of the Shiite party's student group in Huvelin. However, from my first phone contact with him, he seemed very reluctant to accept this label. I first referred his circumspection to a natural caution in front of an outsider. But my understanding of his situation rapidly evolved. During our first meeting, he heavily insisted on the gaps that were distancing him from Hezbollah:

*"Je ne suis pas membre du Hezbollah...il y a une rumeur, mais je ne suis pas un partisan. Par contre je suis avec la Résistance<sup>79</sup>. Je viens du Sud, j'ai vu tous les massacres israéliens, j'ai vraiment vécu ce qui se passe au Sud (...). Je me souviens quand j'allais chez mes cousins au Sud, toujours après la première nuit, je ramassais mes affaires et je voulais partir...c'était terrifiant les bombes qui tombaient autour de nous (...). Je soutiens le Hezbollah parce que je soutiens la Résistance, et pas l'inverse (...). Je préfère un pays laïc, je le dis franchement, je suis contre un parti communiste (...). J'ai beaucoup de chose contre le Hezbollah, mais je ne le dis pas parce que maintenant, c'est la guerre (...)."<sup>80</sup>*

Mehdi's affiliation with the party of the Resistance is seen as rooted in his experience of the Israeli operations in South Lebanon. At the time of the interview, the atmosphere in the country was heavy: the alliance forged for the 2005 parliamentary elections between the tandem Amal-Hezbollah and the March 14 coalition had

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<sup>79</sup> The "Resistance" refers to the Islamic Resistance, the name of Hezbollah's armed organization that organizes the resistance against the Israeli occupation of seven villages in the southern region of Shebaa.

<sup>80</sup> All the following extracts are borrowed from two interviews realized in February (3 and 18) 2006 [in French].

collapsed. The two Shiite movements suspended their participation in the government and tried to provoke its resignation. However, March 14 led by the Future Movement of the Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri, Walid Joumblatt's PSP and the Lebanese Forces refused to bow. The political scene was sharply divided and rumors about possible escalations were recurrent. Mehdi's words "*maintenant, c'est la guerre [now it is the war]*" strongly stressed this tension and suggested the expression of his solidarity with Hezbollah's political stand, explaining why he made his critics of the party less vocal. His words also highlight the violent and confrontational construction of partisan affiliations. Still, his link with Hezbollah seemed to owe much to his arrival in Huvelin, in the faculty of Management:

*"J'ai commencé la politique quand je suis arrivé à l'université. Deux ou trois mois avant les élections estudiantines, tout le monde se sépare, tu commences à entendre des discours religieux...les Musulmans pensaient qu'il fallait faire quelque chose pour eux parce qu'ils se sentaient exclus alors que leur nombre augmente (...). J'ai refusé cette logique (...). Ici en gestion, il y a beaucoup de Musulmans, au contraire de l'USJ qui est une société chrétienne (...). Avant de venir à l'USJ, j'ai passé un an en faculté de biologie à l'UL. C'était la porte pour la politique, mais je n'étais pas impliqué. Le point de départ pour moi, c'était les élections de l'USJ car à l'UL, ce n'est pas vraiment une vie politique: le Hezbollah gagne toujours. Si j'avais continué à l'UL, je ne crois pas que je me serais engagé (...). Je n'ai pas ressenti la vie politique avant d'aller à l'USJ."*

Elitist like AUB but overwhelmingly Christian like the LU – branch 2, Saint-Joseph University carries the heritage of Jesuit education in Lebanon. Its historical center dating back to 1875 presents the architecture of a religious seminary. Contrary to AUB imbedded into its neighboring district of Hamra, USJ gives the impression of a closed space, concealed from its immediate environment, the mainly residential districts of Mar Maroun in Achrafiyeh (Davie 1997, p. 3). The campus of Social Sciences where my fieldwork started in 2007 is situated one block away from the initial building of the university, in Huvelin Street. Located in the heart of the "Christian Beirut", "Huvelin" – as my interlocutors used to call it – hosts around 2,500 of the 11,000 USJ students, distributed between the five institutions that compose the campus: the faculty of Law (343 students), the faculty of Economics (484), the faculty of Management (1480), the Political science institute (75) and the institute of Insurances studies (109)<sup>81</sup>. The majority of these students belongs to the different

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<sup>81</sup> These figures refer to the number of students registered on the electoral lists of the various faculties and institutes for the university elections in November 2009. These data do not take into account the students who had not at that time paid their inscription and tuition fees. Sources: indexes of voting

Christian communities and resides in Eastern Beirut or its near suburbs, the Metn and Baabda districts. However, a growing number of Muslim students can be found on the campus, mainly in the faculty of Management<sup>82</sup>. This presence works as the basis for the constitution of a group publicly claiming its affiliation with and support for the main Shiite movements Hezbollah and Amal. Besides, the establishment of this group is facilitated by the alliance concluded in February 2006 between Hezbollah and the FPM, one of the most influential forces on the ground in Huvelin. In spite of this recent evolution, Huvelin remains geographically and socially a Christian territory.

It was in the confrontation with this Christian environment and the political hostility it expressed toward Muslims and Hezbollah that Mehdi actually forged his engagement. A “*Christian society*”, the campus has been influenced by the political forces implanted within Christian areas for decades. From the 1950s, the mounting impact of these partisan groups had surfaced, especially with the rise of the Kata'eb student section. Bachir Gemayel, son of the party's founder Pierre Gemayel, who would become the leader of the Lebanese Forces before being elected president of the Republic in 1982, graduated from the faculty of Law in 1971 and obtained a degree in Political science two years later. Since then, his ghostly presence strongly imprints Huvelin's space – materialized by a striking portrait hung in the hall of what is now the faculty of Economics, on the initiative of a former USJ rector, Father Selim Abou. The daunting figure of Bachir confers a symbolic dimension to the campus in the eyes of both Kata'eb and LF supporters. Many are the students who see the arrival of Muslims as a threat for the identity of the university<sup>83</sup>.

From 2005, incidents and fights between “pro-LF” and pro-Kata'eb” students on the one hand, and, on the other, students associated with the Shiite movements Hezbollah and Amal, have been frequent<sup>84</sup>. In the view of the Christian traditional

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counts consulted at the USJ, November 12, 2009, completed with data published on the FPM Internet site: [www.tayyar.org](http://www.tayyar.org) [November 2009]

<sup>82</sup> Although no precise figures exist on that phenomenon, my interviews with USJ students and my observations highlight this fact. A proportion of these Muslim students seem to come from the expatriated Shiite community living in French speaking West African countries, mainly Ivory Coast.

<sup>83</sup> A Shiite FPM student told me how his victory in university elections caused distress among some Christian students: “*The fact that I, a Muslim, won in the elections in my third year made some people cry. People cried! And to be clear, the Muslims did not actually vote for me at this time [2005] because we as FPM were against the dominant political stand of Muslim parties.*” (Tayeb, interview with the author: November 4, 2007 [in French]).

<sup>84</sup> Many troubles were recounted to me by students during my visits on the campus. The national press also echoed the most important incidents. In November 2008, a violent clash opposed students when the Kata'eb supporters tried to commemorate the assassination of former Industry Minister Pierre Gemayel, killed in his car by unknown assailants one year earlier. In reaction, the administration of the USJ decided on December 3, 2008 to ban all political activities (*The Daily Star*: December 4, 2008). A

public of the university, the Christian identity of the territory implies that the presence of Muslims is perceived in terms of an unaccepted sectarian cohabitation. Copresence here produces a sense of sectarian belonging. Those defined as outsiders are rejected, reduced to their alterity, they are summoned to leave the space. The antagonism expressed by groups such as the LF and the Kata'eb originates both in the history of these organizations, which fought against Islamic and Progressive forces, and their present stand in the national political field. The resistance against public implantation of Shiite groups in Huvelin results from a conflict at the national scale. The cleavage between the various collective identifications as they are perceived on the ground is revealed by the mental maps students are constructing about Huvelin's territory. A common idea expressed by many students suggests that group members' physical localisation on the campus depends on their political affiliation. Although students seem to circulate quite fluidly, assertions about a distinctive territorial basis for parties' followers are frequent: while FPM supporters allegedly gather along the faculty of Law and Economics, LF cliques are said to be implanted in the middle of the campus ground, finally Shiites supposedly affiliated with Amal and Hezbollah meet in front of the cafeteria, near the faculty of Management in which most of them are studying.

In this hostile context, Mehdi participated in the setting up of a group supporting the view of Hezbollah, though maintaining a distance with the party:

*“Dans notre groupe à l'université, on essaie de garder une liberté d'action (...). Certains de nos membres appartiennent au Hezbollah, d'autres, non (...). Il y a des idées contradictoires dans notre mouvement...ce qui nous unit, c'est la Résistance et avoir un pays déconfessionnalisé. Certains disent qu'un pays laïc n'est pas applicable, moi, je pense que c'est très facilement applicable (...). J'ai un peu une pensée de gauche, mais je ne suis pas vraiment de gauche. Je pense notamment à Kamal Joumblatt qui est un idéologue, un très grand penseur...il y a eu une manifestation pour commémorer sa mort, le groupe a refusé de participer mais moi, j'ai participé à titre personnel, car c'est un exemple qui pourrait nous donner un Liban laïc (...).”*

The group headed by Mehdi is informal. It consists mainly in a backing force mobilized during the student elections. This group is made of Hezbollah and Amal supporters, but also supporters of the resistance against the Israeli occupation in the South. Some of its members actually belong to Hezbollah or Amal and do coordinate

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few months later, in March 2009, a Kata'eb-Hezbollah brawl erupted in Huvelin (*The Daily Star*: March 19, 2009). More recently, in May 2012, a fight broke out between LF and Kata'eb supporters on the one hand and students labeled “Hezbollah” on the other (*The Daily Star*: May 24, 2012).

their actions with their respective parties. However, it is done through inter-individual contacts. No direct connection exist between the group as such and Hezbollah. Similarly, their coordination with FPM students exist, but seems minimal outside electoral periods. In fact, it appears mainly as a group of sociability for Shiite students who highlight their Shiite political identity in front of an environment perceived as hostile. During the day, they spend the breaks together, in a particular spot of the campus. The loosened nature of the group, apart from its diversity, also resulted from a strategic approach: Hezbollah was willing to keep a relatively low profile on a territory traditionally out of its influence (Lefort 2006). Nevertheless, Mehdi's own trajectory also played a part in the affirmation of his difference:

*“Mon père s'intéresse à la politique, mais il n'était pas engagé. D'ailleurs, il est contre mon engagement...Mais nous sommes dans une famille où chaque soir, il y a une soirée de politique. Tout mon alentour est politique, je vis à Dâhiyyeh...le Hezbollah a fait des tentatives pour me convaincre de travailler avec eux, mais j'étais contre et j'ai refusé. Mais je peux défendre la Résistance sans être un partisan (...). J'ai été au lycée à Hadath, au lycée Pilot, dans un endroit frontière, un peu comme Chiyah et Ayn el-Rummaneh, mais entre Hadath et Kafaat. Au début, c'était mélangé, mais progressivement, c'est devenu plus musulman, je ne sais pas pourquoi (...). Je n'ai jamais eu de leçons de religion, ni à l'école, ni à la maison, même si ma mère est voilée. On a la liberté à la maison...on sait qu'on est musulman, on respecte ça, mais on ne pratique pas l'Islam comme il faut (...). Mes sœurs par exemple, elles ne sont pas voilées, elles sortent et tout.”*

Originated from a Shiite family of Nabatiyyeh (South Lebanon), Mehdi lived with his parents and sisters in *Dâhiyyeh*, the Southern Suburb of Beirut, the territorial stronghold of Hezbollah. However, he apparently suffered from this environment, insisting on the specificities of his own experience. The affirmation “*on ne pratique pas l'Islam comme il faut [we don't practice Islam rightfully]*” illustrates the strength of the religious and social norms dominating his living space<sup>85</sup>. Ill at ease with these rules, Mehdi insisted in his account on borderlines: Chiyah and Ayn al-Rummaneh, Hadath and Kafaat constitute contact zones between sectarian groups, charged with a memory of conflict dating back from the 1975-1990 wars.

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<sup>85</sup> Some of these norms directly result from the political domination of Hezbollah, but the majority of them progressively emerged in social practices constructed in the interactions imprinted by public religiousness and piety. This phenomenon is at the basis of what some scholars labeled as the “Islamic sphere” or *Hâla Islâmiyya* (Deeb 2006; Harb 2005). Prevailing in areas such as *Dâhiyyeh*, the Islamic sphere is nourished by a strong and composite identity narrative – diffused primarily by Hezbollah but not only.

*“Personnellement je suis déchiré entre deux sujets: la Résistance d’une part (...) et avoir un pays laïc. Mais à cause d’Israël, je soutiens d’abord la Résistance car j’ai perdu des amis...des cousins...un cousin. J’ai vu vraiment ce qui se passe au Sud (...). Mais ce qui me dérange le plus, c’est que si tu es chiite, tu n’es pas forcément pour le Hezbollah...ça ne me dérange pas d’être pour le Hezbollah mais ça me dérange ce mode de pensée qui veut que si tu es chiite, alors tu es Hezbollah (...). J’ai des amis du Hezbollah, mais je leur dis que dans ces conditions de travail politique, je ne peux pas adhérer. (...) La religion, tu ne la choisis pas, c’est pour ça que je n’aime pas que ce soit politique. Tu pratiques à la maison, à la mosquée ou à l’église, mais ce n’est pas à imposer aux autres gens. Au Liban par exemple, avec mon nom, on peut savoir de quelle religion je suis...je déteste que mon nom reflète ma religion. Et si ton nom était ambigu, la première question qu’on me poserait serait de savoir d’où je viens pour savoir ma religion (...). Je déteste ça (...). Je suis musulman, ça ne change rien...c’est sûr que ça influence un peu ta vie...ça n’aurait rien changé...peut-être, si j’avais été chrétien, ça aurait changé ma vision politique...même si je ne défends pas la Résistance pour des raisons religieuses...je ne sais pas (...). Au Liban tout est lié...si tu attaques les Chiïtes, tu attaques la Résistance...ce n’est pas sain...c’est une maladie ici.”*

In my Master thesis, I analyzed Mehdi’s case as a classical example of alignment with the norm in front of the out-group (in Huvelin) and differentiation within the group. I evaluated his engagement in the university as a reaction when facing the political hostility manifested against the resistance. Though, from the last quotation, it is possible to understand that what mattered most was rather the personal position imposed on him by some students in the USJ setting. Because he was Shiite, he was associated with Hezbollah and positioned accordingly by the others he encountered in his everyday life on the campus. On the campus, Shiite students are generally referred as “Hezbollah members”. Actual members are in fact a small minority. Some are supporters of the party, others are Amal sympathizers, but in many cases, being Shiite is enough and an important number of them have a very distant approach on politics. The relational dynamics between perceived groups are here crucial.

Consequently, my interpretation is that Mehdi’s proclaimed liberty and his discomfort were more the result of an incompatibility with the moral order imposed on him by his positioning in the university context as a Hezbollah member. His refusal of the political and societal project of the party, which, in his views, transpires as hegemonic and monolithic, impeded him to encompass the cultural, social, and political meanings incorporated into the storyline assigned to him. Consequently, Mehdi struggled to find his place in the university setting because the position allotted to him did not meet his own perception of his self. His case demonstrates the power of

assignments and the impossibility to escape sectarian and political affiliation in public encounters. Although Mehdi strongly insisted on the richness of experiencing the live with the other, it is clear that the contradictions of his personal positioning impeded him to construct a coherent personal narrative and build a stable self. However, although he was not able at a personal level to overcome the clash between his values – especially those obviously inherited from his family – and the ones highlighted by the Hezbollah identity narrative, his profile within the university setting of the USJ forced him to take a political stand. His choice was in a way imposed on him. Engaging in partisan action was his only possibility to take control of the definition of his self without suffering a classification enforced from outside.

Mehdi's case illustrates how a relational setting dominated by sectarian and partisan references constructs identification. For Mehdi, to exist publicly as a Shiite in Huvelin is to join the pro-Hezbollah student group. Affiliation is expressed in the construction of a personal positioning that enables to claim an identity in front of irreducible alterity. On the contrary, being a Shiite and/or a Hezbollah member in the *Dâhiyyeh* acquires a very different meaning that Mehdi cannot assume. His identification with Hezbollah therefore only acquires signification in the territory of Huvelin in which the presence of Shiites is perceived as a threat to the Christian political domination of the space. This fear tends to associate every potential member with the menace embodied by the Islamic armed movement. The repertoire opened in this case is, for the students rejecting the Muslim presence, the one of protection against intrusion; for Mehdi and his comrades, it is the one of affirmation in front of negation. Interestingly, Mehdi's reaction facing a system associating sectarian origin and partisanship participates in the reproduction of this system. From this example, it is understood how individual perceptions of fragmentation concur in constructing the social structure that created them. To paraphrase Gérard Lenclud, we are facing here a new version of the chicken and the egg causality dilemma (Lenclud 1993, § 57). While individuals construct the society, societies construct the individual (Simmel 1999 [1908], p. 431).

In these developments, I tried to demonstrate how the social production of the university space was achieved in specific settings and how it impacted the positioning of the self. Identifying oneself or being identify with a partisan group, amounts to adopting a specific position in relation to the coexistence in the university lived space. This process illustrates the relational definition of categories (Simmel 1998 [1907]) as well as the power of perception in the constitution of groups (Turner 1982, p. 16). Furthermore, it exemplifies how the divided social structure is realized and actualized in the systems of interaction produced by the students' representations. The

significations they utter and utilize contribute to the formation of the contexts in which they interact. It is now time to see how the students' use of partisan positions and their afferent storylines to frame the situations and label their environment is sustained by the omnipresence of the political forces in the university settings.

## **2. SECURING THE TERRITORY**

In the university settings, questioning the social production of space supposes to study how partisan groups like the FPM surround their territories of implantation to maintain the preeminence of their definition of the reality. This framing of the university spaces is both material and symbolic, relying on both the sense of belonging and the insertion into social networks encompassed in the notion of *groupness* I am using to qualify the process of identification. The aim is to generate the conditions in which identification with partisan groups through the social production of the university spaces operates intelligibly: how are partisan storylines made available in student interactions?

### **A) The local implantation of political forces**

As much as temporal circumstances, formal organizations and organizational settings provide interaction's participants with the codes to interpret events and behaviors. The establishment of "structures of meaning", to use the words of Geertz (1973, p. 12) implies the mobilization in the university settings of both material and cognitive devices. They aim at framing student interactions and participate in the social definition of space. Through their physical presence, political forces such as the FPM intend to legitimize their definition of reality. This presence deploys a double surrounding of the territory in question: organizational on the one hand, and interpersonal on the other.

As illustrated by the description of the LU Faculty of Information and Documentation opening this chapter, the materiality of partisan forces' implantation is, at first consideration, visual. The corridor of the LU main campus in Hadath provides a striking example: the new comer cannot miss the gigantic poster celebrating the students killed fighting with Hezbollah's Islamic Resistance during the 2006 war. However, this immediate presence is relative. If some iconographic displays are permanent, others only appear during determined period, political festivals or commemorations. The visual presence of parties is moreover reliant on the rules and limits imposed by the administration of the different universities. Dependent of public policies and hence under the direct domination by political movements, the LU presents the most visible occurrences of partisan symbolism. On the contrary, the



visibility of dominant groups such as the Free Patriotic Movement, the Lebanese Forces or the Kata'eb in Huvelin is scarce. AUB provides an intermediate case. If political parties are officially banned, students are allowed to form clubs<sup>86</sup> that serve as screens to partisan presence, the FPM using the Freedom club to organize its activities.

On November 19, 2010, during the student election campaign, *Outlook*, AUB student publication, opened its pages to several of the most prominent clubs. The next day, I found students discussing about the various clubs' logos, one asking the others if they would be able to recognize the political parties standing behind them. The task proved quite easy.

Club's name	Club's logo	Logo of the related political party
Discovery club		
Freedom club		
Lebanese Mission club		
Social club		
Youth club		

The social composition of the local population plays a role in the strength of the partisan visible imprint on the ground. For instance, I noted that Hezbollah was more likely to insist on its socio-religious roots in a university located in a Shiite area as exemplified by the occupation of the student council rooms: in Hadath, since many formerly dispersed faculties have been reunited on the campus, the population is not

<sup>86</sup> In 2012, AUB counted 50 clubs, not all of them related to political movements. The most famous partisan clubs are the Freedom club (FPM), the Discovery club (Kata'eb), the Lebanese Mission club (Amal), the Youth club (Future Movement), the Social club (LF). Clubs are authorized to organized political activities but theoretically remain independent from outside influence. Clubs bylaws are accessible on line. See: [http://www.aub.edu.lb/sao/activities/Documents/clubs\\_bylaws.pdf](http://www.aub.edu.lb/sao/activities/Documents/clubs_bylaws.pdf) [August 2012]

entirely coming from Hezbollah strongholds anymore. Therefore, the student representatives' office is not politically appropriated. The office in itself only displays a painting evoking symbolically Science – the new campus was implanted on the territory of the faculty of Sciences of the branch 1. However, since the 2006 war, the campus has been marked by iconography celebrating the Resistance and its student martyrs. Further, while Hezbollah is not the only party with student representatives, only its members are physically – and in permanence – present in the office. On the contrary, as observed in February 2006 and in October 2007 in another Lebanese University faculty situated in West Beirut (Unesco district) where the student population is almost entirely Shiite, the small student representatives' room was clearly marked both politically with a poster of Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah and religiously with a frame representing a Quranic inscriptions.

Beyond visual imprint, the parties have also established a dense penetration of the faculties with representatives at every scale – class group, year, faculty, campus, and university – wherever they have enough activists or supporters. To focus on the FPM, the movement structured a pyramidal network in the three universities I studied. The objective being for the party to enhance its presence and its efficiency on the ground. For example, in AUB, the group's structure was reorganized in 2010 in order to improve its functioning and its implantation at every level. An official of the Student Affairs explained the reform in these words:

*“Cette année, nous avons changé la structure du groupe. De mon temps, il y avait un coordinateur au sens large. Ce coordinateur était responsable de manière générale. A ses côtés, il y avait le président du club officiel du Tayyâr à l'AUB, le Freedom club. Ce président était plutôt chargé des activités, événements, conférences, etc., des choses plus logistiques, la politique étant prise en charge par le coordinateur. Il y avait ensuite des étudiants de différentes faculté pour les aider. Mais c'était un peu chaotique. Alors nous avons opté pour une nouvelle structure. Maintenant nous avons un coordinateur général et un coordinateur pour chaque faculté. Le coordinateur général définit la politique générale à l'université, il est par exemple responsable des relations avec les autres partis à l'université, gérer les alliances s'il y a alliance ou changement dans les alliances, etc. Alors que les coordinateurs au sein des facultés sont responsables du bien-être du Tayyâr dans leur faculté (...).Le président du Freedom club existe toujours et son rôle n'a pas vraiment changé.”<sup>87</sup>*

A comparable structure<sup>88</sup> exists in Huvelin. The FPM disposes there of one general coordinator for the campus, a supervisor in each faculty or institute and designated

<sup>87</sup> Virgil, interview with the author: May 14, 2010 [in French].

<sup>88</sup> My aim being here to present the conditions in which the social production of space operates, I

representatives in every level of study (from the first year to the Master). I noted a similar implantation in the various faculties of the LU – branch 2 in which the Party has a general coordinator and agents in most class groups. In the faculty of Sciences in Fanar, the FPM designates one responsible in each specialty (Biology, Chemistry, Math, etc.). All elements indicate that other political forces use an analogous organization that enables the parties to guarantee the presence of the organizations in every classroom even with a small number of activists. What matters seems the territorial unity more than the institutional functioning as a general coordinator is always to be found in campuses grouping several faculties. Conversely, there are no global student representatives for the entire USJ or LU which are divided into distinct locations, this role being filled by a member of the Party's Committee of the Student Affairs. The physical space of their academic unit is the realm of the student activists on the ground.

The control of elected student committees represents another powerful means for political groups to establish their presence and affirm their supremacy over their rivals. Symbolically, running these committees participate in the construction of the image of the party as a dominant actor. Materially, the control of student committees enables the parties to set up more activities and get funding for their projects. The budget of the various committees can equate to an important amount of money in USJ and AUB<sup>89</sup>. Once again, the margins of maneuver of the partisan forces depend on the rules imposed by the administration of the universities. In AUB, all activities have to be approved by the Office of Student Affairs and the university council (USFC) in which student representatives sit alongside the President of the university, the Dean of Student Affairs and faculty members<sup>90</sup>. In USJ, the administration similarly imposes strict limitations to student activities. Student activities must be officially submitted to the approval of the dean or president of the concerned faculty and the use of the funds allocated to student committees are similarly supervised<sup>91</sup>. Furthermore, on December

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concentrate on the sole implantation of the partisan groups on the ground. The internal functioning of the FPM student groups is detailed in the second part of this work focusing on socialization. See Chapter Three

<sup>89</sup> In USJ, the annual budget of a student committee is comprised between two millions and twenty millions of Lebanese Pounds (between 1,300\$ and 13,000\$) depending on the size of the faculty. In AUB, the amount available in each faculty is also variable, but often exceeds 10,000\$ per year.

<sup>90</sup> The USFC – University Student Faculty Committee is composed of the President of the university, the Dean of Student Affairs, the associate Dean, the chairperson of the Senate Committee, seventeen elected student members (including the Vice-President of the University elected among student members during the first meeting of the year), and seven faculty members. See: <http://www.aub.edu.lb/sao/activities/org/usfc/Pages/index.aspx> [August 2012]

<sup>91</sup> See the bylaws of the student committees, article 41 and articles 31 to 40 (under Title VII).

3, 2008, following a fight, the President of the university issued a decision suspending all activities related to politics in order to prevent further troubles<sup>92</sup>. In theory, the situation is comparable in the Lebanese University in which political activities have officially been banned. However, the influence exerted by the partisan forces on the administrative personnel of the LU generates exceptions. For example, in February 2007, the President of the LU, Zuhair Chukr, participated in the celebration of Hezbollah's Martyr Day organized in the main campus of Hadath. The deputy Secretary general of the party, Naim Qassem, as well as the Head of its student section, Youssef Merhi, were attending. Chukr declared that although political activities are officially forbidden in the university, this commemoration was a national event<sup>93</sup>. It is therefore also in a power struggle opposing them to – or on the contrary in connivance with – the administration of the universities that political forces build their legitimacy on the campuses.

Besides, the influence of political forces in the national university generates direct competition to control the administration positions in the various faculties of the LU. The situation was perfectly illustrated by a major conflict opposing the FPM and the LF about the Faculty of Information and Documentation that occurred only a few weeks before my encounter with Aida. At the early stage of my fieldwork in the LU, the local press echoed a conflict between students of the FID in Fanar. The nomination of Dr. Antoine Khoury Harb, a FPM official, as the new administrator of the FID generated a wave of protests orchestrated by LF students and the student committee of the faculty<sup>94</sup>. A few days later, I met with Aida. During our interview, I asked her about the crisis:

*"It's always the same things about mistakes and corruption (...). The President of the university – not only of our faculty but the university as a whole – appointed a new administrator. But all the troubles are because he belongs to the FPM. Even if he didn't say anything political, he was just here to do his job, but they started saying: 'No, he should not be here, he is a criminal: he was using guns in Achrafiyeh!' Well, if you guys talk about using guns in Achrafiyeh, look at yourselves, look at your leader, the criminal...Now I'm talking political, but let's put politics aside. They demanded that the faculty closes its doors and when that person*

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<http://www.usj.edu.lb/etudiants/amicales/111012stat.pdf> [August 2012]

<sup>92</sup> See *The Daily Star*: December 4, 2008.

<sup>93</sup> See *L'Orient le Jour*: March 19, 2007.

<sup>94</sup> See *L'Orient le Jour*: December 7, 2010. See also:

[https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reports/features/strike\\_not\\_storm\\_keeps\\_classrooms\\_quiet](https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reports/features/strike_not_storm_keeps_classrooms_quiet) [December 2012]

*goes away, it will reopen for studies. But the faculty is open and all the students can come.*"<sup>95</sup>

The conflict illustrates both the way political forces consider the LU and how identity narratives inspired by political parties are injected in the context of the faculty as Aida refers to the past domination in Achrafiyeh of the LF militia and its leader, Samir Geagea, in order to discredit the claims of its supporters. In spite of her attempt at qualifying the conflict in academic terms, its political dimension and meaning strongly dominate. The rhetoric she uses, for example when implying that the change is related to corruption matters, generates a realm of signification largely shaped by the perception of the figure of the LF enemy, associated with militia rule and sleaze. At the opposite, the LF version of the story, diffused in a press release emanating from the student committee in the FID, constructs a radically different reality. It states that the appointment resulted from a forced resignation of the former administrator, Laure Abi Tayeh. Denouncing “*pressures*” exerted against her and her family, it charges the honesty and morality of the newly designated director. The change in the administration is described as imposed from outside: the President of the university, i.e. a Muslim, and FPM supporters that allegedly threatened Mrs Abi Tayeh. On the contrary, the LF-dominated student committee underlines its legitimacy as representative of the students and thus its right to call on for a strike<sup>96</sup> that lasted for several days, without success. The two versions of the story obviously build two fields of concurrent realities that sustain the division between the groups. In light of this matter, the description made by Aida of her arrival in the FID takes another dimension. Her denunciation of the LF grip on the faculty and her critics against the former director and the administration are also to be understood in the context of this present crisis. Her story then becomes an argument in the competition opposing the two parties for the control of the FID. It exemplifies the dominant representations of the LU faculties among student affiliated with political forces: they are spaces to defend or conquer.

In addition to their formal presence in the university settings, the political forces use their social networks to surround the university territories. Nassim, the president of the Freedom club in AUB, got me acquainted with a method used by the FPM to target new comers in the universities. A former student of Jamhour, one of the most famous schools in the country, he has been appointed in the FPM school committee. His

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<sup>95</sup> Aida, interview with the author: December 9, 2010 [in English].

<sup>96</sup> The press release is cited in *L'Orient le Jour*: December 7, 2010.

mission was to mobilize school students but also to inquire in advance of the political beliefs of the new comers in the different universities in which the FPM is active:

*“ Moi, puisque j'étais à Jamhour, je connais beaucoup de gens. Il y a huit grandes écoles privées dans la région de Baabda. Je regarde une école, je la connais. Je veux entrer dans cette école. Quelle est la meilleure façon de rentrer en contact avec quelqu'un de cette école? C'est de parler avec quelqu'un qui est ancien de cette école! (...) Je vais voir les gens qui sont anciens de ces écoles ici à l'université. Moi, je suis à l'université, je connais des gens qui étaient dans ces écoles. Ce n'est pas que tous les gens sont intéressés, mais ils peuvent m'aider, me mettre en contact avec d'autres gens. Si quelqu'un est intéressé, pourquoi pas se rencontrer et parler. Ce n'est pas quelque chose d'officiel. On ne va pas dans un bureau dans un centre du CPL dans la région. Non. C'est comme ça qu'ils faisaient avant que je ne travaille avec eux. Avec moi, non. 'Où tu veux sortir? McDonald's?' Alors on va là, on se rencontre et on parle. Quand tu es ami avec eux, ça marche. Et quand tu connais des gens un peu partout, deux, trois, quatre puis quinze personnes, tu sais que ces gens-là peuvent te ramener cent personnes pour tes activités. C'est ça. Ensuite, en terminale, tu peux déjà faire des pointages: untel, qui est avec tel parti, va à l'AUB; un autre, qui est avec tel autre parti, il va à l'USJ; un troisième, il est 'neutre plus' ou 'neutre moins'; un autre sympathisant, etc. Je peux te dire que pour les écoles Baabda, (...) On avait par exemple mille noms, chaque nom, on pouvait savoir [leur tendance politique].”<sup>97</sup>*

According to Nassim, using social networks, the FPM is able to locate students in terms of their political stands. As his description shows, the system of assignation of a partisan label on new comers is extremely developed – it includes the evaluation of “neutral” people as “plus” or “minus”. Student identity is, in this frame, defined in terms of partisan affiliation. The surrounding of the student population is reminiscent of the temptation of political forces to target the youth so as to build a new identity. Such attempts reached a climax at the time of the construction of the communal strongholds in the 1980s (Picard 1994, p. 158). Besides, this system is new in the FPM. Its implementation was made possible by the legalization of the Party and the increase in the number of its followers it entailed. It is also possible to suggest that the intense political competition between parties generated by the post-2005 ongoing crisis has made such practices necessary, all the more since the FPM's main rival, the LF, is strongly implanted in many schools.

The FPM implantation on the ground is such that the Party is able to know potential new members or adversaries before their arrival in any campus. Many of my

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<sup>97</sup> Nassim, interview with the author: May 18, 2010 [in French].

interviewees thus acknowledged having been contacted by the FPM Student Affairs Committee during the summer preceding their entrance in a university. Such an omnipresent cross-checking of the student population is all the more efficient to enlist members and diffuse a definition of reality based on political groups since the arrival in a university represents an important step in the life course of the young men and women. Many of them, especially those coming from smaller schools, experience their entrance in a faculty or a campus as the entry in a new world. Lost in a new environment, often very different from their former school as illustrated in the previous description made by Tino, the presence of the partisan group provides them with a familiar structure. Mediated by social networks, the inscription of the Party in the university setting appears strongly strengthened. Entering university space is therefore being positioned in these partisan networks and thus contributing to the reproduction of the divisions organizing the social systems experienced by the students.

All these elements imprint the space and contribute to legitimize the partisan presence in the university. The omnipresence of the political organizations implies the definition of space as partisan territory. Hence the positioning of individuals along partisan lines is highlighted. Not only does such a surrounding of the space enable to recruit new members, but the reference to partisan identities is also made almost constantly available in student interactions to define their personal positioning. Nassim's explanations moreover reveal how parties like the FPM use youth sociability to influence and enroll new members.

## **B) The partisan insertion within student sociability**

The strength of the grip established by political forces in the universities is only made intelligible if the relationship they maintain with their environment is taken into account. It is through the symbiosis with the student milieu that they are able to legitimize their presence in universities. In other words, the parties have adapted to the specificities of the spaces they penetrated. They have incorporated students' sociability as much as they have oriented it. Relying on its presence in many student councils and the strength of its social networks in the universities, the FPM, like other parties, imposes itself as one of the chief actors of the student life. FPM activists present on the ground do not only relay political propaganda produced by their movement. In fact, the majority of the events they organize are framed as social activities.

The perfect example can be found in the case of Huvelin. Since December 2008 and the ban on political activities, the public lectures given by partisan figures invited by the students' Amicale disappeared. However, the FPM as well as the LF still set up

student life events: cheese and wine evening, election of a Miss USJ, road-trip in Lebanon, cruise, tombola, sport tournaments, and of course number of night parties in the numerous bars or discotheques of the capital – especially in the districts of Monot and Gemmayzeh, renowned for their nightlife and adjacent to the Huvelin campus. A simple look at the electoral platforms proposed during student elections<sup>98</sup> by the two main political actors of the university demonstrates the central role played by these events in the implantation and the legitimation of the parties. Despite their nonpolitical facade, these events are closely couched in partisan terms, first of all because the students know which group organizes what, and because activists from each party mobilize their own social networks in the campus, which are often overlapping but remain different.

Assaf, a second year student in AUB explained the importance of similar activities to reinforce the FPM group in the university:

*“Well, here in AUB, many people come from different areas in Lebanon, from all the regions. People come from everywhere to AUB. Imagine a student who supports the FPM. Suppose that he comes from the North, like the Akkar, at the border. When he comes here, he will be at first very afraid of saying that he is a supporter of the FPM because he doesn't know anyone. He is new to the area, he doesn't know the area and he doesn't know anyone. When you see other people with spirit supporting the FPM you will feel more comfortable. That's what we are trying to do here in AUB: we are trying to show the students that we are strong, that you can enjoy your time with us. When we hang out together, when you know we organize talks, we have fun, laughs, loud talks, etc., people will come and see us, and they will like our “gang”. This is a main point here at AUB for the FPM. Now it's going well, for instance we have three events going at the same time: a had the TV show “LOL” event, a show on Orange TV – a rafting event [on Nahr al-‘Asî (Orontes)] and today we have a football event because it's the final of the Champions League. When people come and see the FPM, they are all surprised of our achievements. We are very proud of that. (...) We also invited the army to AUB to make a demonstration: climbing ropes, etc. And we brought many others...we brought Ghassan Rahbani, a very famous singer in Lebanon, to talk about the relations between politics and music. We also brought Michel Elefteriades<sup>99</sup> who is also well-known (...) who talked about the FPM and the art in Lebanon, stuffs like that. We organized also many*

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<sup>98</sup> Some examples of electoral platforms are available in the appendix.

<sup>99</sup> Michel Elefteriades is an artist, and a music and TV producer. He had engaged with Aoun's movement in 1989. After October 13, he founded and headed one of the first movement opposing the Syrian military presence, known as *MUR* (a French acronym for *Mouvements Unis de Résistance*).



*events to talk about the Syrian presence in Lebanon and we are also trying to support as much as we can the [Lebanese] prisoners in Syria.”<sup>100</sup>*

In AUB, the existence of the FPM Freedom club as well as the relative liberty compared to USJ enable the FPM to set up many more activities than in Huvelin. Most of these events can be labeled as social events. Nonetheless they actively contribute to the diffusion of the Party’s collective identity: celebrating the Lebanese Army echoes in the universe of signification of the FPM – a party which condemns the actions of the militias and, parting, the LF rival; organizing a conference by a personality known for his/her FPM affiliation or inviting students to a TV show broadcast by the Party’s official TV channel also reverberate a clear partisan positioning. Other activities, like the annual “welcome party”, the car race called “rally-paper” organized every year by the faculty of Engineering habitually controlled by FPM supporters, or the Champions League final, are clearly designed for a wider audience. They aim more at maintaining social networks and advertising the capabilities of the FPM elected student representatives. They are also occasions to present the Party’s view and to try to convince students to join the movement. “*In a two hours bus trip to go rafting, you will have time to discuss a lot of things with the students!*” Nassim concedes<sup>101</sup>. These activities are organized by the Student Representative Committees of the various faculties, or directly by the Freedom club. In both cases, application for funding can be submitted to the USFC, explaining the material importance of student elections. Failure to secure a majority in the student councils necessitates multiplying sociability events or the search of sponsoring to fund activities. For example, the budget of the rally-paper organized by the faculty of Engineering amounted 35,000\$ in 2009<sup>102</sup>. The next year however, the USFC refused to finance the activity, urging the Freedom Club and FPM members to find sponsors<sup>103</sup>. Personal but also partisan connections played a central part in securing the needed amount of money.

The way *Outlook* echoed the FPM “Fall Back party” in its issue of October 19, 2010, is eloquent regarding the attention given by political groups to their insertion within student sociability. In the columns of the AUB student publication, Michel, the president of the Freedom club, asserts that the club sold out all the tickets and that “*tickets were being sold in the black market for 50\$ and a Saudi guy wanted to pay ten*

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<sup>100</sup> Assaf, interview with the author: May 22, 2010 [in English]. Assaf’s portrait is detailed in Chapter Four.

<sup>101</sup> Nassim, interview with the author: May 18, 2010 [in French].

<sup>102</sup> Karam, interview with the author: May 15, 2010 [in English].

<sup>103</sup> Robert, interview with the author: May 17, 2010 [in French].

*times the price of a ticket to let him and his three bodyguards in*". He proudly announces that 713 paying entries have been registered that night in the Chocolate night club of Sin el-Fil chosen for the event. The journal goes on quoting the president of the Freedom club to affirm that there definitely would be another party of the kind – the article concluding that “*certainly the next party will be an even bigger success*”<sup>104</sup>. Clearly the rhetoric chosen borrows more to the standards of a successful entertainment than to political stand – even if the anecdote mocking the “Saudi guy” might cause speculations about a possible reference to Saad Hariri or his supporters.

Essentially, the FPM activists try to mark the territory and imprint their presence as much as possible as Assaf’s account underlines. The diffusion of the Party’s identity narrative depends upon its physical presence on the territory. Thanks to this implantation, the group appears as a potential source of identification for new comers. Social events emblematic of student sociability powerfully support such capacity. Therefore parties do not simply impose themselves but rather use an already existing form of sociability, which carries their insertion within the university spaces. By orienting such activities toward partisan references, the activists capture the frame of interpretation available in the university contexts and actively diffuse party-based narratives.

Commemorations play a central role in that matter. A memorial for October 13 is set up every year in AUB. The Freedom club also organized an exhibition in the memory of the Lebanese Army soldiers killed in the battle of Nahr el-Bared in 2007. Due to the greater margin of maneuver offered to the students in the Lebanese University, the faculties of the branch 2 present interesting examples of such celebrations, for instance in the faculty of Information and Documentation:

*“Chaque année, nous faisons ce qu'on appelle le "Orange Day", pour fêter le jour où le Général Aoun est revenu de France, le 7 mai 2005. Parfois, si le 7 mai est un dimanche, nous le faisons le lundi à l'université, mais en tous cas, on fait une activité politique : on met de la musique du Tayyâr, on porte des vêtements orange, on apporte des ballons orange et tout orange, même ce que l'on distribue à manger est orange (...). On prépare de vrais jus d'orange devant l'université...pas à l'intérieur car il y aura trop de tension. On fait aussi des manaqish [Lebanese salted pastries] et du keshek orange [Lebanese meal made of bulgur and milk](...) parce que le Tayyâr est connu pour être le parti orange. (...) Nous essayions toujours de ne pas faire de problème car s'il y a un problème après une de nos activités, ce ne sera pas bon pour notre image et l'activité sera perdue.”*<sup>105</sup>

<sup>104</sup> See *Outlook*: October 19, 2010.

<sup>105</sup> Kamal, interview with the author: December 6, 2010 [in French].

The symbolic dimension of the commemoration is underlined as well as the related tension prevailing between the FPM and its challengers. As Aida did in her presentation of the FID, Kamal stages the FPM in the position of victim of possible LF violent behaviors. The evocation of the events is therefore also an occasion to reiterate the narrative about militia attached to the LF. The liberty allowed to the political forces in the LU authorizes the holding of conferences more directly connected with partisan affiliation, such as a conference of the Lebanese Army and its fights “*in Nahr el-Bared against the terrorists, and the war of 1989-1990 against Syria and the LF*”<sup>106</sup> or a lecture given by a FPM official, Alain Aoun, organized in the faculty of Management in December 2010. Such events are not without boosting the rivalry between parties for the appropriation of the space. The evocation of the incidents which occurred that evening is then another occasion to spread the storyline of the FPM assimilating LF supporters with hooliganism and to depict the LF rule as imposed on misinformed students:

*“We organized a conference with Alain Aoun and they called the police [darak] to prevent him from entering the university. They don't want our political view to be expressed in the university, because all the people in the faculty would learn about our political views and they would not be able to control the university any more. So they tried to stop the meeting.”*<sup>107</sup>

In Nader’s words, it seems inconceivable that students could genuinely endorse the LF domination, which implies the control of information – a reference to the hegemonic project of the militias during the wars (Corm 1991). The various armed groups had indeed tried to enhance their supremacy through the control of cultural institutions and the creation of monopolistic media in the areas they controlled (Picard 1994, p. 157-158). Interestingly, the situation perpetuated after the war and the FPM in turn founded its own communication networks composed of a Television channel (*OTV*) and a radio station (*Sawt al-Mada*). In the university context, the activities organized by the *Tayyâr* thus play a role comparable to the role of the media in the society: they intend to reestablish the “truth” as defined by the FPM identity narrative.

The freedom of action in the LU also enables the group of activists to label their events with distinct partisan references. For example, during my visit in the faculty of Management in Karm el-Zeitoun, I noticed a poster at the entrance door. The placard was advertising a bus trip to North Lebanon. It not only displayed the typical orange color, but also mentioned the FPM and named the persons in charge to contact all FPM

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<sup>106</sup> Nader, interview with the author: December 4, 2010 [in English].

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

activists in the faculty. Such a situation exacerbates a competition between groups in the organization of student events, as Nader also indicated to me:

*"[This year], I tricked the LF by putting on the walls a poster saying: "FPM welcome party event, coming soon". I knew they wanted to do a welcome party too, so I put my posters before they did it. I knew that the date we chose to put the posters, the 5th of November [2010], was good: on the same day, there were elections in Notre-Dame University and in USJ. So all the LF people in the country were working on elections, and they couldn't see what I was doing. When they saw the posters they put their own posters but after two or three days, I put new posters with all the details about our party: the place, the price, etc. So I was able to offer better conditions and all the people in the university went to our welcome party, the FPM one."*<sup>108</sup>

In this short anecdote, Nader stages himself as a smart character fooling his enemy, once again embodied in the Lebanese Forces. Beyond asserting the superiority of FPM members over their rivals, his account also presents the Aounist movement as much more popular among students than the LF, accused earlier in our interview to "*dictator [sic.] the university*", a meaningful neologism.

Another specificity of the LU is the necessity for a party wishing to become a major actor in the scene of the university to take in charge some of the basic needs of the students. Alain, my main contact within the FPM Student Affairs Committee – himself a former USJ student – clarified that "*there is a difference in the political approach [between private universities and the LU], a difference in the way of working, because in fact, in the LU for instance, they [the activists] give photocopies of courses to the students...they give the students the minimum a university should have, but that do not exist there. Meanwhile in USJ, we organize conferences on public debt. But in the LU, they don't care because they lack all the basic things.*"<sup>109</sup>

The deprivation of the public university, here exposed with a hint of disdain, generates the setting up of an entire economy of services linking the political groups and the students. Elie, coordinator of the FPM in the faculty of Engineering in Roumieh detailed how it was organized in the context of his institution:

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Alain, interview with the author: November 7, 2007. The original statement was in French: "*il y a une différence dans l'approche politique, une différence dans la façon de travailler entre les universités, parce qu'en fait, à l'UL par exemple, ils donnent aux élèves les cours en photocopie...ils donnent aux élèves le minimum que les universités doivent avoir, ils ne l'ont pas. Tandis qu'à l'USJ on fait des conférences sur la dette publique. Mais à l'UL, on s'en fout, il y a même pas les choses basiques...*"

*“[On fait] des photocopies de livres ou de documents... [Courte interruption] Il y a certaines choses que l'on donne gratuitement, et d'autres choses que l'on vend. On possède des représentants dans chaque année, ces représentants organisent à la fin de chaque année les livres, les photocopies et les cours que l'on veut photocopier pour l'année suivante. Deux ou trois semaines avant que l'année ne recommence, on commence les photocopies.*

*- Avez-vous un partenaire pour ça?*

*Oui, on a un centre de photocopie avec lequel travaille notre université...et on a notre centre pour les cours pendant l'année...parce que c'est proche de l'université, c'est plus facile. Ça permet aux étudiants de pouvoir photocopier les cours et tout quand ils ont besoin.*

*- Comment ça se passe? Est-ce qu'il y a quand-même un bureau des étudiants malgré qu'il n'y ait pas eu d'élections depuis trois ans?*

*Il n'y a pas de bureau...dans notre université, on a fait un contrat entre nous, les FL et la direction de l'université. Chaque parti a pris en charge un travail spécifique qu'il peut faire en tant que bureau des étudiants. Nous avons pris les activités et les FL ont pris la photocopie des livres. En dehors de l'université, chaque parti peut jouer le rôle qu'il veut en tant que parti, en tant que CPL ou FL, en tant que politique, mais pas en tant que comité des étudiants.*

*- Donc vous faites aussi les photocopies de votre côté?*

*De notre côté on fait les activités en tant que bureau des étudiants et on fait les photocopies en tant que CPL (...)"<sup>110</sup>*

Usually, the student committee of each faculty is in charge of such activities. However, in November 2008, the direction of the LU suspended indefinitely internal elections as well as all following a severe incident between LF students and FPM supporters in the faculty of Sciences in Fanar<sup>111</sup>. In November 2008, a student affiliated with the FPM was wounded, stabbed by a fellow supporting the rival organization of the Lebanese Forces. Significantly, the words used to describe the subsequent argument between the two factions were often inspired by the rhetoric of tribal violence. Since then, in most of the cases, the last elected councils prorogate their own mandates, allowing the maintenance of undisputed political domination for the group victorious in the 2007 elections. This also explains the feeling of injustice

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<sup>110</sup> Elie, interview with the author: December 8, 2010 [in French].

<sup>111</sup> For example, Michel Aoun, leader of the FPM, declared that reconciliation would only be possible after the punishment of the aggressor. See: <http://mplbelgique.wordpress.com/2008/11/11/aoun-s%E2%80%99en-prend-au-premier-ministre-et-au-dirigeant-des-fsi-au-mont-liban/> [April 2012]

expressed by Aida in her description of the LF rule in the FID. In Roumieh though, the two rivals agreed to share the tasks between themselves, with the accord of the administration of the faculty. The university officials thus recognized the status of political parties in the management of the institution. The willingness of the two parties to sustain their influence on the ground seemed more important than the conflict dividing them. However, the competition didn't fade away. The photocopies made by the FPM in its own name serve as a means of financing the Party's activities in the faculty, but also ensure that the LF does not benefit from the monopoly of student services.

The aforementioned services look sometimes much more elaborated than photocopies. In the faculty of Sciences, where the FPM still controls the student committee following a massive victory in the 2007 internal elections, the students are offered private courses to enhance their academic results as explained by Sami, the President of the committee:

*"[Les étudiants] n'aiment pas qu'on leur parle de politique. Alors on cherche à organiser des sessions de cours particuliers: on fait venir un prof qui enseigne à l'université dans une salle dont on dispose hors de l'université avec un tableau et tout ce qu'il faut pour donner des cours particuliers chaque fois que l'on voit qu'il y a un manque [dans la formation proposée à la fac]. Nous faisons ça et les activités [sociales]. La semaine dernière, mercredi, nous avons fait un 'Magic Show', avec des magiciens et un concours d'improvisation. Ça a bien réussi. C'est comme ça. L'important, le problème plutôt, c'est l'argent...nous n'avons personne qui nous donne de l'argent, nous n'avons que les photocopies que l'on vend à des prix normaux. Donc quand on veut faire une activité, on va voir le chef du département et on voit combien on a d'argent (...). Chaque année, lorsqu'il y a l'inscription des étudiants, c'est nous qui nous occupons d'eux. Parce qu'ils viennent avec leurs parents, ils ne connaissent rien de l'université. Alors nous demandons 5000LL [2,5 Euros], ce n'est pas obligatoire, pour avoir les sessions [les examens passés] pour toute l'année. Sinon, parfois, nous donnons les sessions gratuitement. Nous obtenons les sessions des professeurs. Certains ne veulent pas les donner, parce qu'ils reposent les mêmes questions chaque année, mais la plupart nous les donne, avec les corrigés. Il y a d'autres partis qui cherchent les sessions en cachette, qui les photocopient et les distribuent, mais ce n'est pas notre problème."<sup>112</sup>*

The out-of-campus courses are offered for free to the students, the cost being taken in charge by the student committee and the FPM. The teachers volunteering are not necessarily supporters of the Movement, but, according to Sami, rather recruited

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<sup>112</sup> Sami, interview with the author: March 28, 2011 [in French].

through interpersonal networks. His account further illustrates the economy of services built inside the university in order to enable the organization of activities. The lack of money of the LU explains such need for services. Nonetheless, such networks of assistance fully participate in the production of the space as partisan territory. It also constitutes the basis of a low scale economic system in a way comparable to clientele networks between students and the dominant political forces, in which the students remain dependent on the parties. Such clientelist practices moreover sustain the imbrication between political parties and the LU administration as reliance on the administrative resources of the university proves helpful in the activists' task. Still, the clientele links are central, not so much materially but above all symbolically, in the construction of the affiliation and identification (Lenclud 1993).

Considering this imbrication between partisan networks and everyday life in university, it is possible to understand that it is the students who, through their activities, construct the settings in which their interactions unfold. The omnipresence of political forces leads to the actualization of the spatially and temporally situated social systems sustaining the divided structure the Lebanese society. Such a situation is exemplified by the state of the student mobilizations in the country.

### **C) In search of alternatives**

Being engaged in the FPM means to endorse the definition of the social systems one experiences as fragmented and to inject in encounters a narrative identity that actualizes intergroup dividing lines. It also provides the students with a status allowing them to present an image of their self. On the contrary, in spite of the strength of student sociability and the persistent problems faced by the youth – in terms of condition of studies (especially in the LU), financial cost of education<sup>113</sup>, and in job perspective<sup>114</sup> –, alternative figures of identification based on generational or sectorial dimensions struggle to emerge. As it is the case elsewhere in the world, the Lebanese youth evolve in their own cognitive spaces, populated by popular cultural icons, music or movie stars, and manifested in sociability practices. However, these shared

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<sup>113</sup> Many students get into debt in order to pay for their education due to the high prices of tuition fees in reliable universities. The situation urged the Central Bank to encourage commercial banks to facilitate loan for students. In spite of these measures, students often struggle to pay off their debts. See *The Daily Star*: February 21, 2011.

<sup>114</sup> Several reports have noted the existence of a "brain drain" in Lebanon, due to the lack of professional perspectives in the country. In October 2009, data published in conjunction with the United Nation Development Program's Human Development Report showed that around 20,000 Lebanese emigrate each year, most of whom are well-educated. Cited in *The Daily Star*: October 7, 2010. See: <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/13677> [August 2012]. See also Chapter Four.

references fail to overrun the fragmentation generated by partisan positioning and sectarian affiliations. While the questions of civil marriage, the lowering of the voting age may provide common ground, the permanence of the perception of the other as a threat, as demonstrated in the narratives on the LF or the experience of Mehdi in Huvelin, impedes any durable form of gathering around collective causes. In that sense, the politics of the university spaces extends the “culture of discord” described by George Corm (Corm 1992). “*There is a lot of solidarity between us, and between them, but between us and them there is not*”<sup>115</sup> a third year student in the faculty of Sciences told me to describe the relations between the LF and the FPM activists in the university.

In many respects, the events of 2005 and the ensuing polarization of the political scene have been determinant. Already, during the 1990s, the political participation of the youth appeared to be marginal, especially compared to the prewar situation (Favier 2000b, p. 97) when the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a climax in rising student mobilizations, until the evolution of the social and political conflicts toward open war stopped the process. Described as a “golden age” for student mobilizations, the eve of the 1975 war saw intense movements organized by various political groups within and outside universities. The movement of the Awakening (*al-Wa’i*), the Lebanese Communist Party and other leftist groups, as well as the Kata'eb youth section, played the central part in these mobilizations. Such effervescence led to the constitution of the National Union of the Lebanese University Students (UNEUL – Union Nationale des Étudiants de l’Université Libanaise) in 1971, an institution that symbolized student mobilizations for several years before collapsing following the outbreak of the war. UNEUL was officially disbanded in the early 1980s (Favier 2004, p. 167). In the postwar decade, the two high-points of student mobilizations occurred in December 1997<sup>116</sup> and spring 2000<sup>117</sup> but they remained short-lived episodes. The 2005 turn accentuated the movement’s marginalization. In generational terms, present-day students share an experience built in the political strife opened by the rival demonstrations of March 8 and March 14, and reinforced through the many successive

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<sup>115</sup> Joe, interview with the author: March 29, 2011 [in English].

<sup>116</sup> In December 1997, the mobilization started following the arrest of around sixty persons, including students, who participated in a demonstration against the cancellation of an interview of Michel Aoun, the FPM leader, scheduled on the MTV television channel. Students from several universities and different political affiliations gathered in solidarity with their imprisoned comrades. The mobilization then focused on student issues such as the situation of the LU, and civil rights (Favier 2000a).

<sup>117</sup> In April 2000, another series of demonstrations took place, once again after the arrest of FPM students protesting against Syrian rule. The movement of solidarity then evolved toward more general political and sectorial demands from the students (Favier 2000b).



crises – December 2005 with the resignation of Hezbollah and Amal ministers from the coalition government lead by Fuad Siniora; the July 2006 war; the popular demonstrations led by Amal, Hezbollah and the FPM against the March 14 government from December 2006 to February 2007; the May 7 street fighting between March 8 on the one hand and the Future Movement and the PSP on the other; the fall of Saad Hariri's cabinet in January 2011, etc. Such a polarized political scene stands an obstacle to alternative mobilizations (Karam 2006, p. 297; 2009).

The 2010 AUB strike provides a sound example. The movement erupted on Wednesday May 19, after the administration of the university decided to increase tuition fees. Protests rapidly spread. Classes were suspended and the students occupied the upper-campus area, in front of the administrative offices. The mobilization was “spontaneous”, in the sense that no specific groups or movements organized it. Seeing the success of the action, political parties though rapidly activated their networks to increase the number of protesters. They head of the respective parties also coordinate in order to define the best strategies in front of the administration. Officially, the USFC student members, in majority of the March 14 alliance and headed by the USFC Vice-president, Elias Ghanem, a LF member, were in charge of the negotiations. Within two days, an agreement was reach between the board of the university and the student representatives, who hastily called for the end of the strike. However, the students learned that the agreement in question simply postponed the rise for one year. The USFC rapidly published a communiqué “proudly ammounc[ing] the triumph of the AUB student movement”<sup>118</sup>. Drawing on a historical parallel with other AUB mobilizations in 1974 and 1993 when student movements were unable to impose their views against the administration, the statement proclaim that this time political tensions and selfishness have been overcome. Yet, other participants in the mobilization were demanding the complete suppression of the project. Despite the claim of the USFC, it seems that political competition was indeed instrumental in this outcome as the March 14 forces within the student council tried to clinch a deal as fast as possible. Besides, the strikes of 1974 and 1993 were of another magnitude. In March 1974 especially, the Lebanese government ordered the intervention of security forces to end the occupation university buildings by students on strike (Barakat 1977, p. 157). The movement started in protest against a 10% increase in the tuition fees. On March 14, a general assembly gathering 1,500 students called for a strike that would last for forty-one days and ended in armed clashes with the police (ibid., p. 181). The administration afterward suspended the Student Council as well as 103 students.

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<sup>118</sup> The complete text is available in the appendix.

The day following the end of the movement, I met Assaf, who actively participated in the strike. He also evoked the heritage of past activism in AUB:

*“During the last ten years, or even more, twenty years, we have been losing that spirit that was present before, mainly related (...) to the presence of the Palestinian club as well as the Palestinian groups such as the PFLP and the Fatah, which was present too in AUB. You had other clubs like No Frontiers or the SSNP, and the Communist party. Those groups were the spirit of student activism in AUB. We lost a lot of this spirit. Now no one cares...no one cares if they increase the fees. No one cares if they close the cafeteria, No one cares if there is no class available...no one cares! (...) The three days strike reminds us about the good old days...but not a lot because it used to have bigger movement here. Once the campus was closed for two days and the second day the police came and fight with students, and there were guns inside the university. And all the students cared (...). So, as a FPM students, because the FPM is very well known for its activism especially in the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, as well as a few years ago in the 2000s, we are trying now as much as we can to get this spirit back.”<sup>119</sup>*

The parallel Assaf draws between AUB student movement and FPM activism appears surprising. As he stated, mobilization in AUB came mainly from leftist groups while the demonstration organized by the FPM students almost exclusively targeted the Syrian presence in Lebanon. However, in the context of decrease of student activism, the situation of the FPM students is somehow telling. The Movement had been structured by youth mobilizations for years, taking advantage of the wave of anti-Syrian demonstrations organized from within the universities. However, with the departure of the Syrian troops, the return of Michel Aoun from exile, and the legalization of the FPM, the Party invested the conventional political scene. Caught in the rapid growth of political tensions, the students do not seem concerned by generational issues such as the lowering of the voting age or the legalization of the civil marriage, or by academic matters (for example the call for a reduction of tuition fees in their respective universities), but rather focused on the defense of their parties in a reflex of solidarity. While demonstrations against the Syrian presence represented a political experience relatively specific to the youth because of the closure of other spaces of expression, their ending marked the reintegration of the students into the conventional political field.

Have the Lebanese students lost their role<sup>120</sup>? The statement appears superficial as, in fact, the problem seems to be more profound. The comprehensive analysis Agnès

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<sup>119</sup> Assaf, interview with the author: May 22, 2010 [in English].

<sup>120</sup> Two articles published in *al-Safir* newspaper in May 14, 1992 and March 9, 2000, were entitled:

Favier conducted on student mobilizations in the 1960s and 1970s has already pointed out that political organizations were pivotal in the emergence of the demands voiced by the students (Favier 2004, p. 187). The same tendency surfaced in the December 1997 movement, which was similarly structured by the youth sections of conventional political forces (Favier 2000a, p. 672). Union between students subsisted as long as the parties supported the demonstration but rapidly shaded away when political interests diverged. Comparably, the campaign for the lowering of the voting age, one of the major reforms that could impact the young generation, has for a long time been victim of the fear of the Christian political forces to be marginalized (Karam 2006, p. 185-188) as the measure supposedly favors the demographical representation of Muslims<sup>121</sup>. So, despite momentary mobilizations, student activism never seemed susceptible to break a pattern of political relations based on restricted identifications. This is well illustrated by the conflict referred to by Nader and Patrick concerning the lack of funds devoted to the Christian branch of the Lebanese University. In fact, the absence of monetary resources is general, forcing the President and the central administration of the university to neglect all of the branches and concentrate the investments only on the recent Hariri Campus. Instead of interpreting this situation as a student issue or a social question, they read it terms of sectarian struggle.

Therefore, the sources of the impossibility to transcend partisan or sectarian lines rather lay in the nature of the State in contemporary Lebanon. The autonomy given to communal groups as well as the strong capitalist inclination of the elites have shaped a tradition of “weak state”. The power of patron-client ties has further accentuated this tendency before the collapse of the state institutions in front of the militia order completed the phenomenon. From the 1980s, militia leaders have entered the administration so that today the State appears as a collection of partisan leaders backed by confessional communities. Together, they impose an interpretation of the society emphasizing fragmentation in sectarian segments rather than in social class or along economic lines. In fact, the political elites need this perception of the reality because of the sectarian-based electoral system: they need to rally the support of religious groups to secure their position in power. The consequences on the university spaces is obvious: the social production of space as divided territories to conquer or defend, the omnipresence of partisan networks in the university settings, and the recourse to

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*“The students in search of their lost role”.*

<sup>121</sup> Article 21 of the constitution states that the legal minimum age to vote is 21, while the civil majority is fixed at 18 years old by the Code of obligations and contracts dating back to 1938 (Karam 2006, p. 185). Estimations show that the lowering of the voting age would increase the numbers of voters by 175,000 Muslims and 50,000 Christians (*The Daily Star*: February 23, 2010).

partisan and sectarian storylines to interpret student interactions all sustain a system in which, to quote Michel Seurat, identity – the auto-centered and exclusive definition of the group – overrides politics – the necessary cohabitation and negotiation with the other (Seurat 1985, p. 79).

### 3. PERSPECTIVES — A STORY OF EMPOWERMENT?

In light of this observation, I would like to turn back toward Aida's opening narrative to propose a more personal interpretation of her entrance in the faculty of Information and Documentation. By resituating her account in the perspective of her complete life narrative voiced during the research encounter, it is possible to re-qualify it as a story of self-empowerment. At the beginning of the interview, Aida presented herself as having been submitted to some of her friends, supporters of the Lebanese Forces, before distancing herself from their position. She then linked up with her arrival in the FID, where the same kind of scenario repeated itself: at first subdued by the domination of her environment, she decided to fight against it. The voicing of the realization of a mistake is typical of the cognitive mobility experienced during the intense socialization process implied by the entrance in a political group such as the FPM<sup>122</sup>. However other elements have to be taken into account. Two factors inclined me to think about it in another perspective: the difficulties subsequent to her move in a suburb of Beirut, and the crisis in which her family seems to be locked:

*“Actually, I have a problem...it's personal but I don't talk about it, especially to a stranger, but I have problems, especially with my father. My father was in the ministry of Education, he worked there but he quit so now he is sitting at home, day and night, day and night...and my mum, she did work for one year in a company but it closed, so she is a house-wife. My dad quitted his job, because he was sick, he couldn't handle it and he quitted. So he is here day and night in our house. So a woman and a man all day in the same house, they are going to argue. So that's why man and woman should both have a job. They separate during the day and then they come back and share their experiences (...). Then they can decide to make their lives together. My father worked in the ministry of Education, he was a supervisor in a school, (...) he always worked in the ministry. I have myself worked a lot, I worked in many restaurants, I once sold accessories in a shop, but I didn't like it. I worked for some time...working as a waitress is not interesting but I needed to have money. But when I came here [in al-Mada radio station] they hired me and I liked the job.”*

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<sup>122</sup> I deal with the question of socialization in detail in the Part Two of this work.

At the end of the interview, I finally learned that her father already divorced once. To do so, because of the control exerted by communal institutions on personal status laws, he was obliged to change his confessional affiliation as the Maronite church does not permit divorce. Aida's parents thus registered in the Syrian Orthodox Church that authorizes divorce. But her mother later urged her children, including Aida, to join the Maronite community:

*"Because my mum said that, in Lebanon the Presidency is reserved, you cannot be a President if you are not Maronite...I said: "Mum, I'm not going to become President!". She said yes but...in the Maronite law, you cannot divorce. Our family is Maronite. But my father got married with another woman before my mother and he wanted to divorce. The Maronite Church does not allow divorce. So he had to change to the Syrian Orthodox and divorce. (...) My cousins, they are all Maronites (...). [So] my mum wanted [us to be like the rest of the family]. Because people were always asking why we are Syrian Orthodox, and we didn't want to explain every time that my father divorced...so...I don't care...If someone asks me about that, am I a Catholic or an Orthodox, I would answer that I am a Christian, and above all a Lebanese! (...) All the Christians, it's one religion! (...)"*

The energy manifested by Aida all along the interview – “the spiritual energy” to use the title of Henri Bergson's book she cited as the most influential reading in her life – may be the expression of an affirmed will to extract herself from her environment, to actively take control of her life. The strength with which she expressed her career dream could be another sign:

*[I wanted to be a journalist] all my life! I love this job. When you're a journalist, it means that you will be a passionate person all your life. I tell you something that will let you understand things: [when I was young], I used to imitate the women on TV, beautiful women who put on make-up, dressed...I think like all little girls do. So I was starting to think that I wanted to be a journalist and I believe that when you're a journalist with her own program on TV, you can have a great cause and talk about it, and make all people see it. So it is a way to improve your country and your society. (...) I believe that I want to be a journalist and I want to have my own program like maybe "Oprah" (...). In Lebanon, they [the media] put the causes in front of the people but they do not listen to the reactions (...). This is my idea for my program so it is a way to improve the society..."*

Aida's story would be then as well the story of her own self-empowerment facing the constraints of her social milieu and more generally, of the Lebanese sectarian structure. In this perspective, her choice to join the FPM group in the faculty participates in her quest for emancipation through action. It is illustrated in the changing of her attitude throughout the story of her entrance in the FID: at first

submitted to the will of the dominant social (the Lebanese Forces) force and its agents in the faculty, her engagement enabled her to conquer a forceful status as the narrative ends, taking control of her own destiny. The absence of alternative mobilizing identity only partially explains her getting closer of the FPM. The cause of her engagement is more complex. Still, the process of her relationship with the party is, in my sense, inseparable of the personal situation she experienced. In her construction of her self-concept – understood as the cognitive structure available to a person in attempting to define him/her (Gergen 1971, p. 23) – the omnipresent partisan identity narratives strongly limit alternative way of engagement. As stated by Erik Neveu, politicization is the result of collective and individual strategies in a given field (1996, p. 13), but also of the mechanisms of social and symbolic assignments dominated the global social environment. Positioning herself as a FPM activist is therefore for Aida also a means of pursuing her own liberation. In order to exist in her social environment, she uses a cognitive structure available, which represents a resource for her. Unsurprisingly, she described the FPM as “*the solution*”.

Aida then engaged in many activities related to the FPM. Besides her work at *Sawt al-Mada* and her student activism in her university, she participates in the publication of a FPM magazine, *al-Nashra*<sup>123</sup>. A dedicated Christian, she also took part in the pilgrimage organized by the FPM in Syria to celebrate the Patron Saint of the Maronite. Hence, her sense of belonging encompasses professional, generational, activist, and even religious dimensions, all incorporated into her attachment to the group.

In the university territories I described, those who want to propose an alternative to partisan mobilization cannot find a channel of expression. “*This generation is not engaged for itself*” a young Lebanese researcher told me once. “*It is a generation that is a remnant of the civil war, which explains its incapacity to go beyond the political frame inherited from the war. (...) Many of my friends left the country because of the economic crisis, the LU is destroyed, there is no sexual liberation, there is no social security, there is no public transportation, but the question is whether you are March 14 or March 8! (...) It is an 'assimilationist' generation, which takes old issues instead of creating new ones*”<sup>124</sup>. An observation marked by deception that exemplifies the strength of parties’ conflicting identity narratives in the everyday life of the Lebanese youth.

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<sup>123</sup> For more details, see Chapter Three. Covers of the magazine are available in the appendix.

<sup>124</sup> J.M., interview with the author: October 26, 2007 [in French].



## Chapter Two

# “It’s not about politics, it’s social”

## Student elections as a positioning ritual

*“(…) the logic of individual action in politics cannot be reconstructed as the logic of a choice of means most adequate to achieve given ends, but as the logic of membership action. That is, as a logic of confrontation and conflict between collective identities, modifying considerably the ends of political participation”*

Alessandro Pizzorno (1985, p. 59)

The previous chapter introduced the arrival of students into university spaces lived as partisan territories: images and representations of the actors, coupled with the organizational presence of the parties command the way social settings are experienced in the student milieu I observed. Symbols are mobilized and meanings negotiated, embedded in narratives themselves emerging from the dialectics of social encounters. The fragmentation of the university territories and the incapacity of a sectorial student movement to emerge beyond the political divisions and across the boundaries separating the various institutions of higher education, as well as the concomitant domination of partisan networks within the campuses, imprint the practice of the university life. Such a configuration leaves the political parties as the dominant providers for causes and the major directors of collective actions. This does not mean that political parties are the only form of social organizations existing among the students nor that substitute social cleavages are non-existent. However, if alternative groupings occasionally generate sporadic mobilizations, they appear unable to outweigh the partisan segmentation<sup>125</sup>, so that the capacity of the Lebanese youth to

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<sup>125</sup> Agnès Favier draws this conclusion from her study of the student movement of December 1997 (Favier 2000a). The same assumption arises from the observation of recent events, like the May 2010 strike against the rise of the tuition fees in AUB: the protest didn't spread to other universities while rivalries between political groups inside AUB led to divisions about the strategy to adopt in front of the administration. See Chapter One. More recently, the pro-secularization mobilization of the Spring 2011 underwent a slow but clear marginalization after noticeable initial successes, arguably due to both the internal divisions of the participants and the weight of the inter-partisan tensions in the political field.



express collective identities remains in the present context predominantly entrapped in the agendas of the national political organizations<sup>126</sup>.

The primacy of the partisan frame in the allocation of signification in the university settings becomes the most obvious as the experience of university settings unfolds: a couple of weeks after the beginning of the academic year, newcomers come into contact with student elections for the first time. These votes are organized to elect the student representative councils, whose forms differ between the American University of Beirut<sup>127</sup>, the Saint-Joseph University<sup>128</sup> and the Lebanese University<sup>129</sup>. During my fieldwork periods in Lebanon between 2007 and 2011, elections were held every year in the American University of Beirut and in the Saint-Joseph University, whereas, as noticed in the previous chapter, they have been suspended in Lebanese University since 2008. In the context of a rising political strain nationwide, the council of the LU decided to ban elections in an attempt to diffuse the tension among students<sup>130</sup>. Since

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<sup>126</sup> For example, although the FPM officially campaign for the secularization of the political system, the vast majority of the FPM students I was in contact with during my fieldwork didn't participate in the various pro-secularism demonstrations organized in the spring 2011. Only one student openly declared that she would take part in the movement, while most the other criticized the timing or/and the organization of such demonstrations. On the contrary, the majority of the interviewed students participated in the demonstrations organized by the FPM along with other opposition groups in December 2006 and January 2007.

<sup>127</sup> In the AUB, the student elections were until 2012 held in two rounds. The first one referred to the election of faculty councils, Student Representative Committees (SRC), whose composition depends on the size of each faculty. The newly elected members of the SRC then voted in each faculty for representatives who will compose the University Student Faculty Committee (USFC). Since 2012, the students vote at the same time for SRC and USFC candidates (see *L'Orient le Jour*: November 12, 2012). The USFC is headed by the president of the AUB, but the Vice-president of the council who has a major role in the running of the student affairs is designated among student members. See: <http://www.aub.edu.lb/sao/activities/org/usfc/Pages/index.aspx> [April 2012]

<sup>128</sup> In the USJ, the elections determine the composition of the various faculty councils, named "Amicales des étudiants". Contrary to AUB, student representation is limited to the faculty level. The vote is held during the same day in all the different faculties and campuses that compose the USJ, on a single round proportional ballot. The president of each *Amicale* is chosen by the elected members. Student faculty councils' statuses are available: <http://www.usj.edu.lb/etudiants/amicales/111012stat.pdf> [April 2012]

<sup>129</sup> In the LU, no conventional structure exists: it seems that the functioning of the councils and the limits of their activities are not codified by any law (Al Amine, Beydoun, Chaoul, Haddad, Nour-el-Dine 1999, p. 102). The faculty assemblies are generally named "section councils" [*Majlis al-Fir`*] or "student committee" [*al-Hay'a al-Tulâbiyya*] (Safar 2005, p. 18).

<sup>130</sup> The resolution to suspend student elections is not exceptional and occurred several times in the history of the various universities. In April 2007, the LU had already temporarily suspended student elections (*The Daily Star*: April 3, 2007). Recently, after a brawl opposing rival student groups, the Lebanese American University (LAU) took the same decision (See *L'Orient le Jour*: November 15, 2011). The most striking example is found in AUB where the student council was created in 1943 but rapidly dissolved (Barakat 1977, p. 152), then mostly inactivated between January 1954 and March 1972 (Favier 2004, p. 136-138) and between July 1974 (Barakat 1977, p. 181) and 1994. More

then, no more polls have been arranged in the public establishment, in spite of insistent pressures from the political organizations<sup>131</sup>.

Student elections constitute the climax of political mobilization in the university worlds. They play an essential role in the affirmation and the legitimation of the position of the political organizations within university spaces and among the youth in general. They also represent a peak in the experience of student life, a symbol of its “*liberty*”<sup>132</sup> compared to the closure of political activism imposed in most of the schools<sup>133</sup>. In parallel with the relative emancipation from parents’ control it induces, the arrival in the university connotes for the newcomers the reaching of a political maturity – at least the opportunity to concretely enter public politics. In that sense, student elections stand in a way as a rite of passage, all the more important since the Law impede political participation of the youth until the age of 21. The university arises thus as a space of in-between, marking the transition between political immaturity and the effective possibility to vote in local and parliamentary elections: “*the interest of student politics in university is to acquaint the youth with politics, because before 21, it is not possible to vote but after graduation, we are precisely 21 years old*”<sup>134</sup>. As a consequence, university elections also represent an occasion to

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generally, during the civil war (1975-1990), most universities canceled the electoral process before student committees were reestablished in the early years of the 1990 decade.

<sup>131</sup> In March 2007, the student section of the Lebanese Forces and the Kata’eb party organized a demonstration and a sit-in in front of the faculty of Sciences in Fanar to demand the restoration of student elections and the end of the suspension of political activities. See *The Daily Star*: March 30, 2007.

<sup>132</sup> The expression was used by one of my interviewee, whose comment denoted a widely shared vision among the youth I encountered. Phil, interview with the author: October 20, 2008.

<sup>133</sup> All the prominent political parties have established school committees in charge of spreading their cause among the youth. The majority of the schools is private and depends on specific codes. Although these schools are not free of political influences, public activism is in general banned as Issam a FPM activist in AUB remembers: “*The difference between school and university is first that university does not implement any limitation to political activities. There are some restrictions, but they are limited. (...) At school, the students are still too linked with their parents (...). The meetings were taking place outside the school, it was forbidden. (...) Students are more independent. And there are elections, which highlight our role with the youth*” (interview with the author: May 26, 2010 [in French]). Yet, some political forces possess their own educational system, especially in the Shiite community in which the construction of communal schools were parallel with the political empowerment (Le Thomas 2012), with the Amal Movement (*Amal al-Tarbawiyya*) and Hezbollah (School al-Mahdi as well as a complex network of non-profit organizations such as the associations *al-Chadîd*, *al-Mustapha*, *al-Îmdâd*, etc.).

<sup>134</sup> Karl, interview with the author: October 28, 2008. The original statement was in French: “*L’intérêt de la politique à l’université c’est d’habituer à la politique, parce qu’avant 21 ans, on ne peut pas voter et que quand on finit la fac, on a précisément 21 ans*”. Besides, in a country in which political discussions inside the family or between friends are common scenes, either while watching the evening news or at gatherings, the passage from school to university seems to introduce a legitimate

publicly align oneself with a partisan group. They are a time when students position themselves or are being positioned in relations with political sympathies.

A paradoxical yet sound example is provided by the story of Silvio, born in 1990, a student in the American University in Beirut. I first met him in May 2010, during the early phase of my immersion within the FPM student community in AUB. Silvio was then presented to me as a dedicated member, participating in every meeting set up by the Freedom Club, the official group representing the Party in the university. Despite having scheduled an interview, we were at the time unable to meet after a last minute cancellation. The encounter thus took place a few months later, in October. As the informal discussion preceding the interview started, Silvio immediately tried to distance himself from the FPM. He insisted on the fact that he was not a follower but a mere supporter and that his participation to the group activities was now over and had been anyway minimal. He was also one of the rare interviewees who straightforwardly asked for anonymity and questioned me about the procedure of informed consent I was using. At first, I understood his reserves as symptomatic of a form of restraint I often encountered with activists engaging conversation with a stranger. However, unlike in these frequent occurrences, Silvio's reluctance to endorse the position of a FPM student lasted all along our conversation. It was even amplified during our second meeting that was held in December the same year. Then, confronted with the slides presenting dates and figures of the FPM history, he patently overplayed ignorance. From the beginning, the story he voiced was the one of a misunderstanding:

*“Ça a commencé avec le meilleur ami de mon père qui a un fils [à l’université], que tu connais je crois. Il est plus âgé que moi. C’était il y a deux ans – moi j’étais encore à l’école – et ils parlaient des élections universitaires. Ils trouvaient ça excitant. Je m’étais dit que l’année où je rentrerai à l’université, pourquoi ne pas participer aux élections, ça serait une bonne expérience. Au départ en fait mon objectif n’était pas du tout politique. Plutôt social en fait. C’était une expérience. Pour moi c’était quelque chose de nouveau. Je voulais tout essayer. C’est une des choses importantes à faire à l’université. En fait, j’ai trouvé que ce n’était pas bien du tout, je ne le referai plus. Mais c’était une expérience. C’était ça mon objectif, pas du tout politique.*

*- Mais pourquoi avec le FPM alors ?*

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right to join the conversation and give one's opinion. For example, in another of our discussions Karl and one of his friends, Omar, expressed this idea: Omar: *“Je me rappelle de longs débats dans les soirées, (...) mais avant 15 ans, je ne comprenais rien. Seulement tu écoutes, tu essaies de te faire une opinion, mais personne ne t'écoute quand tu veux parler. [Karl: Exactement, j'ai le même vécu avant l'université] (...) C'est une question d'âge...les petits écoutent (...). [Karl: Tout le monde parle, sauf toi!] C'est ça! Tout le monde est passé par là.”* Interview with the author: October 29, 2008 [in French].

*Justement parce qu'il y avait déjà le fils de l'ami de mon père qui était avec ce groupe. Je me suis dit pourquoi pas? Je connaissais déjà quelques personnes de ce groupe...si j'avais des amis dans l'autre groupe, j'aurai pu choisir l'autre groupe. (...) J'avais pour objectif d'avoir de très bonnes notes à l'université. Mais le travail que l'on devait faire pour les élections prenait beaucoup de mon temps. On a commencé à travailler un mois avant les élections et j'oubliais mes responsabilités académiques. (...) Mon objectif c'était de rentrer en classe pour rencontrer des gens, être ami avec eux, juste pour avoir leurs voix à la fin. Je n'aimais pas trop cette approche. Je crois que c'est la cause pour laquelle j'ai perdu (...).*

*- Comment as-tu été choisi comme candidat ?*

*J'ai dit que je voulais bien être candidat et le groupe m'a dit: 'd'accord, on va te soutenir'. Si tu veux, c'est parce que j'avais donné une bonne impression au début. J'avais montré que je voulais participer, être actif. Mais ensuite, quand j'ai vu le genre de problème que ça pouvait m'apporter, j'ai arrêté tout de suite. Par exemple, je suis une personne apolitique et je n'aime pas donner l'impression aux gens que je suis avec tel ou tel parti. (...) Quand j'ai remarqué que les gens commençaient à dire ça de moi, j'ai tout arrêté. Voilà, (...) je commençais à ressentir cette perception des gens (...). Par exemple ma sœur est en première année à l'université. Elle est à l'USJ. Un jour, quelqu'un du Taysâr, l'aborde comme ça, et lui dit: 'Ah, mais tu es la sœur de Silvio à l'AUB! C'est le plus grand aouniste à l'AUB!'. Elle m'a demandé si je connaissais ce type. J'ai dit que non. Je n'avais jamais entendu parler du mec. (...) Je n'ai pas aimé ça."<sup>135</sup>*

However, in the course of the conversation, some elements tend to indicate that his choice to run for the elections with the support of the FPM was not as arbitrary as it seemed at first. First, Silvio acknowledged that in most of the cases, he found himself in accordance with Michel Aoun's political stands. More significantly, he detailed a history of conflict opposing his family to the Lebanese Forces militia during the civil war:

*"C'était la guerre, tous les partis ont fait de mauvaises choses...mais je suis en train de parler d'un point de vue légal. Michel Aoun était général de l'armée. Comme il n'y avait plus de président, il est devenu chef du gouvernement. (...) Samir Geagea lui a pris le contrôle des Quwwât [the Lebanese Forces]. C'était une milice. Cette milice n'avait pas le droit de faire une guerre contre le gouvernement, ou au moins ce qui aurait pu devenir un gouvernement. (...) Je ne connais pas beaucoup d'information sur la guerre parce que ça ne m'a pas vraiment intéressé. (...) Je me rappelle par exemple que notre famille possède une station d'essence. C'était mon grand-père qui*

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<sup>135</sup> Silvio, interview with the author: October 26, 2010 [in French].

*s'en occupait, mon père ne l'avait pas encore reprise car il était à Londres à l'époque. (...) La milice des Quwwât, ils sont venus pour s'emparer de la station-service. Et ils se sont installés là avec leurs tanks et leurs armes. Chaque fois que quelqu'un venait se servir, ils prenaient des commissions. Tu vois ? Donc ça aussi ça m'a fait réfléchir. Ce n'est pas juste. En plus, quand mon père est venu, il a voulu faire changer cette situation. Mais il n'a pas pu, ils l'ont même menacé. Ce n'est que vers la fin de la guerre qu'il a pu faire ce qu'il voulait, qu'il était vraiment libre. C'est plutôt ça. Donc on a eu une expérience personnelle avec ces gens-là. En plus, il y a une autre. Juste à côté de chez nous, à Nahr el-Mot, il y avait des jeunes avec leurs parents qui marchaient avec des bougies, en hommage à tous les martyrs, les Quwwât sont venus et les ont tous tués. C'est pour cela que ça s'appelle Nahr el-Mot [qui signifie en Arabe 'le fleuve de la mort']. Enfin, c'est une des explications je crois."<sup>136</sup>*

Both the episode of the gas-station and the carnage of Nahr el-Mot demonstrate that Silvio's choice to join the FPM group at his arrival in the university was not accidental. Clearly, Silvio did not demonstrate a great interest in politics throughout the conversation. Nevertheless the history of his family as well as the local memory of Zalqa, his living area in the Northern edges of Beirut, played a role in his choice. Selecting the FPM was a response to the electoral situation in which he made a choice in terms of categorical positioning. Silvio's decision was made possible by his contact with Freedom club members and an inherited aversion for the LF dating back to a discord between his family's and the movement's interests. The war economy of the militias relying on the use of force to control the distribution of basic goods such as gasoline and impose taxation on the business existing in their territories thus prompted a conflict between Silvio's grand-father and the Lebanese Forces. In our second encounter, he added that this episode erupted at the time of the war opposing the Lebanese Forces and the National Liberal Party of Camille Chamoun, which corresponds to the period of the construction of the militia's stronghold in the Christian regions. He also indicated that the armed group seized a hotel belonging to his family<sup>137</sup>.

Interestingly, Silvio uses in his account the same lexical field centered on the dichotomy between state legitimate order and militia's illegality that FPM members generally mobilize to distinguish between Michel Aoun and the Lebanese Forces. Telling the story about the past spoliation of his family's possessions already positioned him in the present setting in opposition with the LF, implying a

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Silvio, interview with the author: December 13, 2010 [in French].

convergence of views with the FPM narrative about the war and the militia nature of the Lebanese Forces. In the same manner, his undetailed evocation of the killing that happened in Nahr el-Mot probably emerged from shared local knowledge, including the interpretation that the name of the place derived from the recalled massacre, which is not the case. The event took place on Monday the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1990. Answering a call from Michel Aoun's mobilization unit, people gathered at night with candles in front of several crossing points on the frontline separating the positions of the Army on the one hand and of the Lebanese Forces and the Syrian troops on the other. In Nahr el-Mot however, the LF opened fire with machine-guns, killing twenty people and injuring around fifty (Dagher 1992, p. 304-305). Supporters of Michel Aoun renamed the area "River of Martyrdom"<sup>138</sup>, a consequence that could explain Silvio's comment about the original denomination of the region.

The story of Silvio's short-lived integration within the FPM in AUB appears to rely on the same bases that have been highlighted in the engagement stories presented in the opening chapter as well as in Chapter One: memory of the family, social networks, and the strong implantation of partisan group in the campus. However, his withdrawal and reluctance to maintain his ties with the collectivity seem to indicate a relatively low degree of identification with the movement. The appeal of elections nonetheless convinced him to align himself with the FPM in the partisan landscape existing in his university. The time of electoral competition thus seems to have activated a sense of partisan attachment fueled by his rejection of the Lebanese Forces as well as by his acquaintance with some FPM members in AUB. Whatever his motives – meeting new friends, experiencing the thrill of elections, improving his CV with a status of faculty delegate, etc. – he chose to openly participate under the banner of the FPM. He accepted to be associated with the Party during the episode of university elections. What Silvio refused was to be durably assimilated with the group, including outside AUB<sup>139</sup>. He rejected the position that his participation in the elections imposed afterwards on him, acknowledging that he had underestimated such assignation of identity: “[People] only want to see an image, a general view. I didn't like it, so I stopped everything. (...) [After a while] I said to myself that it's not important, I will lose the elections and it will be over, everybody will forget...but it was not actually the case”<sup>140</sup>. However, he could have as well endorsed this label and, from this experience,

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<sup>138</sup> See: <http://forum.tayyar.org/f91/remembering-black-october-1990-a-530/> [September 2012]

<sup>139</sup> During our second meeting he explained: “*je ne veux pas être étiqueté [I don't want to be labeled]*”. Silvio, interview with the author: December 13, 2010 [in French].

<sup>140</sup> Silvio, interview with the author: October 26, 2010. The original statement was in French: “[*Les gens*] ne veulent voir qu'une image, une forme générale. Donc ça ne m'a pas plu et j'ai décidé de tout

have deepened his integration within the group. It shows that election time in the university space can generate partisan identification even for young people lacking strong political convictions. Silvio's case illustrates how student elections play a central role in the discovery of the university life. It also demonstrates their assignation power and, *a contrario*, how engaging in elections within a particular group may attach the individual to the collectivity. Student elections appear therefore pivotal in the identification process at work between the individual and the group within the university spaces.

Before focusing on the deconstruction of the identification process in the coming chapters, my aim is now to discuss the impact of university elections in the elaboration of the split social system prevailing in the university settings. What are the conditions that enable students like Silvio to activate – even momentarily – a sense of belonging to one of the partisan groups competing for the appropriation of the space? My hypothesis is that student elections work as positioning rituals i.e. as elements of maintenance of the divided social structure because they ensure year after year the reaffirmation of boundaries and the reproduction of distinctive partisan identity narratives within the campuses. Here, I refer to an extended conception of positioning, adapted from Harré's theory (Harré 2004; Harré & Van Langenhove 1999). While his model focuses on conversational episodes, I use it as a conceptual backdrop to analyze more general interactional settings. As in Harré's work, the notion of position is mobilized as an alternative to the one of role. Every interaction is characterized by a set of positions defined by the participants' relations and available to them, creating a temporary and relational moral order in reference to which they are inclined to think, act and speak. This order is at the same time linked with specific storylines, narratives that the people positioned are in process of "living out" (Harré & Moghaddam 2003, p. 8). The university elections' interactional setting encourages the allocation of reciprocal positions of students in terms of partisan identities. It may be described as a routinized form of interaction in which attachment to a political group is materially and symbolically highlighted.

Student ballots are symbolic because they serve as mediation for expressing a vision of political reality in which dominant parties claim to embody the various component of the divided social structure. In virtue of their repetitive nature (they are organized every year at the same period) and their dramatic dimension, they can be described as a political ritual. Drawing on the suggestion of David Kertzer, I use the

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*arrêté. (...) [Après un moment] je me suis dit tant pis, je vais perdre les élections et ça va être fini, tout le monde va oublier...mais ce n'a pas vraiment été le cas."*

concept of ritual as an analytical category, defined in a classical sociological perspective as normalized and recurring symbolic behavior (Kertzer 1988, p. 9). As Kertzer puts it, rites are used “to create political reality for the people (...). And through political ritual, we are given a way to understand what is going on in the world, for we live in a world that must be drastically simplified if it is to be understood at all.” (ibid., p. 1-2) According to him, rituals serve as devices through which “beliefs about the universe come to be acquired, reinforced, and eventually changed.” (ibid., p. 9) Political rituals such as student elections are thus used to symbolically affirm the deference to social perceptions of reality carried by dominant actors on the political scene – in the considered case, the political organizations.

Being political in their nature, university elections are also concrete interactional rituals. Indeed, they involve the joint participation of multiple actors and precisely exist because of this conjunct contribution. In that sense, and following Goffman's invitation, student elections can be analyzed in the perspective of the “sociology of the circumstances”, which focuses on how a social system is built by the conjunction of persons and by the interactions it hosts (Goffman 1974 [1967], p. 8). Doing so, I intend to analyze the emergence and the diffusion of meaning as they are generated by the interplay between actors in the ritual of student elections. My aim is to concentrate on the grammars that unify and inform the actions of interacting people in a given social “configuration”, understood in Norbert Elias' perspective highlighting the relational and interdependent positions existing between the individuals and the groups in which they are evolving (Elias & Dunning 1994 [1986], p. 60-61). Like the players of a football game, the actors' moves are only understandable in relation to the situation of the other players, both from their team and from their opponent (ibid.). These moves, I argue, are based upon grammars – working as structures of signification (Hastings 2001b) – that constitute ordering devices to define, to distinguish, and to classify the social. They assign specific positions and behaviors, thus giving materiality to the productions of the imaginary (Balandier 1992 [1980], p. 41 and p. 48). In that perspective, rituals operate as dramatic demonstrations<sup>141</sup> of the social structure. They articulate power and meaning (Augé 1977) as “dramatization determines the horizon of meaning in which power relations are embedded”<sup>142</sup> (Abélès

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<sup>141</sup> According to Georges Balandier, the use of the metaphor of the theater to describe the social world was inspired by the work of Nicolas Evreinov, whose theory gives theatrical basis for all the manifestations of the social life (Balandier 1992 [1980], p. 13). The sociology of Erving Goffman has made the most of this insight (Goffman 1986 [1974]; 1959). In substituting the notion of position to the concept of role, I intend to give more flexibility to such a framework without refuting its strength in order to highlight its circumstantial nature.

<sup>142</sup> I translated the original formulation from French: “la mise en représentation détermine l'horizon de



1997, p. 270). The pursued goal is here to tackle the construction of these grammars from the bottom, starting from the temporally and territorially situated behaviors of the students.

Drawing on the fragmentation of the university spaces and the domination of the partisan networks, I intend to demonstrate how such a configuration frames the interactions during student elections and what the consequences are for the participants in terms of personal and social identity construction. Through a series of episodes concentrating on the issue of political competition between groups in AUB (1), the election campaign in USJ (2) mobilized to study the staging of collective identities during the electoral process in both universities, I argue that the time-and-space of student elections build and prescribe both collective and individual positioning in terms of partisan identification, thus fueling the processes of in-group integration and out-group distinction. By providing a concrete scene for expressing *groupness* and rivalries, the electoral moment exacerbates the latent ongoing competition between rival groupings for the definition of the social boundaries and the appropriation of the disputed territory of the university. As such, student elections emphasize the issue of relational positioning within the university space (and beyond), distributing the participants in a social map organized along partisan lines. They incarnate a time and space of production and activation of political identifications. In my view, they can be observed as a paradigmatic example of the on-going construction and display of bonds, borders and identity narratives as they occur in various Lebanese interactional settings. They constitute one of the scenes in which partisan identifications are relationally built.

## **1. EPISODE ONE: POLITICAL COMPETITION AND SOCIAL BOUNDARIES IN AUB ELECTION CAMPAIGN**

Focusing on the case of the 2010 AUB elections of the Student Representative Committee (SRC)<sup>143</sup>, the configuration of time-and-space will be studied in regards to two sets of interactional flows. The first one refers to the relations between the

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signification où s'inscrivent les rapport des forces”.

<sup>143</sup> This phase concentrates most the attention because all enrolled students can participate in the polls during the same day. The SRC members are elected in a single round majority vote. The second round consisting in the designation of the USFC members as well as of its Vice-President is generally held one or two weeks after the general election. The SRC vote is a single round ballot based on the majority rule. Each student can vote for a predetermined number of delegates representing his faculty, discipline, and year of study (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior). Students are allowed to select candidates from different lists.

university internal scene and the broader national socio-political arena, and especially parties' competition. It is predominantly oriented from the outside toward the university's space, essentially because of the domination of political organizations on the territory of the campus. It results that, even if the shift can be reversed on particular occasions, electoral interactions within AUB are framed by imported political praxis. Using Bourdieu's concepts, it could be said that the students' practices – the pattern of their actions – are shaped by their deprived position in the political field: they seem to reproduce cleavages and practices built on the conventional political scene. However, the situation is more complex if a second set of interactions is considered, defined by the interrelations between students inside the territory of the campus. As I intend to demonstrate, these two interactional processes are not necessarily congruent, which can lead to some disjunctions and conflicts, but are both participating together to the elaboration of the interactional setting in which the intergroup struggle for space is waged during the electoral moment (and beyond). My thesis is that these coexisting definitions of the situation play a central role in the production and the staging of (narratives about) collective/social identities based upon partisan labels.

### **A) Scene one: Order out of chaos**

Friday, November 19, 2010. It's still early in the morning. The stands typical of the student elections' campaign in the American University of Beirut have been raised for a couple of days only. Around thirty small constructions are facing the West Hall in the upper campus. Most of them are still empty as the two previous days were off due to an Islamic holiday. Only a few activists are preparing the stands for the two-day electoral campaign that will be waged before the vote, scheduled the next Wednesday. Although the stands' allocation is theoretically random, the distribution on the ground is based on the political division<sup>144</sup>. The first fourteen stands are held by the "*Students at Work*" group, affiliated with the March 14 coalition. The next five are identified with the name "*Alternative Front*"<sup>145</sup>. The last twelve appear more disordered. The wooden structures are covered with stapled posters representing a game of domino. They are entitled: "*Order out of Chaos*". Although the slogan and drawings are the

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<sup>144</sup> Each stand has a number and the administration organizes a kind of lottery. The stands' positions are drawn by every list of candidates, but the lots are exchangeable. The major activist groups therefore agree to trade their stands' location between each other in order to be able to regroup.

<sup>145</sup> The *Alternative Front* is composed of various AUB clubs and small political groups displaying a leftist-secular orientation. It gathers the Jordanian Club, the Syrian Club, the Palestinian Club as well as the political current "No Frontiers" [*Bilâ Hudûd*]. This leftist gathering emerged in AUB in the late 1990s but it has gone through a progressive process of decline since 2005, on which I discussed earlier. The electoral platforms of the *Alternative Front* can be consulted in the appendix.

same in all the sheets, the colors differ. Some are orange and white, others yellow and black. For someone accustomed to the Lebanese political scene, it is clear that these signs respectively refer to the campaign of the Free Patriotic Movement and Hezbollah, the two prominent forces in the opposition against the then ruling March 14 grouping on the national scale. Indeed, Fouad, one of the most active FPM partisans in AUB, is there, discussing with a small group of friends. They are talking about removing the posters from all the stands. But they are soon interrupted.

On the occasion of the Independence Day, scheduled on November 22 but celebrated early that year, the Lebanese flag is raised in front of West Hall, while speakers are voicing the national anthem. The sound crackles and sizzles. Tens of students have gathered to attempt the ceremony, most of them singing with the right arm raised, as it is the custom in Lebanon. On the top of the steps, in the embrasure of the building's entrance, wearing a dark-green suit, the Dean of the Student Affairs is preparing his first "Flag Day" speech. He was appointed recently after dedicating several years to assist his predecessor, Dr. Maroun Kisirwani, a prominent figure in the recent AUB history<sup>146</sup>. Around him, stand two of his subordinates as well as a few other officials. University Security guards are also present, at the back of the scene. Referring to the up-coming elections without mentioning them, the Dean's words warn against dissensions among AUB students: "*What unites us is stronger than what splits us apart! (...) Let us remember our common determination in favor of AUB's success and greatness.*"

Quite exceptionally, the celebration of the Independence Day takes place just before the student elections. Officially, the vote has to be organized before December 1st, when the newly elected university council is supposed to meet for the first time every year. For that reason, polls are generally held within the first two weeks of November. However, in 2010, religious holidays and the Independence Day made them more difficult to schedule. "*We discussed the date with all the political parties*", explained the Dean. "*The academic year really starts on the first week of October when registration and tuition fees payment deadlines expire. We only know how many students are going to be present from this moment. This means that political party members always ask for a delay to have enough time before the elections in order to identify all the potential voters and socialize*". In spite of being officially banned from the campus, political parties are recognized as important actors in AUB. "*We know the*

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<sup>146</sup> Maroun Kisirwani spent nine years as head of the Office of Student Affairs, between 2001 and 2010. He therefore accompanied the student movement in the university throughout the spring 2005 events. He became the first Dean of Student Affairs to be honored upon retiring by the USFC on April 30, 2010. See: <http://www.aub.edu.lb/news/Pages/107062.aspx> [May 2012]

*head of the parties among students and try to discuss with them as much as possible. We even organize meetings with officials responsible for student sections of the political parties. But we prefer to focus on students, especially since they do not always agree with their supervisors from outside. For instance, we had recently some problems with a particular political group that encouraged its students to generate troubles in the university. However, after an internal meeting between us and the students belonging to that party, we were able to diffuse the tension. It was then the students who convinced their leaders to avoid causing strife in the campus”<sup>147</sup>.*

In the alleys of the campus, the same dialectic between outside and inside, visible and invisible forces shaping the electoral configuration, seems at work. As the ceremony ends, FPM students start to take off their orange and white placards again. They replace them with more elaborated violet posters without dominos but still entitled “*Order out of Chaos*”, excepting for one stand, labeled as “*Order of the Engineers*”. Meanwhile, other stands have been erected, facing the huts of the FPM. Some students are decorating them with blue signs: “*Will we run this campaign?*” and “*WE WILL*”. They are also hanging complete lists of candidates, distributed by faculties and years of study (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior). Although no political signs are visible, clues indicate that their lists gather followers of the Socialist Party (PSP) and Harakât Amal.

“*We have a problem with Amal*” Fouad explained to me. “*Because Hezbollah doesn't want to fight Amal, we don't know what is going to happen now. We are organizing meetings between the various opposition groups in AUB outside the university, in the offices of the political parties – Malek represents the FPM there and he usually takes Issam, Michel or me with him.*” The ongoing negotiations force the FPM students to conceal the names of their candidates, in the hope of an eventual agreement with Amal and the PSP. Nassim, president of the Freedom club, concurs. But he adds: “*The problems are almost solved. We found a solution in the Faculty of Engineering, that's why we already announced our lists there with a different campaign name. But the thing is the PSP tries to push us to the limit...they want us to publicize all our candidates to make the negotiations more difficult. If we can't agree all together, then they will have more of their own members in the ticket with Harakât Amal.*”

At that moment, Malek, the coordinator of the FPM in AUB, arrives. He looks tired and confesses that he hasn't slept a lot during the last nights. “*Many problems are still to be solved. Everyone wants a bigger slice of the cake! We have announced that we*

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<sup>147</sup> Interview with the Dean of Student Affairs: November 19, 2010 [in English].

*will unveil the names of our candidates today. The other didn't do so completely yet. Representatives of the Amal movement and Hezbollah in AUB have called me from 3 am last night. I didn't sleep much. They wanted me to stop everything until we find an agreement, but I didn't. It's a game. It's all about who is going to step back first. Hezbollah already tried a bluff a couple of days ago. They put the yellow domino posters up, to pressure Amal. They wanted to make them afraid of having to run on their own. Then, I myself displayed the orange dominos to say that we are also ready to go without any kind of alliances. Today, we replaced those orange signs with violet ones. It was planned from the beginning that our campaign will be violet, but we made the orange posters to increase the pressure. There will be many meetings today; I hope everything will be cleared before the weekend. I am coordinating the issue with the FPM student committee, but, unlike in all the other parties in which students are following the instructions given to them, we are the ones who actually decide what we are going to do and inform our party outside."*

It is now 2:30 in the afternoon, and the game of cat and mouse continues. The "We Will" group displays its determination by putting up a gigantic blue sign covering the front of their five stands. However, the bluff didn't impress everyone. Lea, senior candidate for the FPM in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, is watching the scene: "We know they will end up being with us. For sure they will withdraw some of their candidates...they named candidates for almost every possible positions but it's a political move, to pressure us." Indeed, when I come back after the three-day weekend to the campus on Tuesday morning, on the eve of the elections, everything has changed. It's only 8:30 am but FPM students are already finishing replacing all their posters again. There are now only three occupied stands with blue placards, all entitled "Order of the Engineers" and displaying the names of the candidates for the sole Faculty of Engineering. The FPM lists in the other faculties have merged with the "We Will" campaign, which is now displaying slightly different posters integrating the candidates affiliated with the Aounist movement. Behind the "We Will" stands, the old Amal-PSP lists are now laying on the ground after having been shredded by the activists.

### **Commentary**

Understanding the design of the "We Will" campaign necessitates zooming out of the university. Undeniably, it echoes directly the concomitant political imbroglio at the national level. After having embraced the "Beirut Spring" in 2005 and formed the political gathering of the March 14 along with mainly the Future Movement, the Lebanese Forces and the Kata'eb Party, Walid Joumblatt, leader of the PSP and Druze

landlord, has progressively distanced himself from his allies since the summer 2009. He officially announced his withdrawal from the coalition in a press conference on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2009<sup>148</sup>. However, before he finally completed his volte-face by voting the no-confidence against Prime Minister Saad Hariri in January 2011, Joumblatt had chosen to keep a centrist position for several months without formally joining the opposition. In this context, the attitude of the Youth Progressive Organization, the student branch of the PSP has been subject to much speculation. In 2009, they maintained their alliance with the Future Movement in AUB whereas they supported the opposition groups in another university, the Lebanese-American University (LAU). Before the 2010 vote, it was rumored that the PSP students would run the campaign on their own or would even refrain from participating in the elections. In AUB during the campaign days, it became clear that the PSP is engaged with the Amal movement in a campaign that apparently excluded the FPM.

The reasons why Amal was likely to join the PSP rather than the FPM seem obvious: the two parties share a common ally, Hezbollah, but oppose each other on many aspects, most of all because Amal's leader, the long standing head of the Parliament, is perceived as one of the main target of the FPM anti-corruption discourse. The tension between the two sides was publicly revealed during the 2009 parliamentary elections when the FPM challenged Amal's hold on the mainly Christian city of Jezzine, in South Lebanon. Along the years, Nabih Berri had taken advantage of his prominent position within the State apparatus to establish patronage networks in the region of Jezzine where he was thus able to ensure the election of loyal Christian MPs. In 2009 however, despite their global alliance and mediations from Hezbollah, Amal and the FPM quarreled over Jezzine as Michel Aoun wanted to reinforce his position as a nationwide leader for the Christian Lebanese. It was finally decided that both parties will present their own list and on June the 7<sup>th</sup>, the FPM swept the all three contested parliamentary seats, causing Amal much discontent.

The entire act staged in AUB that year exposes a shadow theater whose scenario is written elsewhere and actions are set up in the backstage. Everything that matters gives

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<sup>148</sup> The reasons behind his withdrawal are multiple. For many analysts, they are rooted in the May 7 events in 2008. At that time, the PSP headed by Walid Joumblatt was considered a pillar of the March 14 government. Joumblatt was instrumental in the decisions of the cabinet to pressure Hezbollah by removing its land-line communication network and replacing the head of the airport security, known for his ties with the Shiite party. However, after the outbreak of armed clashes triggered by the government's move, Joumblatt witnessed the collapse of his ally of the Future Movement in Beirut within a couple of days, leaving the PSP alone to confront Hezbollah's fighters. Although he didn't break away from the March 14 coalition until the summer 2009, the 2008 episode certainly played a role in Joumblatt's perception of a necessary accommodation with Hezbollah to protect his own group, which led to the change of his strategic positioning.

the impression to occur outside the front scene, under the auspices of the partisan forces, negotiating between each other. The deal was clinched on Sunday night, apparently thanks to the willingness of Hezbollah to reach an agreement. The Shiite party is said to have removed most of his own candidates in order to enable the fusion between the two lists. In such a game, the students appear as the proxies of their respective groups. In spite of his affirmation, Malek apparently lacks the power to compose his own partition centered on AUB's internal space. As such, the problem opposing his group to Amal is not new. Six months earlier, he already shared with me his discontent regarding their alliance:

*"I went once to General Michel Aoun, a month and a half ago. I told him that I believe one of our allies is not working with us in AUB. I really don't want to be allied with them next year for the elections in AUB (...). To my surprise, he told me: 'Do whatever you thing is right. If you believe they are not good allies, don't go with them'. (...) I told him: 'They are doing wrong, I can't tolerate that!' (...) First, they worked on improving the sectarian divisions. Second, and more importantly, they are not honest with us. (...) When we go in the elections they are not giving all their votes to our candidates. They are giving all their votes for their candidates but not all their vote to ours. They are working wrong. The manner they speak is not decent. At the end, I couldn't tolerate this. The ones before me, they tolerated this because they didn't want to lose the elections. I don't care if I win or if I lose. Honestly, I don't care."<sup>149</sup>*

However the alliance remained. Whether it was to secure a victory in AUB elections or to avoid a crisis between political partners in a tensed national configuration, the maintenance of the electoral coalition illustrates the importance of university polls in the eyes of partisan forces. This significance is first material. As discussed in the previous chapter, elections offer the occasion to control faculty councils and thus to secure the funds allocated to them in order to finance partisan activities and promote the presence of the group in the university territories. Second, the symbolic dimension emerges as central. Claiming the victory in the student polls organized in an eminent institution such as AUB helps enhancing the public image of a political movement, especially in a context of intense partisan competition. All national medias report the results of the voting held in the country's most prominent universities and the results are analyzed year after year in the light of the struggles structuring the political field. Finally, on the internal scene, triumph in the electoral process highlights the presence of the group and constructs it as a figure of

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<sup>149</sup> Malek, interview with the author: May 26, 2010 [in English].

identification for the students. Undoubtedly, success generates a sentiment of domination that fosters a sense of security in the divided social environment of the campus, encouraging those among the students who feel attached to a party to engage. A member of the Amal youth movement in the Lebanese-American University (LAU) I met during my Master studies presented this idea quite clearly: *“I thought that I need to belong to a group in order to exist here, because you don't know anyone when you arrive in the university...it was at first social, then you feel implicated in politics (...). There are so many different groups that you have to belong to one of them. (...) To see that we are a strong group here encouraged me”*<sup>150</sup>.

Demonstrating its implantation thus may enable a party to produce political vocations among students. In that sense, the inter-party competition and the social process of identification among students work hand in hand. Elections constitute the archetypical time in which partisan boundaries become immediately visible, fueling the dynamics of recognition and distinction. Highlighting the presence of political groups, student ballots produce through the interactions between participants a classification of the social based on partisan identification. To the material interests of the political forces, the electoral process adds a symbolic dimension sustaining their role as identification frames. Consequently, the students' allegiance to partisan directives essentially impacts their mobilizations and thus the social categories these practices sketch.

The description of this first scene aimed at demonstrating the influence of political groups on student mobilizations during the electoral process. Because collective identification is produced in action (Mathieu 2001, p. 18), the capacity of partisan forces to compose from the back scene the progress of the play enacted by the students necessarily enables the diffusion of categories organizing the social structure as it is perceived in the AUB setting. The order that shapes the apparent chaos of interactions between students is built around partisan labels and storylines. However, this goes far beyond the immediate political competition as such and rather echoes a more global vision of the social reality as fragmented between groups as it is possible to infer from the next scene.

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<sup>150</sup> Hamad, interview with the author: March 3, 2006 [in English].



## **B) Scene two: “I am taking a stand”**

Tuesday, November 23, 2010. The last day of the electoral campaign. The situation remained however surprisingly quiet. Only a dozen of activists were already present when I entered the campus in the morning. Although FPM has joined the “*We Will*” campaign, it was in front of the stand of an independent candidate, a Senior Staff Writer of *Outlook*, that I found Lea, nonchalantly reading her Biology handbook. She smiled at me and said: “*As I told you on Friday, the two sides have merged! But I am not happy with it*”, she added. “*I don’t want people to see me with them, so I sit here*”. As I asked her why, she answers: “*I don’t like blue!*”

*“No seriously, what is the problem?”*

*- The “We Will” campaign is the problem!*

*- It’s about politics or is it something else?*

*- It’s not about politics, it’s social!*

*- What do you mean?*

*- I don’t like these people. (...) Some were my friends but I realized that they are not honest. (...) They don’t like each other, and they don’t like us, but only because of politics they are together. So it’s just the opposite of what you say: in politics, we are together, but the problem is social, with the people. (...) Moreover, I don’t trust them, we don’t know how they are going to vote for the USFC [in the second round of the elections].”*

A few meters away, Anis, another FPM activist in the university, was setting up his own stand. He installed a big orange poster displaying his name and the position for which he was running, a senior (third year) seat in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. “*I am taking a stand, literally*” he told me with a humoristic tone. “*This alliance is purely for electoral purposes. I was against it. The majority of our group didn’t share my views. Democracy in the FPM kicked me out!*” he explained, stating that it was important for him to expose his views and that he hoped to attract many votes from FPM supporters who would prefer to support him rather than the candidates of the unified list. From that moment, Anis started a campaign on his own, walking around the alleys surrounding West Hall to engage conversation with students and try to convince them to vote for him, most of the time accompanied by his girlfriend. Wearing trendy clothes, he also displayed ostentatiously a Christ pendant around his neck.

### **Commentary**

Key themes emerged from that short early morning scene. Lea's comment about the social dimension of her rejection played a central part in the construction of my understanding of the situation. A blatant conflict emerges between the two flows of interactions shaping the electoral process in AUB. The decision taken by the political forces of the “national opposition”<sup>151</sup> to unify their parties in a front against the March 14 campaign, “*Students at Work*”, is criticized by FPM students. Some of the discontents come from the eviction of one candidate implied by the merge of the Aounist and the “*We Will*” lists<sup>152</sup>. However, the posture taken by Lea and Anis signals a more profound rejection. As Lea did that day, Anis explained his refusal of the alliance by pointing out the disaffection between FPM supporters on the one hand and Amal or PSP followers on the other:

*“We don't even like each other! On the other side, the Lebanese Forces and Future Movement are really allied and never fight or at least they did it inside, they don't let their fights being decided by other parties. They have common views, right or wrong, but they have common views. Their alliance is based on common ground. (...) We don't have common ground in our alliances. That was my point. That was why I ran as independent during elections. (...) But they didn't want to lose. I said that losing is not a problem if you prove your point and prove to your people that you are still on the same views we started with. I tried to show this, but it's hard to convince someone to lose.”<sup>153</sup>*

Both Lea and Anis condemned the electoral nature of the agreement by emphasizing the distinction that exists on the campus between the students attached to the different groups. In that sense, they reveal a conflict opposing the interactions of partisan forces on the national scale and the student interactions at the micro level of everyday life in their campus. In their views, electoral groupings that participate in the elections are constructed as embodiments of segments of the social structure. It seems that in a configuration in which the boundaries are eclipsed by the electoral agreement,

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<sup>151</sup> The gathering of Hezbollah, Amal, and FPM, alongside smaller movements (mainly the Marada of Northern Lebanon landlord Sleiman Franjeh, the Armenian party of Tachnag, and the SSNP) against the then governing coalition of March 14. The opposition was generally referred to as “March 8 coalition”, however, the FPM as a political force participated in the demonstration held on March 14, 2005, and not in the one of March 8.

<sup>152</sup> A few minutes after my conversations with Lea and Anis, agitation arose in front of the “*Order of the Engineers*” stands. One student, with the help of his friends, wrote his name with a pen on the poster displaying the FPM candidates in the faculty of Engineering. The rest of the group rapidly intervened and the tag was concealed by a white paper stapled on the placard.

<sup>153</sup> Anis, interview with the author: November 30, 2010 [in English].

Lea and Anis insisted on the social differentiation in order to maintain the delimitation. They refused to be positioned on the basis of an electoral coalition that does not represent for them an accurate image of the social system existing on the campus and, beyond, in the country. The system they perceive divides the Lebanese society – hence the student population – in sub-groups understood as embodiments of partisan labels articulated to confessional backgrounds. These sub-groups are defined as much by their own characteristics as by their relations. In the narrative FPM members mobilize, their sub-group is considered “Christian” in its background but favorable to coexistence – which distinguishes it from the LF, Christian but advocating separate development of communities. Although the content of the definition of attributes varies according to the dominant identity narratives in each sub-group, all globally agree on the boundaries between them. FPM as well as LF members acknowledge the same symbolic borders. Yet, they don't give them the same meaning. The social system is thus constructed upon the *habitualization* of fragmentation and concurrent narratives related to it. A position in interactional setting relies on a storyline, a narrative that justifies it and which are usually taken for granted by the participants (Davies & Harré 1990). Here however, the storyline “electoral alliance” seems not enough to support a position associated with what is perceived as alien social components. As was the case in Silvio's story, the actors refuse to endorse in the course of interaction an identity label that does not reflect their perception of their self.

Lea's remark about politics also highlighted a specific definition of what is political. In my question, I was not referring to the alliances organizing the party system but rather to the political stance of the FPM. In my mind, their position on corruption for instance may have given ground to reluctance concerning the partnership with the Amal Movement, an opinion that regularly arose in my interviews. However, in her response, her conception of politics was limited to inter-partisan coalition in the public political scene. By contrast, her re-qualification of the difference as social illustrates the domination of identification processes – based on an exclusivist definition of the group – over politics – the necessary cohabitation and negotiation with the other – I already mentioned about the production of university territories (Seurat 1985, p. 79). If the political struggle waged by the partisan forces on the campus' territory is, after all, the phenomenon that predominantly shapes the outcome of the electoral process, its main effect remains that it activates perceptions of the social world relying on irreducible boundaries. In the eyes of students like Lea, the elections serve less the affirmation of a political domination, without even mentioning the defense of the students' rights, than the symbolic proclamation of exclusive identities. As Michel Seurat himself noted, identity, as proclaimed by Lea, stand

primarily as a tool to define a relation to the others in a contextualized interactional setting (Seurat 1985, p. 80). Politically, some of the partisan groups may have common interests, but they nonetheless remain distinct. So Lea expressed the idea that they gather around the FPM group in AUB because she recognizes herself in the collectiveness it incarnates in contrast with the others.

The rejection seemed even stronger in the case of Anis. Not only he refused to join the “*We Will*” electoral list, but he engaged in the battle as an independent. At first sight, his decision may have appeared as a tactical move from the FPM group: as every student can designate as many competitors as there are seats to conquer independently of the lists established by the student coalitions, the movement, by presenting one of its members outside the official candidates of the opposition coalition, offered the opportunity for his constituency to remove one of the Amal-PSP contenders and select Anis instead. In doing so, they may ensure that the FPM gets at the end more nominees than its allies considering that most of people vote for pre-arranged unified lists<sup>154</sup>. However, it was not the case. His rejection of the alliance with Amal and the PSP led him to openly reconsider his link with the FPM:

*“Some still like Michel Aoun but some are disappointed about the outcomes. (...) Some disagree with Michel Aoun’s and FPM’s current politics, their alliances and views. (...) Mainly it’s the alliance with people who don’t share his political views. Some alliances now are completely unexplainable...the people don’t share the same idea. I mean with Hezbollah and Harakat Amal and now with the PSP. I think that each one has its own ideas, its own goals for Lebanon. And alliances are just based in numbers, not based on common views. (...) August 7 [2001] was when FPM was really on its views and fighting with nothing for what it believed was right. (...) I still believe in those views and I think that current decisions are not based on these common views. After 2006, FPM started to drift away from this base, they are not the same. (...), I am very nostalgic of this time, and of 2005: I think it was the only election when FPM went through really believing on its principles. (...)I tried here in the university [to bring the spirit back] in demanding that FPM runs as independent, but FPM members, who are maybe very intelligent, didn’t want to...they also seek their own interests and preferred to win with any alliances than to lose, even if it would have brought the old spirit back. And they have the wrong beliefs that FPM members will remain FPM members whatever the alliances. (...) It’s not based any more on young people thinking of what is right and what is*

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<sup>154</sup> Actually, both the FPM on the one hand and the ticket Amal-PSP on the other apparently used the strategy of splitting electoral lists in order to overcome its rival within the opposition and to ensure its domination in the second round of the elections, the USFC vote. At the end of the 2010 elections, Amal succeeded in gaining the largest number of delegates in both the SRC and the USFC, thus ensuring the election of one of its member as Vice-President of the USFC.

*wrong. (...) That is why I am not such an active member of the FPM. Many members are like me, at least here. (...) I still think that many MPs and ministers from the FPM are working for the good of the country but I think the only problem with FPM is their alliances: it's not based on any common ground.”<sup>155</sup>*

As was the case for Silvio's, his example illustrates *a contrario* how participation in student elections can be seen as the translation of one's identification with the group. To be attached to the FPM is at first demonstrating this link in collective interaction by taking the position of a follower. When the “*We Will*” list failed representing an image of the group Anis had constructed, it led him to reconsider his involvement. He refused to continue to publicly endorse a positioning as FPM member. His withdrawal allows understand how student elections offer the scene to express publicly identification with a group, first of all because they ensure year after year the reaffirmation of partisan identity within the campus. Staging his own distance with the FPM let also Anis openly affirm the limit of the identification he experienced with the group at that moment. His words indicate that, if he was still inserted within the social network of the movement, his sense of belonging to a collective project declined, precisely because he thought FPM had lost his identity in the path it chose. Moreover, the idea of lost identity refers to the own interpretation of Anis, examining what he considered as the heart of the group. To say that the movement changed, that it didn't follow its initial views suggests an introspective analysis inclining him to think that the FPM does not correspond to the image he formed of it and therefore cannot support his sense of self anymore: “*I don't know [if I still consider myself as “FPM”]. I don't know, really...I still believe in the initial views, but I don't know if I am still an FPM member”<sup>156</sup>.*

The focalization of Anis's critics on alliances evokes a closed definition of the group. During our first meeting he insisted that:

*“In Brazil, no one cares about other people's religion. So when I came here I didn't even know my religion! I didn't know my religion before I came to Lebanon and talk with people asking about religions. I learned that there are different religions. Outside, all the Lebanese people are the same: all our friends are from all the religions and all of them have almost the same views about the country. But when they come to Lebanon, they differentiate between religion and political views. (...) The division here is really based on religions. When I first came, I rarely went to West-Beirut and actually, I think I never came until I was 15 or 16. We lived in East-Beirut and we never crossed the 'border', it is like a border, and when you go from*

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<sup>155</sup> Anis, interview with the author: November 30, 2010 [In English].

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

*one region to another, you don't feel that outside Lebanon that you have regions for religions. Here, people look at you based on your religion. They don't look at you as a person. That was a little bit strange when I came. Then I got used to it, like everyone.*"<sup>157</sup>

The Lebanese structure therefore underlines in his perception religious belonging and intergroup differentiation. Lebanon is a society made of boundaries. Although he stated in the same interview that "*Lebanon as I wish would be when religions are apart from politics*", he also voiced many opinions shaped by this perception of division between sects. His nostalgia of the pre-2005 era is also the regret of a lost unity among Christians, which he attributed to the struggle for leadership between Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea<sup>158</sup>. So his reminiscence of the past ideals of the Party is at least partially related with the deception caused by division between Christians. Interestingly, his original environment, the Lebanese emigrants' community in Brazil, is described with the same image of unity. Anis seems at the same time to regret and reproduce sectarian fragmentations. In that sense, the FPM alliances with Muslim groups such as Amal, Hezbollah, and more recently PSP, came in a way in contradiction with this construction of reality Anis operated in the Lebanese context. However when we met in May, although he noted that Amal didn't represent a reliable partner in AUB and expressed doubts about the alliance with Hezbollah because of the May 7 events, he didn't question his own affiliation with the FPM.

Two hypotheses may help understand how student elections led him to reconsider his position. First, it might be because 2010 elections in AUB saw for the first time PSP students join the coalition. In May, he explained that his father, originated from the Aley region, had been caught into the war of the Mountain, opposing the Lebanese Forces and the PSP in 1983-1984: "*My father was living in a region that was evacuated. The Lebanese Forces took him with them to Deir al-Qamar. He was with 150 men from the LF and was the only one that was not engaged. They were not from the region but come to fight the PSP and the Syrians. So he had to lead them to Deir al-Qamar*"<sup>159</sup>. Second, and, in my opinion, more convincingly, the university elections forced him to take a position in his everyday interaction. To use Lea's words, until then, the FPM's alliances were a "*political*" choice but became "*social*" when it was

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<sup>157</sup> Anis, interview with the author: May 25, 2010 [in English].

<sup>158</sup> He explained: "*Before 2005, when Michel Aoun was in France and Samir Geagea still in jail, Christians were still together. They liked each other, they had common views: they wanted Syria out, they wanted independence, and young people forgot about what happened [during the war]*". Anis, interview with the author: November 30, 2010 [in English].

<sup>159</sup> Anis, interview with the author: May 25, 2010 [in English].

necessary for him to position himself in the interactional flow on the campus. The allocated position proposed to him implied the concrete endorsement of these alliances, the affirmation of a common belonging uniting the groups of the opposition. Anis rejected it, reiterating several times that “*there is no common ground in these alliances*”. From a causality point of view, it is difficult to say whether it was his rejection of the electoral gathering that triggered his detachment. However, the rhetoric of the betrayal of the FPM ideals as well as the constant reference to the Party’s allies clearly indicates that since this episode, he had not been able to fully recognize himself in the movement any more.

His evolution thus demonstrates how elections concretely establish positions in the interactions unfolding in the university setting and how they are intrinsically connected to the sense of belonging of the students. It also acknowledges the importance of concrete circumstances experienced by the actor in the birth, evolution, and transformation of their identifications. The social link building the group is not immutable but rather an evolving process negotiated in the flow of experience. Starting from Lea’s and Anis’s reluctance to approve an electoral alliance, it was demonstrated that elections are perceived as an event allocating meaning to students’ relative location in the university territory. The competing groups are considered as incarnation of social sub-cultures. Consequently, elections enable the interpretation – i.e. the embodiment – of the character of the partisan follower, envisaged as constitutive of the self. As such, they constitute a positioning context that plays an important role in the materialization of the processes of identification experienced by the students. The electoral moment thus clearly highlights the issue of positioning in the university setting. But positioning oneself as a group member is not invariable: as an interactional process, it is negotiated. Lea used the dialectic between political alliance and social belonging to mark her distance without refuting her place as a follower of the FPM. She afterward participated in the polls along her comrades. Anis on the contrary mobilized the rhetoric of original purity and change to construct his distance with the group. In both cases, the time and scene of the electoral process was the occasion to elaborate and display their sense of belonging in reference to partisan identity.

Although the scene reveals some disjunctions and conflicts between the inter-partisan and the intra-student levels, both are participating together to the elaboration of the interactional setting in which social identities based upon partisan labels are produced and staged. Despite the agreement to unify the opposition lists, every party

tried to override its allies<sup>160</sup>. Identity claims and the struggle for appropriation of the university space therefore proved stronger than the politics of coalition observed at the national level. But once again, this phenomenon seems to reflect a more structural tendency existing in the political system. As is the case in the Lebanese scene, the parties inside AUB endorsed the status of social segment representatives, negotiating between each other for a share of power. As observed in scene one, beyond the facade concord, all parties tried to secured a “bigger slice of the cake”, to paraphrase Malek. This attitude fueled social distinction – parallel to representations of the students. The system in which student mobilizations occur remains therefore determined by a grammar dividing the social between groups in opposition to one another.

### **C) Scene three: Students at work**

Tuesday, November 23, 2010. D-Day. The first students arrived on the campus around 8, walking through the impressive deployment of security forces. While groups of soldiers from the Lebanese army and Internal Security Forces guards were stationed in Bliss Street, protecting AUB main gate, inside, employees of the university double checked the identity of any trespasser. Only students who had paid their tuition fees for the coming semester could enter the campus. For outsiders, it was necessary to benefit from an authorization granted by the administration. Your name was then put on the list of the “Captain”, the head of the AUB security.

The early comers were activists. They gathered in strategic places, in front of the future voting points to arrange their final strategy around a quick breakfast. The cluster supporting the March 14 coalition presented a group strong of around twenty students wearing yellow construction vests. They brought key-rings, scarves, stickers, and T-shirts of the same color. These initial moments confirmed that the match would be decided between three main groups: “*Students at Work*” (March 14), “*Alternative Front*” (secular and leftist AUB clubs), and “*We Will*”. If the different components of this last coalition coordinated together, each party nevertheless worked mainly on its own. In front of a cell only made of FPM followers, around ten persons, Malek organized a small briefing. After reminding the main tasks assigned to each of them, he gave the cell-phone provided by the Party to one of his subordinates. It would be one of the rare appearances of the FPM leader in AUB during that day, another indication that what matters was handled in private, in some back-scene setting.

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<sup>160</sup> After the elections of the 2010 USFC, both members of the Amal-PSP coalition and of the FPM tried to ally with representatives of March 14 to ensure the election of one of their members as Vice-President. A student from the Amal Movement was finally elected.



The student masses showed one hour later. From that moment, the arrangements organized by the groups became clear. Two main spots of activities emerged: West hall in the higher campus and the surrounding of the Engineering faculty in the lower part of the university. These two sites being related to the two most populated faculties: Arts and Sciences (FAS) and Engineering and Architecture (FEA). In front of these spots, some students questioned every person they came across to inquire about his or her faculty, discipline, and voting intentions, while others were in charge of distributing the programs and lists of candidates to the crowd. The formers widely differ in forms: “*Students at Work*” platform looked like small magazines, made of fine paper and incorporating photos of each of their candidates, whereas the “*Alternative Front*” uses simple black and white paper sheets<sup>161</sup>. The “*We Will*” campaign didn’t even distributed programs, even if some were sent by emails directly to the students, at least in the faculty of Engineering. The contents of the electoral platforms were scarce, limited to general propositions to enhance the student’s conditions (opening of studying spaces, change of the credit system, improvement of the cafeteria, development of financial aids, etc.) and, in the case of the “*Alternative Front*”, broad political messages (secularism, boycott of Israel, freedom of expression, etc.). No mention of partisan positioning was present. The lists of candidates distributed were small and each sheet completely filled by the names of the candidates. Besides electoral material, the groups circulated stickers or cell-phone covers for the students.

Activists were continuously talking on the phone, holding lists of names. These lists indicated the surnames, first names, partisan preference, and reference (the activist in charge of contacting him/her) of each enrolled student for a given faculty. Some team leaders were regularly reported the latest progresses. When the electoral operations really started, at 10 am, another display emerged. The supporters of the various lists gathered along the barriers that guided the path to the voting rooms. Every time a student reached that point, he or she was met by this crowd inquiring about his or her name and reminding about the rules to follow: “*Just circle the number of the candidates on the ballot papers, not their names!*” Suddenly, in the routine of the discussions between activists and passing students, an undergraduate answered that he didn’t vote yet. Immediately, one, then two and three supporters of the “*Alternative Front*” encircled him and designated a girl among them to guide him to the polls. During the day, many students were thus escorted to the path with much insistence, surrounded by supporters of one or several groups, each one trying to be the last to

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<sup>161</sup> The programs of “*Students at Work*” and of the “*Alternative Front*” are presented in the appendix.

speak to him or her and to put the chosen list in his or her hand. After five hours on intense activity, the pace slowed and the campus was left progressively emptied of its population. The alleys leading from the main entrance to West Hall seemed strangely quiet after the overflow of movement they witnessed earlier. Around 4 o'clock, the activists would finally go to the voting rooms themselves and, once all of them would have cast their votes, they would throw their lists in the air, in a din of applause and shouts.

Sounds and visuals were indeed important components of the scene displayed in the setting of the campus. From the morning, the outburst of multiple tints struck the eye. Rival groups wore distinctive clothing of the theme color they chose for their campaign. These colors have no specific meaning and change every year. They are not symbolic but distinctive. However, activists often wear accessories displaying the colors associated with their political groups: orange for the FPM, green for Amal, blue for the Future Movement. Students also customized their clothes with stickers, scarves, badges and all sort of gadgets. The physical space of the campus was itself turned into a contest of colors, especially in the areas designated for the display of placards. Usually filled with information about student activities or university's life, they became during the campaign and even more during the day of elections a battle field. At regular interval, each side intended to cover all the posters of its rivals, changing the shade of the landscape. Beyond the willingness to distinguish between the competing lists, the clothes of the activities also aimed at marking their partisan identities. Noticeably, in the early hours of the electoral agitation, students from Hezbollah were distributing their recognizable black scarves to their supporters. Taking them from a gigantic plastic bag, two activists were providing their comrades with this highly identifiable symbol. Many of the FPM students, in addition to the blue t-shirts of the "*We Will*" campaign and the orange accessories reminding of their political stands, also paraded with a dark *keffiyeh* of their ally.

With the campus waving like a beehive, the space was saturated with sounds. However, it rarely took the form of vocal contest between competitors. Except for the final moments in which activists of a given side went to vote in turn, the rivals did not engage in openly demonstrative voicing. The sound that emerged was more related to the ongoing flow of activity: people calling each other, shouting instructions, or inquiring about students' participation. During the previous days, vocal battles were also extremely rare. Only once did the rival groups of "*We Will*" and "*Students at Work*" confront each other with songs and slogans, and it was related to the presence of journalists from a TV channel. It seemed during the all week that the competition

for the appropriation of the space was limited to the disclosure of the results and its aftermath celebrations.

### ***Commentary***

The practices of the student activists on the occasion of elections constitute a ritualized know-how. The three main groups in competition use the same techniques that are reproduced year after year. When I first discovered AUB polls during the year of my exchange studies in 2002, the political context as well as the alliances completely differed but the behaviors displayed the very same characteristics. The routinized nature of these performances grants them the normalized and recurring dimension of rituals (Kertzer 1988, p. 9).

The origins of such practices are multiple. However, they seem largely inspired by the functioning of the partisan electoral machine at the national level: the control exercised on the lists of voters, the calls and personal encouragement to participate to the polls, the continuous verification of who has effectively voted, are all found during elections held in the country, either parliamentary or local. Even the form of the electoral lists is similar to the ones used in voting operations outside the university. However, if those small sheets of paper filled with the candidates' names without any remaining space aim at avoiding split-ticket voting by providing ready to use lists with no possibility for the voters to erase one name and replace it by another, they are useless in the context of the university where the ballots are printed by the administration and only require from the students to circle the number of the candidate they chose.

The importation of partisan practices and habits may come from the intervention of the parties' organizations and human networks in the voting process. The mobilization of the electoral machine of the parties in the university is primarily a mobilization of resources. Human resources first, as a vast number of students take part every year in the electoral campaign. The groups in competition need the support of many in order to maximize the impact of their pre-election work: identify the students and make sure they vote. These flocks of people who gather in front of the ballot rooms, who call their fellow students to convince them to show up, who relay the information to the team leaders, who ask everyone passing by if he or she voted, are recruited beyond the nucleus of politically active students on the campus. Being the climax of partisan mobilization, the campaign stimulates participation further than any other activity organized by partisan groups during the year. Additionally, the material resources employed are considerable. According to the March 14 representative, the 2010 campaign cost 10,000 dollars. Rumors circulating among students evoked the double.

Political parties provided the money needed to buy all the accessories, but also to pay cellphone bills, or even transportation for students who were unable to reach the university on the day of the elections. If the amount of money injected into university politics has been criticized inside as well as outside the arena of the campus<sup>162</sup>, students interestingly never complained about alleged vote buying. The condemnations I collected during my years of fieldwork remained limited to stories about the distribution of prepaid cellphone cards.

Despite the massive intervention of political movements, outside politics is not the only element to take into account to understand the electoral practices. The continuous inter-generational transmission of knowledge between the successive flows of students has also generated the *habitualization* of the techniques activists deploy during the decisive day. In that sense, the university elections play a central role in the political training of the young partisans. Students who engage in these electoral activities learn the rules of the game from their more experienced fellows. This transmission of knowledge is moreover pivotal in the construction of the electoral moment as one of the highlight of the university life. To acquire the skill to run student elections and actively participate in the event represent one of the discoveries made during the stay at AUB. Even for the students who are not necessarily engaged in politics, it is difficult to ignore the event as well as the inter-student socialization it implies. For the sake of the campaign, the participants have to meet with scores of new comrades and exchange with them. Within each group, the numerous pre-electoral meetings as well as the action during the final day construct strong bonds. This may explain the high participation rate recorded every year<sup>163</sup>, far beyond the number of politically active students. The number of followers active in the electoral machines of the party during the event is also far more important than the nucleus of young people who animate the FPM group during the year. The case of Silvio encountered in the introduction of this chapter is exemplar in that respect.

A key moment in the social system of AUB, the day of elections moreover produce a political reality. It works as the reminder of the domination of partisan movements on the public arena. In spite of their strong implantation in the university, political movements remain relatively discreet in the everyday life of the campus. During the electoral process in contrast, the domination of these groups openly resurfaces. Thus, student elections maintain the perceptions that the social structure in AUB setting rests

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<sup>162</sup> In 2008, Michel Aoun, leader of the FPM, condemned in an interview to the *al-Manar* channel the money paid by the March 14 coalition to finance student elections: "Aoun afraid political money reaches universities!", *Al-Manar* website: November 8, 2008.

<sup>163</sup> Official data for 2009 and 2010 SRC elections are presented in the appendix.

above all on partisan identities. Through their objective domination made possible thanks to their strong implantation and the mobilization of their resources, the parties impose the subjective definition of reality as fragmented between political groups. Symbolically, elections reaffirm the prevalence of an interpretation of lived space as a field structured by partisan competition. The use of distinctive clothing for instance, as the case of the scarves worn by Hezbollah supporters demonstrates, serves as representation of the identities embodied by the political groups. These black *kūfiyât* symbolize the fighters of the Islamic resistance who usually wear them, but are also primarily related to the Shiite symbolism as they most of all appear during the period of '*Āshûrâ*', their black color referring to the mourning of Imâm Husayn martyred in Karbala in the year 680<sup>164</sup>. Such markers therefore support identity narratives about the partisan groups, positioning them in relation to one another in terms of present political stands (the resistance against those who campaign for the disarmament of Hezbollah) and sectarian backgrounds (Shia against Sunni Muslims), illustrating once more the imbrication between partisan and religious references. These relational claims about identity about the competitors are publicly reasserted at the occasion of student elections and highlighted in the interplay between actors.

Political competition between partisan forces and the process of distinction between students both exacerbated during the electoral procedure thus construct the university territory of AUB as a fragmented space. In this divided setting everyone is potentially positioned in reference to labels perceived as incarnation of coexisting idiosyncratic social groups. Joint participation of distinctive groupings gives these gatherings all their meaning through the affirmation of their boundaries. It underlines the circumstantial and relational nature of identification processes as the case of University Saint-Joseph also illustrates.

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<sup>164</sup> '*Āshûrâ*' literally refers to the tenth ('*âshûrâ* means the tenth day) of the Islamic month of *Muharram* remembered as the day of the death of Husayn, son of the Imâm Ali and grand-son of the Prophet Mohammad, massacred along with members of his family in the battle of Karbala. The killing was ordered by Yazid, caliph of the Umayyad, upon the conflict opposing the Shiites, partisans of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (People of the House – referring to the family of the Prophet), and the Sunnis rejecting the exclusive legitimacy of the family of the Prophet. According to the story, Husayn was killed after ten days of a heroic resistance. The commemoration thus lasts for these ten days, each one corresponding to one specific episode, the climax being reached on the day of '*âshûrâ*'. '*Āshûrâ*' represents the founding myth of Shia Muslims (Mervin 2000, 2007).

## 2. EPISODE TWO: A RITE OF INSTITUTION? ELECTORAL MEETINGS AMONG USJ STUDENTS

The situation in the Saint-Joseph University notably differs from the AUB case because of the Christian social, spatial and political environment. The electoral competition is deeply marked by the rivalry between the FPM and the Lebanese Forces, even if other partisan actors play a role in the contest. Starting from the elections of the year 2008, the impact of the duel is explored in reference to its social function, using the concept of rite of institution proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. According to him, these rituals consecrate the social significance of specific boundaries (1991 [1982], p. 117). My hypothesis is that the routinized and symbolic activities organized by the group during student elections intend to institute and legitimize its difference regarding to the outsiders. They participate to the affirmation of a separating line defined in reference to identity narratives that create an “*arbitrary boundary*” (ibid., p. 118) and can thus, in spite of some limitations, be analyzed in a discussion of Bourdieu’s insight about the power of rituals to assign properties of social nature and consequently build “real” social oppositions. Student group behaviors aim at “*sanctioning and sanctifying a difference (...) by making it known and recognized (...)*” (ibid., p. 119).

### A) Scene one: “ma’nâ”, “dednâ”

Tuesday, October 21, 2008. Alain called me around 8 pm to inform me that the USJ students in the faculty of Economics would held their first pre-electoral meeting that night, in the Queen’s Plaza building, the location of the former FPM headquarters in Jdeydeh, in the northern suburb of Beirut. As I arrived in the second floor office, the organization of the work was immediately visible: three tables were scattered in the vast room, each gathering around a dozen of activists, males in majority, distributed by year of studies. They were all busy scrutinizing lists of enrolled students, copied from the administration of the university or even photographed and then printed. The ambiance seemed studious yet relaxed. The activity was simple: one member was reading the names and, afterwards the others answered: “*ma’nâ*” [“with us”], “*dednâ*” [“against us”], or “*neutre*” [systematically said in French]. The operation was repeated several times during the night, classifying the population of the faculty into those three categories. Students call this a “pointage” [also always in French]. “*We count approximately and the next day we try to have a feedback on that. Tomorrow, we will start the fieldwork in the campus, which means to discuss with the neutrals to convince them to vote for us*” explained a second year student during the meeting.

The work was supervised by the FPM coordinator in the faculty of Economics as well as the representative of the Party for the whole campus of Huvelin. They visited regularly each table and in turn informed Alain, at that time the head of FPM Student Affairs in charge of private universities in Beirut. The controllers never stayed at one place for long, multiplying aside conversations among them or with the more experienced activists in charge of advising the students realizing the *pointages*. The meeting thus appeared as a superposition of group work and back-scene exchanges, with some insuring the link between the two dimensions.

Suddenly, after one hour of work, the second year students exulted, claiming to have a margin of fourteen votes over their rivals. Immediately, Doni, representative of the FPM in Huvelin, reacted: “*I want you to do a ‘pointage pessimiste’* [a “*pessimistic scrutiny*”, said in French in the middle of an Arabic sentence]” he warned as he reached the table of the second year students. “*But I am sure to win*” answered the future candidate, “*I got 72 votes and they got only 50!*” Doni replied immediately: “*I will do it again with you. Don’t count anyone who is not 100% sure to be with us*”.

The list of the second year students was studied again, using this time a slightly different categorization: the neutrals were divided between those having a positive attitude toward the FPM (“*neutres plus*”) and those who seemed closer to the Lebanese Forces views (“*neutres moins*”). When the students found themselves unable to categorize someone, they discussed about his or her acquaintances or asked one of the more experienced activists who had been working in the university for years. They might know the person in question, his or her friends, or a member of his or her family. When the problem remained unsolved, the first option was to ask for the cell phone paid by the Party – the “*Telephone al-Maktab*” [the phone of the office] – to call a classmate who would possibly provide an answer. “*From which region does he come?*” constituted the last mean to determine uncertain cases.

The time passed with a continuous litany of names, followed by the same comments: “*ma’nâ*” or “*dednâ*”. After around two and a half hours spent examining the enrolment lists, most of the participants went back home, leaving only the senior activists. It was then around midnight and Doni announced that he would like to work a bit on the electoral program. Only eight activists remained and the work was not intensive. A computer was brought in and a draft program opened. A few ideas were discussed: to organize a “*Founders’ Day*” in imitation of AUB, to set up a game to attribute the rare available parking places between the students who demanded one, to ask the administration to create assistant positions for deserving students, to organize a “*Job fair*” to facilitate employment of the graduates, and a photo exhibition about the civil war entitled “*student citizen*”. Finally, the possibility to create a website to

present the program was proposed. No more than one hour was devoted to the discussion. It was then time to tidy up and close the office. The discussion between the five last students continued in the stairs and then in the car back to Beirut: “*Think about bringing stress-balls and pens for the elections, it would be great!*”

### **Commentary**

Being the first of a series of gathering organized between the 21<sup>th</sup> of October and the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2008, date of the elections, this meeting was also typical. The successive encounters were similarly dedicated to the realization of “*pointages*”, until the eve of the D-day. The activity of scrutinizing the list of enrolled students is both repeated every year and symbolic. As such, it participates in the institutionalization and the ritualization of behaviors observed during the moment of university elections. Starting from this specific activity, it seems possible to draw the structure of signification – or the grammar as I named it in the introductory section of this chapter – of student politics. The collective practices observed indeed work as a web of significations the actors are using and in which they are evolving. The “*pointage*” can be considered as a favorite mode in the students' repertoire of action aiming at drawing a line between a “we” and a “them”. A line that symbolizes the essence of the social distinction, the ultimate delimitation as the handling of the case of neutral people illustrates: even they have to be classified between the two rival groups. Significantly, symbols are sometimes drawn on the lists in front of the names to illustrate affiliation: a triangle imitating the Cedar, symbol of the LF, and a “V”, symbolizing the FPM logo.

The duality of the universe displayed by the praxis observed during this and the subsequent meetings refers of course to the competition opposing the two main political forces implanted in Huvelin: the FPM and the Lebanese Forces. Even if other parties are part of the process, the classification remains between “*Tayyâr*” and “*Quwwât*”. This distinction operates at several levels and not only in the here and now of the electoral campaign in USJ as it originates from the struggle that opposed the two sides at the end of the Lebanese wars in 1989-1990, and it echoes a political strife in the national scene. Consequently, it follows that the boundary that sustain the structure of signification produce by the practice of scrutiny is of triple nature in reference to the shaping of the students' political culture as defined by Daniel Cefaï (2001, p. 95-96). It is first a structure of *temporality* as it consists in the actualization in the time and space of USJ elections of a social distinction previously constructed. It is secondly a structure of *interaction* because in that context, being “*Tayyâr*” only acquires meaning because others are positioned as “*Quwwât*”. Finally, it is a structure of *relevance*: the



boundary institutes meaning about the social and the way it is perceived. It establishes a frame of interpretation of the reality experienced by the students in their university.

The signification introduced by the collective behaviors of the FPM students relies on identity narratives that aim at framing the distinction. Those storylines use symbolic references in order to describe every LF supporter as a deviant: “one who is different from the rest of us, who cannot or will not act as a moral human being” (Becker 1997, p. 34). On that night, when I asked Emile, a third year student in Economics I encountered at the beginning of my research, how he and his fellow-students were able to categorize people, he told me: “*Honestly, we can infer from one’s look to which group he belongs (...). They [LF militants] are from another kind of society...they are thugs, in the true sense of the term. They are bad people. They wear necklace with their cross-sword [the symbol of the LF militia] so everybody can see it. (...) We try to socialize with the newcomers because many support the FPM but they are scared because they are victims of aggressions*”<sup>165</sup>. At several occasions during the following gatherings, students came to me to discuss the way they perceived the difference between themselves and their rivals. The most striking remark I heard was this comment Rawad, another third year student, shared spontaneously with me: “*We are not the same kind of people (...). Did you notice the difference between our profile and theirs? I mean, it's not that we have a better political view, but did you see the human difference? (...) They like to go down in the street with a gun and stay there, just to block the road and claim [the street] is theirs*”<sup>166</sup>.

Segregation is thus argued by students to be social and not political. It apparently depends on differentiated morals related to opposite universes built throughout the history of social relations between the LF and the FPM. It is mainly the armed conflict between the two groups that informed the distinction. The war was waged by Michel Aoun's Army in the name of the restoration of the State and its rule of Law against the chaos embodied by the militiamen. This military opposition has been perpetuated through a political antagonism between the centralism of the State and the autonomy of the confessional segments. Though the content of the political programs of the two

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<sup>165</sup> Emile, interview with the author: October 21, 2008. The original statement was in French: “*Franchement, on peut juger sur le look du type...ils [les FL] sont une autre gamme sociale, ce sont des gens méchants au vrai sens du terme, ils sont vilains. Ils mettent une croix-glaive bien visible. (...) On essaie de sociabiliser avec les 1<sup>ères</sup> années car beaucoup sont CPL mais ils ont vraiment peur à la fac, ils sont victimes d’agressions*”. Emile’s portrait is detailed in Chapter Four and Chapter Six.

<sup>166</sup> Rawad, interview with the author: October 30, 2008. In this case, military outfits or laid-back attitudes were pointed out as clues about party membership. The original statement was in French: “*Nous n’appartenons pas à la même catégorie de gens. Est-ce que tu as vu la différence entre le type de personne de chez nous et le type de personne de chez eux? Niveau allure, non pas qu’on ait une meilleure politique qu’eux mais...tu as vu la différence de style, de profil, de type?*”

movements has changed, their opposition remain. Finally, these contradictions further articulate in the eyes of FPM supporters a social distinction between civilized people from the city and the thugs from the periphery. Again this representation comes from the experience of the LF militia. While the first Christian armed-groups organized around 1975 were composed of volunteer students and urban small bourgeoisie, the continuation of the conflict saw an important transformation of the social origins of the members: in the 1980s, the LF was formed of professional fighters recruited among unemployed people from rural areas (Picard 1994, p. 155). Rawad's claims have to be considered as symbolic narratives, whose composition has to be analyzed in relation to the process of social distinction between the two groups. In this regard, the positions allocated to the student population strongly incorporate the storyline elaborated among the FPM group about militia vs. order. Depending on the partisan labels attached to them, students are inscribed in this narrative about collective identity: LF supporters embody the militia past of their organization and their behaviors are said to be determined by the party's perceived militia identity. The interpretation of the students about the act of making a "*pointage*" as such is also dependent on the identity narrative mobilized to define the groups: "*as they are an extremist party, they base their scrutiny on sectarian membership (...), but ours is only based on political views*"<sup>167</sup>.

As the question about geographical origin of one student presented in the scene one indicates, it however happened during my observations that the sectarian criteria was used to make a guess about the political stand of some students, mainly Muslims (the Sunnis being consider as against the FPM and the Shiites in favour of the Party, due to its alliance with Hezbollah). In addition, I have not noticed whether the Lebanese Forces use a different method to realize their "*pointages*". From what I was able to see, the technique they employed seemed extremely similar to what I observed more deeply among FPM students. Therefore the signification of the praxis depends not on the *doing* as such, but on the *being* of the actor. Here, to quote Bourdieu, "[t]he power of the categorical judgement of attribution, realised through the institution, is so great that is capable of resisting all practical refutations." (Bourdieu 1991[1982], p. 124)

As was the case in AUB, the electoral programs in USJ do not focus much attention of the students. They mainly consist of cosmetic side-products of the mobilization. Only a handful of activists participate in their redaction, using the models established during the previous years. As a former FPM coordinator in Huvelin

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<sup>167</sup> Marko, interview with the author: October 27, 2008. The original statement was in French: "*Parce qu'ils sont un parti extrémiste, ils basent leur pointage sur l'appartenance communautaire (...). alors que nous, c'est purement politique.*"

told me during the electoral campaign: “*Only three or four people write the programs, which are always almost the same for the various faculties, to display a general vision for the whole university (...). To mobilize as many people as possible beyond politics, we say that we don’t care about political issues...we say that but it’s not true [laughs]! The aim is to attract neutrals, so that is what we do. (...) Who write the programs? It is always the same ones, it’s well known...those who know how to read and write [laughs]!*”<sup>168</sup>

The programs are for example apparently deprived of political references, focusing rather on the organization of social activities or on the improvement of the relation between the students and the administration of the university. The form also appears more important than the content. Precisely in 2008, the LF and its allies in March 14 produced a remarkable program: an actual hard cover A4 book of thirty pages, printed on glossy paper, incorporating photos, and personally addressed to every student of the campus with a name tag and a letter. Undoubtedly produced by professionals, this master piece only briefly mentioned general political stands such as “*independence*” and “*sovereignty*” in its short introduction before proposing along the next pages ambitious activities such as a trip to Vienna, a journey in hot-air balloon, or a cruise on the Mediterranean Sea<sup>169</sup>.

Nevertheless, the deletion of the political dimension is largely fictional. First, some symbols may come as reminders of the partisan identities of the groups in competition: the Cedar displayed on the March 14 program is for example immediately identifiable with the logo of the Lebanese Forces. Second, most of the students perfectly know which political forces stand behind every candidate. This is due to the domination of the partisan perception of space on the one hand, and to the fact that the candidates themselves proclaim in many occasions their own affiliation, yet often cautiously using a graduated scale (independent backed by a party, party supporter, party member). If the programs formally do not exhibit any political signs as such, they are still identified with parties. Third, the propensity to claim political neutrality is in itself ambiguous. Certainly, it represents a tactical mean to persuade the largest possible number of voters. But at the same time, discussions between students on the campus

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<sup>168</sup> Karl, interview with the author: October 23, 2008. The original statement was in French: “*seules deux ou trois personnes écrivent le programme qui est commun, pour une vision globale pour une Amicale entière (...). Pour ramener le plus de gens possible au-delà de la politique, on dit qu’on s’en fout de la politique...on dit ça, mais ce n’est pas vrai, on ne s’en fout pas [rires]! Le jeu est d’attirer les indépendants, donc on fait ça. (...) Qui rédige les programmes? Ce sont toujours les mêmes, c’est connu...les gens qui savent écrire et lire [rires]!*”

<sup>169</sup> Comparatively, the program produced the next year was much more modest: reproducing the design of the previous one, it consisted in an A5 booklet made of 14 pages.

during the time of elections concentrate mainly on political issues. For instance, Karl, who explained the strategic necessity to convince neutrals argued in another occasion that: *“To win votes, it's easy: you link the situation in the university with the geopolitics. For example, you say that if they don't vote for the FPM, the LF will win and become more popular, thus may win the parliamentary elections. That would trigger a change in international politics, as Lebanon would join the American axis and the Christians would be crushed by the Saudi allies of the Americans, who support the Islamists.”* In fact, as he himself put it: *“You have different strategies to convince different people!”*<sup>170</sup>

Beyond the varied strategies mobilized in the political competition, the key social processes in action during the electoral circumstances remain essentially the construction and display of concurrent collective identities. What grants electoral practices observed among students their institutive nature is their capability to diffuse or to communicate the partisan distinction they intend to assert. Without a doubt, the differentiation between FPM and LF members seems to operate far beyond the relatively small group of students actively engaged in politics in the university. The core of FPM activists in the faculty of Economics barely exceeds a dozen of people. However, in the meeting I observed along the years, more than fifty persons were regularly present. Not all of them could be considered politically active. Nevertheless, they felt concerned and wanted to position themselves in reference to the division instituted between the two factions. As Joy, a second year student put it: *“This country sucks. Some work to change things but it is pointless. The children will always believe the ideology of their parents. But we participate anyway, to flaunt ourselves”*<sup>171</sup>. The strong participation in pre-electoral meetings highlights the institutionalized dimension of the polls in the university life. It also serves the interests of the Party, as the more students join, the more names on the enrolment lists can be identified and classified, and the better the scrutiny becomes.

More fundamentally, analysis of the voting results provides an essential clue about the nature of the processes at work in the electoral campaign. First, the high level of

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<sup>170</sup> Karl, interview with the author: October 23, 2008. The original statement was in French: *“Tu sais très bien comment ramener des voix, c'est facile: tu rattaches la situation de l'université avec la géopolitique! Par exemple en disant que si tu ne votes pas CPL, les FL gagnent, donc ils deviennent plus populaires et gagnent aux élections parlementaires, ce qui provoque un changement dans la politique internationale, le Liban basculant dans l'axe américain et les Chrétiens vont être bouffés par les alliés Saoudiens des américains qui soutiennent les islamistes. (...) Tu as différentes stratégies pour convaincre différents types de personnes.”*

<sup>171</sup> Jay, interview with the author: October 21, 2008. The original statement was in French: *“Ici, c'est merdique, certains travaillent pour changer mais ça ne sert à rien, les enfants croient toujours en l'idéologie, comme leurs parents. Mais on le fait quand-même, pour s'afficher!”*

participation in the elections is a indication of a process of institutionalization of the vote. The circumstances of the polls in the social setting of the campus encourage the activation of political affiliations and boundaries among the students, generating the positioning of almost all the student population through its electoral choices. In 2008, in the faculty of Economics, the turn-out was outstanding: 379 students out of 425 officially enrolled participated in the polls (111 first-year students out of 125, 98 second-year students out of 105, and 170 third-year students out of 195). The participation therefore reached 89%. The next year, in 2009, it was still 87% for the faculty of Economics (420 voters out of 484 enrolled students)<sup>172</sup>. In Huvelin, this ripple effect may be even stronger due to the double polarization of the scene: between March 14 and March 8 on the one hand, as it exists in the national political field, and, in the other hand, between the FPM and the LF. However, the available data concerning the turn-out in AUB elections tend to demonstrate that a high level of participation often prevails in student elections in the circumstances of the electoral campaign: 73,6% of AUB students took part in the 2009 SRC elections, and 68,6% the next year. Yet, in 2010, a revote organized on November 26 for the Sophomores of the faculty of Arts and Sciences gathered only 35,7% (330/927) of the students against 66,1% (613/927) on the election day<sup>173</sup>. This illustrates the importance of the partisan electoral machines deployed during the D-day, but also the impact of the interactional circumstances.

Moreover, according to the electoral rules in effect in USJ in November 2008, every enrolled student was asked to vote for two candidates to represent his class. Although the parties always presented a ticket with two contenders, it was perfectly allowed for the students to choose among all the available candidates, regardless of their affiliations. On November 7, 2008, the day of the election, I was able to follow the counting of the ballots in the faculty of Economics. Only five first-year students out of 111 voters chose two candidates belonging to rival political-based lists. In the second year, only four persons out of 99 did so and in the third year only nine out of 170<sup>174</sup>. The next year, the election bylaws changed. Students were asked to vote for pre-arranged lists and not for individual candidates anymore. The only possibility to demonstrate refusal of the dual dichotomy between the two rival camps was therefore

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<sup>172</sup> The data were collected through fieldwork observation and completed by the consultation of the archives of the faculty of Economics in Huvelin, November 12, 2009.

<sup>173</sup> Sources: Office of the Student Affairs, American University of Beirut. The data are available in the appendix.

<sup>174</sup> The figures presented here were collected directly in the ballot room during fieldwork as no official data on that specific issue were released by the university.

to vote blank. The analysis of the results showed that in the same faculty of Economics, only five first year students among 173 chose to vote blank, one out of 85 in the second year, one out of 108 in the third year, and none out of 54 in the Master years<sup>175</sup>. This tends to prove that the electoral moment is used by the students to position themselves in regard to the distinction introduced by parties' labels. A tendency that prevails at the scale of the entire USJ as the relatively small numbers of elected independent candidates along the years indicates (see tables).

	2007	2008*	2009		2010	
			FPM Sources	LF Sources	FPM Sources	LF Sources
FPM and allies	59	59	106	106	118	81
LF and allies	41	38	104	134	95	143
Independents	23	15	61	31	45	41

\*The numbers do not take into account 11 seats that were submitted to a re-vote.

*Sources: Daily newspapers, fieldwork observations and partisan sources (websites, Internet forums of activists, etc). The differences between the total numbers of seats are due to the change in the elections bylaws on the one hand, and to occasional re-vote operations or the ambiguity of the status of some independent candidates according to the parties on the other.*

	2007 (47 seats)	2008 (47 seats)	2009 (58 seats)	2010 (58 seats)
FPM and allies	23	20	25	18
LF and allies	18	22	30	36
Independents	6 (The FPM claimed that 3 of them were elected thanks to the support of its electoral machine)	5	3	4

*Sources: fieldwork observations.*

<sup>175</sup> Sources: fieldwork observations and consultation of the minutes of the elections, USJ, faculty of Economics, November 2009.

My hypothesis is that the dimension of social positioning plays the central part in determination of the votes. In Lebanon national elections are strongly embedded into local territories: each Lebanese is registered on the electoral lists in the village of his/her grand-father. This sustains the role of family and local anchors in the perception of the voters. On the contrary the territory of university is disconnected from local and family origins. People from different regions are brought into the same space. Further, university represents a specific moment, a bracket in the life's course of the actors. It is a time of emancipation from the control of the family. The disconnection with the family is indeed often put forward by the students, celebrating their newly acquired "liberty". These two elements suggest that while national elections may encourage voting behaviors taking into account family and local ties, university elections by contrast emphasize much more interactional positioning. As people from various backgrounds gather in the same space, what matters is the relational situation toward alterity. This positioning being mediated by the dominant groupings, it may allow to understand the prominent part played by partisan identification in the students' votes. To be properly assessed, this hypothesis would require a specifically designed study.

## **B) Scene two: a "Tayyâr profile"?**

Thursday October 23, 2008. Two days after their last meeting, students from the faculty of Economics in Huvelin gathered again in the FPM headquarters. As I arrived in the office, I found them unsurprisingly prepared to continue their scrutiny of the enrolment lists. Some had ordered pizzas and the work slowly got started. The second-year students were the first to lead off. One of their candidates, Georges, who was also the FPM coordinator for his class, organized the task. He nominated two of his comrades to read the name list and another to take notes, insisting on the fact that a clear overview was to be established for the next morning, so the persuasion work on the ground could begin. The gathering counted fifteen students, including six girls, and two male students supporting the Hezbollah. After a few minutes, one of the girls proposed to discuss about an idea for an electoral platform, based on the rights and duties of the USJ students. However, Georges promptly cut off the debate, pointing out that they needed first to position a clutch of "unidentified" students.

The main effort of the meeting however concerned the choice of the last candidate for the third-year students. Several choices remained open to determine who would stand along with Sari as the representative of the FPM in the faculty's polls. The dilemma was planned to be resolved once again through "pointages", to select the best

possible contender. Three different scenarios were successively tested, using the Excel program running on a lap-top computer to count the potential votes in each case. The operation was repeated several times and lasted in all for more than one hour, interrupted from time to time by separate discussions or interventions from the supervisors of the FPM Student Affairs Committee.

As time went by, many students had quitted the meeting. The first and second-year groups had already finished their work and only remained the problem of the third-year candidate to solve. Taking benefit from a short break in the activity, Alain came close to me: *“It’s very important to keep a good atmosphere. We always laugh but still work conscientiously. What I try to do is to communicate my experience. I check how they do things. Because I know them all, I know what may make us win or lose. I know what methods we refuse to apply. Besides, there are sometimes conflicts about the candidates, such as now, and I can talk to each of them to convince the reluctant to accept a solution. Because I know them all, it’s always easier.”*

The results of the simulation finally came around midnight. The comparison between the three competing tickets gave rather clear outcomes. It appeared that if Wissam, absent on that night, were chosen as the second contender after Sari, the FPM could obtain 91 and 80 votes respectively for its two candidates to face an estimated score of the Lebanese Forces’ duo of 77 and 69. The party would thus be at risk to lose one seat, a situation that it had not faced in the faculty of Economics in the past three years. If Rawad, a supporter of the *Marada*<sup>176</sup>, were selected, the scores of the *Tayyâr* would even drop to 87 and 76 against 81 and 71 to their rivals. Finally, with Alex, the situation seemed a bit more profitable with an estimation of 89 and 77 against 88 and 69 for the LF.

The arithmetic conclusion of the operation was thus that Wissam offered more chances to win the two seats at stake in the elections of the third-year students’ representatives. However, this outcome did not seem to please anyone in the group, even less Mike, the FPM coordinator in the faculty. He mentioned that Wissam did not incarnate the profile they were looking for. He looked not serious enough and Mike

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<sup>176</sup> The *Marada* is a small political party organized around the figure of Sleiman Franjeh, the heir of one of the main Christian political family in the history of the country, originated from their bastion of Zgharta in Northern Lebanon. Sleiman Franjeh is the grand-son of a late President of the Republic, Suleiman Franjeh (1970-1976). Known for their close links with the family al-Assad who has reigned over Syria for decades, the Franjehs strongly opposed the rise of the Lebanese Forces and their struggle for the domination of the Zgharta region during the civil wars. Sleiman’s father, Toni Franjeh, was killed in 1978 along with his wife and 33 other people in a raid organized by the LF commander, at that time Bachir Gemayel, known as the “Massacre of Ehden” (Kassir 1994, p. 331). The killing was perpetuated by a commando led by Samir Geagea, the current leader of the LF. Since 2005 a close alliance has been forged between the *Marada* and the FPM. See also Chapter Six.



insisted that he doubted his capacities to handle the campaign. In the middle of this animated discussion, Sari, the first candidate, grabbed Alex by the arm and pulled him into the corridor to discuss. He tried to convince him to run with him in the polls because he surely did not want Wissam as a running-mate. Still, some around the table pointed out that Wissam belonged to the same class than the strongest of the LF candidates. That, according to them, might be a handicap.

Unable to decide, the group turned toward their supervisors. Doni, the FPM head in Huvelin, was the first to be consulted. After looking at the results on the paper, he asked Mike more details about Wissam. As a student in Management, he did not know him very well. Mike, supported by Sari, thus explained that the main problem laid in the attitude of Wissam: *“He doesn't have the Tayyâr profile!”* he said. Moreover he continued, in the third-year, an important cluster of students seemed neutral, which called for choosing someone who looked “serious”. According to the group, they were under the influence of another student named Faysal. *“Those people like Faysal and his friends are not interested in politics...so they want someone with a profile”*. “The previous years, we were able to get people elected although no one in the faculty knew them, because they had the Tayyâr profile: intelligent, hard-working, and serious” someone added. The conclusion sounded plain: Wissam would not be a good choice.

As it was already late in the night, the decision was finally postponed to the next day. While leaving the meeting Rawad turned toward Doni: *“With Alex as a candidate, you can stand for elections with your eyes closed! With Wissam...well, keep your eyes open!”* The next day, Rawad was designated as the second FPM contestant.

### **Commentary**

Considering that the simulated results were the worst possible with Rawad as the second candidate, the choice made by the FPM students appears unexpected. When I expressed my surprise in the next gathering a few days later, I was simply answered that: *“it's not only the votes, there is a whole profile that goes with that”*<sup>177</sup>. The actual reasons why Wissam was not selected remained unclear. Maybe the fact that Rawad represented a party allied with the FPM proved important in the decision. Or maybe personal matters involving Wissam could explain the reluctance of his comrades to choose him. Whatever the motives, the scene in itself appears symbolic as it reveals the construction of both a relation of power and a relation of meaning (Neveu 1996, p. 50) realized in the course of the electoral operations through the choice of the candidate.

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<sup>177</sup> Marko, interview with the author: October 27, 2008 [in French].

First, the process of selection displays the building of a relation of power in a double way: the domination of the Party over the university space on the one hand and, on the other, the affirmation of a hierarchy between the active students. At the scale of the campus, the FPM intends to establish its electoral domination by relying on the social networks existing between students and on the power of its electoral machine, both means reflecting the Party's implantation on the ground that has been described in the previous chapter.

*“Pour choisir les candidats, il y a deux profils: celui qui est déjà ami avec la plupart des étudiants. Tout le monde le connaît, mais ça veut dire qu'il y a des pous et des contres. L'avantage c'est que tu sais à l'avance mais le problème est que généralement, il y a peu de marge. L'autre profil correspond à celui que personne ne connaît mais qui est poussé par la machine électorale: on lui apprend comment parler avec les gens, comment se comporter, comment s'asseoir! Les règles de bonnes conduites c'est-à-dire. Au contraire du premier profil, tu es sûr que tu peux construire l'image que tu veux, tu peux travailler sur l'image pour que personne n'ait de problème avec lui. La personne inconnue que la machine électorale présente, elle commence de zéro, au contraire du premier profil où tout est décidé à l'avance, tu as plus de marge de manœuvre (...).”<sup>178</sup>*

In theory, the choice is made by the students themselves, but the supervisors for the FPM Student Affairs play an important role, encouraging some against the others. The first profile depends on the social networks established in the most prestigious high schools that constitute the main providers of students for USJ: Notre-Dame of Jamhour, Champville, etc. As explained in the previous chapter, the FPM uses these networks to frame the student population and possibly recruits new activists. It also takes advantage of these inter-relations to boost its electoral chances. This strategy seems most often deployed for the first year students' polls, as newcomers remain tightly connected to their school's comrades. The second profile then tends to become dominant for the second and third years<sup>179</sup>, even if the two options are in fact not

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Here is an extract of my fieldwork notes taken on October 23, 2008, after a conversation with Karl, a former coordinator of the FPM in Huvelin: “Concernant le choix des candidats en lui-même, Karl reconnaît qu'il est très influencé par les responsables étudiants du CPL comme Alain. Techniquement, le choix est en fin de compte fait par les étudiants eux-mêmes mais leurs coordinateurs pèsent largement sur la décision, notamment en mettant certains en avant. Les critères du choix dépendent de l'année: en première année, c'est le nombre de ses 'amis' qui est déterminant, ce qui implique de venir d'une grande école qui alimente l'USJ en étudiants telles que Champville, Jamhour, etc. En deuxième année, les choix privilégiés sont les étudiants 'les plus sympas mais qui travaillent sérieusement'. En troisième année enfin, compte la réputation, le travail universitaire, le sérieux. Pour les candidats en Master, 'se sont ceux qui veulent...ils s'en foutent des élections, c'est fini...ça fait bien sur le CV d'avoir été élu étudiant, à la limite c'est plutôt pour ça...mais en Master, la politique, c'est fini!’”. The

exclusive one from another – the perfect candidate being someone who would combine the advantages of the two profiles. Based on its knowledge of the students' sociability and on the power of influence of its electoral machine, the selection of a contender therefore enables the Party to validate its domination over the social space of the campus.

The adoption of a candidate also constructs a power relation between FPM students. The interplay I witnessed was undoubtedly related to a struggle of influence between the students, each one trying to impose his decision. Beyond the motives however, the construction of such a hierarchy is legitimized by a narrative about the genuine embodiment of the qualities of the FPM candidate. In that sense, the selection operates as the establishment of a relation of signification, which participates in the construction of the boundaries between the in-group and the out-group. The understanding the *Tayyâr* profile only makes sense in contrast with the storyline defining the Lebanese Forces' supporters as thugs whose behaviors are inspired by the militia past of their organization. When students invoked the profile that should match together with the candidate, they repeated once again at the university scale the structuring opposition ascertained in the FPM narrative about social distinction between the *za'rân* and the *âwâdim* [*honest people*]. The choice of a candidate appears consequently as involved in the process of institution of a social line that characterized the ritual of student elections.

Second, a relation of meaning is constructed. The holistic dimension of the distinction in the conception of the political competition voiced by the FPM students is such that those who are not positioned in regard with these two rival categories found themselves expelled from the realm of politics. The case of Faysal and his friends evoked during the meeting offers a striking example. Because they were not identified either with the FPM or with the LF, they were defined as “*not interested in politics*”. Yet, Faysal was himself the coordinator of the Lebanese Communist Party in Huvelin. The FPM students could not ignore that. However, in the social map they were drawing, this was of minimal importance. What mattered to them was to institute the boundary between them and the LF as the only meaningful distinction to consider during the electoral process, which in itself aims at positioning the student population

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fact that Master students are not interested in politics anymore may be due to several reasons: first, Master students have generally reached the age of 21, so they can participate in national elections, which may limit the attraction of student polls; second, they spend most of their time outside the campus (many of them work part-time to finance their studies or complete internship in order to facilitate their insertion on the labor market) so they find themselves disconnected of the internal interactions built between the students in the university space that fuel the positioning ritual. On students' trajectories, see also Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

in respect with this particular social divide. As did the technique of scrutiny, the selection of the FPM candidate appears to reveal an essence, introduce of sense of limits, which inclines people to know their place and define their position in the flow of interactions. Symbolically, choosing a candidate is signifying to him how he should be, how he should behave. To institute a *Tayyâr* profile amounts to assign a substance to compose of model of identification and, even, an obligation of respecting these attributes.

The institutive nature of student elections is constructed within the group through these practices observed during the pre-electoral meetings. However, it acquires its full potential to create categories in public settings, by exposing the models of identification in front of everyone, informing the members of what they should be and imposing boundaries to the outsiders.

### **C) Scene three: “Labbayka yâ Emile” — demonstration, imitation and signification**

Friday November 7, 2008. Election Day. The voting operations first started in the faculty of Law in which the first year students were called into the ballot room. The process established by the USJ differed from the one existing in AUB. Whereas anyone could vote whenever he/she wanted in AUB, here, all the voters were gathered into a single room at a given time before the doors were closed and the students started to cast their ballots. Sitting at a table guarding the entrance, agents from the administration controlled their student cards before handing them the voting papers to be used: a yellow one in which students had to write the names of the two candidates they wished to elect as representatives and a blue one for the position of President of their faculty's *Amicale*. The parties' activists swarmed around the table to check with their own list the presence or absence of the electors, trying to gather all of their supporters before the closing of the doors, half an hour later. Tired of their invasive presence, the USJ's agents finally expelled them.

A comparable scene occurred in each faculty, at the beginning of the electoral process. In the faculty of Management, Huvelin's biggest institutions, tens of people stood in line in order to reach the ballot room. All of sudden, FPM supporters and their allies started to shout slogans to encourage Emile Daher, their candidate for the presidency of the *Amicale*: “*Yallah Emile, Yallah! [Come on Emile, come on!]*”. Pro-LF students immediately answered back, but the security guards of the university rapidly intervened to avoid escalation.

In the university yard, supporters of each camps distributed T-shirts, badges, and other signs of recognition, which often ended up customized by their rivals – erasing a name on a badge to replace it by another, adding a comment on a T-shirt or smearing it with paint. Many were the exchanges between the two sides and it was not rare to see a FPM activist accepting a LF badge. Nevertheless they never wore it more than a few second or altered it, changing the name or putting a new sticker on it. In this small campus, everyone knows each other and friendship outweigh partisan divisions but in the circumstances of the elections, the boundary separating both sides seemed impossible to breach. Nonetheless, the electoral process continued during the whole day in relative calm and a positive atmosphere.

In the faculty of Economics however, many were the incidents. After the votes of the first year students in which LF and FPM each won a seat, things started to become more complicated. After the second year students cast their votes, the ballot box was carried to a new room, in which the count immediately started. Although they arrived quite confident about their victory, FPM activists rapidly disenchanted. The first vote went to the LF and their allies of the Kata'eb and National Liberal Party, whose supporters present in the room celebrated loudly, causing the Dean of the faculty to intervene: *“Please, if we applaud each time a ballot is counted, we won't be able to finish. Keep your celebration for the end”*. Finally, the LF obtained 49 and 50 votes for their candidates, against only 48 for both of the FPM contenders. Due to the narrow margin, the Dean first called for a recount. However, under the contradictory pressures of the two sides, she renounced and validated the results, although uncertain. This dramatic ending generated much despair for the FPM supporters. Many, boys and girls, started crying while a fight broke out between the two camps after an exchange of words. Stéphanie, a FPM activist turned toward me, incredulous: *“There is something wrong with the count, it's not possible...it's not possible that they won!”* Another added: *“Michel Aoun himself called the USJ faculty of Economics a “FPM fortress” in 2007, now they can claim that they destroyed the fortress!”*<sup>180</sup>

The vote of the third year students that followed witnessed another drama. After the count, Rawad, candidate of the FPM, was the only one elected with 87 votes. Behind him, Sari and the best LF contestant obtained 86 votes each. In that case, the bylaws stipulated that the older student would be proclaimed winner. However, the Dean suggested a revote, causing strong protestations from the LF, whose candidate

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<sup>180</sup> The previous year, the FPM had swept all the thirteen seats in the faculty of Economics. It is also important to remind that the 2008 student elections were held only six months after the violent clashes of May 2008 in Beirut. Stéphanie and Marko conversations with the author: November 7, 2008 [in French].

was the older one. They claimed that most of their voters had already left the university and thus refused to participate. After several minutes of confusion, the administration stepped back once again. The Dean let both sides agree on a negotiated solution. Delegations of each group met in a private room along with administration members. They decided to leave the seat attributed until the results of the election for the presidency of the *Amicale*. The new elected president would then choose the winner.

These two incidents raised the tension in the campus. As the final results in every faculty approached, sympathizers of both camps started to gather in front of the hall of the faculties of Economics and Management. The rival groups were now side by side in the crowded yard while singing started alternatively:

*“Allah, Quwwât, Hakîm<sup>181</sup> wa bass! [God, the Forces, the Doctor, and that's all]” repeated the LF supporters.*

*“Allah, Nasrallah, al-Dâhiyya kella! [God, Nasrallah, and the whole Suburb]” or “Abu Hadi! [the father of Hadi – Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah general secretary of Hezbollah]” and “Abu Mustapha [the father of Mustapha – Nabih Berri, head of Amal]” responded the students claiming loyalty to the Shiite parties Amal and Hezbollah.*

*“Général [Aoun]! Général!” proclaimed the FPM followers, adding the sound of the car-horn Lebanese used to manifest support to the cause of the General during the Syrian rule over Lebanon.*

Every time a result was announced the winning side intoned these chants. The tension rose again with the FPM and its allies claiming the first presidency, in the faculty of Law. Their candidate went out of the building carried in triumph by his comrades. A young girl following the cortege then took out an Amal flag, but several of her friends immediately grabbed it to conceal this partisan sign from the view of the public. Emboldened by their success, FPM and March 8 students won for a while the sound supremacy over the campus.

Waiting for the results in the faculty of Economics with high hopes, pro LF and Kata'eb students nonetheless responded after a few minutes, chanting the name of their successful candidates as well as some “*Bachir* [Gemayel]! *Bachir!*” They finally exploded when the victory of their champion, Maroun Keyrouz – son of a LF member

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<sup>181</sup> *Hakîm* is the nickname of the LF leader, Samir Geagea. The word originally means “wise” in Arabic but it is generally used in Lebanon to designate a doctor. Samir Geagea started medical studies before the outbreak of the Lebanese wars but only completed one year before joining the militia. Although he never graduated, his followers have since referred to him as the “Doctor”. On Samir Geagea, see Chapter Six.

of the Parliament – was confirmed. “*Quwwât! Quwwât!*” resonated in the early night. The pressure was then completely reversed in a couple of minutes.

The two sides were now facing each other in front of the faculty of Management, the most important prize of the day due to its size. Alternatively, the two groups chanted the name of their respective candidate for the presidency of the *Amicale* as well as their favorite slogans. The tension reached its climax, all the more since the faculty of Management symbolizes the difficult cohabitation between LF supporters and the Shiite students whose physical and sound presence at that moment eclipsed the FPM supporters. The situation boiled down to a face to face between the two opponents, one claiming to incarnate the purity of the territory, the other resolved to impose its unwanted presence. “*Tonight, we are going to chafe each other. We want a fight, all the Shiites want a fight*” confessed a student. Another, a member of the SSNP disclosed a knife that he was hiding under his pants. Finally, the results came. The FPM and March 8 forces carried the day. Emile Daher, their candidate, made his triumphal appearance out of the faculty under the cheers of his supporters. “*Hurriyeh, Siyyâdeh, Istiqlâl!*” intoned the FPM followers, while some Shiite students started to sing a surprising: “*Labbayka yâ Emile!*”<sup>182</sup>

Despite their loss in the faculty of Economics, the FPM and its allies prevailed in the other campuses of the USJ. At the end of the day, their supporters gathered in front of Huvelin, outside the doors, to demonstrate their victory with flags, champagne, and even fireworks. The scene was observed by the security forces who established barriers to prevent the celebrating students to enter the campus. Even if the results in Huvelin were not so good, it was here, in the historical heart of USJ, that the celebration had to take place.

### **Commentary**

University elections are a political ritual. The demonstrations associated with the voting operations and the announcement of the results constitutes the main scenes of this ritual. They stage the public manifestation of the social divisions asserted by partisan identity narratives, thus giving materiality to the productions of meaning at work in the interactions between students. These demonstrations consequently play a central role in the acquisition and reinforcement of a vision of reality fragmented along partisan lines. In this process, the physical gathering of rival groups enables a

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<sup>182</sup> The formulation refers to the ritual of ‘Ashurâ’, during which the Shiites proclaim their loyalty to Husayn: “*Labbayka yâ Husayn*”. The slogan was then used by Hezbollah during its massive commemoration of the martyrdom of the Imâm. During such gatherings, the crowd usually starts chanting “*Labbayka yâ Husayn*” to stress their devotion.

representation – in the theatrical sense – of the distinctive identities, whose significations are expressed both visually and through sounds. As presented in Harré's positioning theory, the circumstances of the time and space of student elections define a particular repertoire of social acts and significations (Harré 2004, p. 6). The means of communication mobilized by the students to build this repertoire in the flow of interactions enacted during the episode of elections include linguistic performances articulated with symbolic systems.

The first element refers to what is said and done. The chants intoned by the students illustrate perfectly the construction of social illocutionary forces. They define a system of concurrent identities acquiring significance in relation to one another. The parallelism displayed by the slogans of pro-Hezbollah students and LF followers is in that perspective striking. Both clearly enunciate the presence of religion in the partisan affiliation by stating God as the primary reference, the allegiance to a leader, whose name is glorified, and finally the affirmation of the primacy of the group – “*the Forces*” in the LF case, the reference to the population of the Southern Suburb for Hezbollah's sympathizers. This last element refers of course to the territorial bastion of the group and can be found in the slogans adopted by other parties, for example the Future Movement: in similar circumstances in AUB, the Future students use to repeat “*Allah, Hariri, Tarîq al-Jdîdeh* [a Sunni stronghold in Beirut]”. Such formulas obviously operate in a mirror game highlighting the relational positioning of the coexisting partisan identities in the social system<sup>183</sup>. Remarkably, the rival groups use to mark and voice their presence alternatively – most often after winning a seat in the electoral competition – but rarely at the same time, suggesting that the domination of one overshadows the existence of the other. A reflection confirmed by the observation of the final celebrations: while the winners paraded inside as well as outside the campus, losers tended to disperse without attracting attention. The genuine despair manifested by the defeated students offers another example of the existential nature of the competition.

The circumstances also give birth to specific patterns of distribution of rights and duties in the interactions, each defining a position. Shouting political slogans would not be tolerated at any other moment of the year and only followers of the political parties are able to engage in chants, monopolizing the demonstrative nature of the

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<sup>183</sup> Interestingly, the FPM does not use a similar pattern in most of its chants although they strongly emphasize the figure of the leader. Is it because the FPM has developed more around a political slogan incarnated in the historical character – the General Aoun – who inaugurated it at the end of the Lebanese wars than on a strictly territorial basis? The question will be more precisely addressed in the second and the third parts of this work.



ritual. In that sense, elections work as an outlet of the political tensions and latent competition that are euphemized in ordinary everyday life of the campus. The ritual marks a condensed time in which the otherwise contained or overshadowed intergroup struggle is publicly assumed. It seems to work as a reminder of the divisions, a reaffirmation of the prevalence of the inter-partisan strife. However, the rights are not the same for all political groupings. The scene in which a student brandished an Amal flag rapidly concealed by her comrades illustrates this: it seems possible to suggest the hypothesis that the presence of the Amal flag in the Christian space of USJ would have been perceived as a provocation, leading the students to spontaneously censure their friend. However, the specific circumstances of the elections also enabled the followers of the Shiite parties Amal and Hezbollah to publicly demonstrate their presence on the campus. A right that they do not enjoy during the rest of the year as the case of Mehdi previously explored illustrated. These students use the ritual as a mean to remind of their presence and to contest the ostracism they usually suffer from some of their comrades.

Finally, the behaviors and meanings are shaped by storylines defining the various positions created by the rituals. To analyze these narratives, it is possible to focus once again on the chants and slogans used by the students. In the case of the FPM, they clearly originated in the history of the movement born with the rise and fall of Michel Aoun. The triptych “*Hurriyeh, Siyyâdeh, Istiqlâl!*” was the political program of the Prime minister during his term 1988-1990. The car-horn sounds were used as symbols of resistance against the Syrian presence after the destitution of the General and the implementation of the Republic of Taef. The incongruous “*Labbayka yâ Emile!*” also denoted the inscription of the symbols mobilized by the students in the history of partisan movements, in that case Hezbollah. Imitation of acts observed in other political settings plays an important part as the foundations claimed for the groups goes beyond the borders of the campus to embrace partisan sub-communities at the scale of the country. The storylines thus injected into university elections transform them in episodes of partisan history and intergroup struggles. The ritual here operates as a performative structure of memory (Bastide 1970). The structure of the slogans associating a religion, a leader, a group, and even a territorial basis conveys a representation of the form of social link on which partisan *groupness* is based, reinforcing the auto-referential dimension of the group and the boundaries separating it from the outsiders.

Through such repertoires, the student mobilizations publicly abide by a specific vision of the social system. In the context of the ritual, participation necessitates the endorsement of the vision of reality conveyed by the partisan forces, whose influence

relies on identification rather than utility. Involvement in the various steps of the rite (pre-electoral meeting, vote, demonstration, and celebration) does not provide an access to material interests nor maximize the potential outcomes of the vote. Those who helped during the meetings or contribute during the day of the elections did not obtain any kind of material gain. In spite of that, a majority participates. For the students, it is more about being recognized, at least temporarily, as members of a community. Admission within the group implies acceptance from the in-group as well as from the out-group. Participation in the ritual enables such public recognition through the endorsement of the boundaries it institute and the certification of the identity of the group by the use of characteristic illocutionary forces and storylines. As Bourdieu explains, "*the act of institution is thus an act of communication, but of particular kind: it signifies to someone what his identity is, but in a way that both expresses it to him and imposes it on him by expressing it in front of everyone*" (Bourdieu 1991 [1982], p. 121). The strength of the injunctions concerning the identity incorporated in the illocutionary forces and the storylines mobilized during the ritual imposes characteristics that the members are obliged to comply with to be recognized during the circumstances of the interaction. Positioning oneself as followers of the LF supposes in the episode to affirm one's allegiance to God and Samir Geagea. Displaying one's adhesion to the FPM presumes to adhere to the specific definition of history centered on the action and character of Michel Aoun. Although the processes of identification are multiple, the ritual tends to select and legitimize certain forms and meanings of membership, thus providing the students with possible positions and their related rights and duties.

Within the campus, the effects in reality of the social division along partisan line result from the power and symbolic dominance of the political forces in the university. In order to socially exist in these circumstances, the affiliation and attachment to a partisan label seems determinant. Parties' authority enables them to impose both effective supremacy and signification in the course of interactions. How reluctant the administration was to confront the authority of the students belonging to the FPM and the LF in the contested election in the faculty of Economics offers a perfect example. The Dean let party members decide the outcome of the contested vote, validating the hegemony of the partisan forces in the social setting of the campus. In the circumstances of the elections, parties are more than ever the dominant social actors in the university territory, allowing them to institute their vision of the social reality, at least in the time and space of the electoral interaction.

A comparable situation exists in AUB, where the administration similarly validated the inter-partisan divisions instituted by the mobilization of the political forces. To

announce the results, the yard in front of West Hall has been divided in two. The pro-March 14 students take place on one side and the March 8-FPM coalition on the other, the two camps being separated by a 20-meter-wide no man's land in the middle of which a giant screen displays the results of the elections as soon as they become available. This division was established in 2008, officially to prevent tension between the rivals. As a consequence, the campus physically manifests the political polarization existing on the national scene. As it was the case in USJ, each side vocally acclaims every seat it wins with chants and slogans, eclipsing for a moment the existence of the defeated camp.

However, if the current political partition into two coalitions has become formative, it has not overwritten the preexisting partisan identities. As the episode of the "*We Will*" list illustrated, party-based groupings remain the structuring force beyond political alliances. If the scene nowadays reflects the polarization between March 8 and March 14, the nature of the practices and storylines mobilized to display the collective identities during the demonstration has remained comparable since I first observed the scene in AUB in 2002. The recent dual division has reshaped the context in which the partisan identities are expressed, but has not replaced them. In USJ, the rise of the movements Amal and Hezbollah supported by the growing Shiite population in the faculty of Management has also altered the conditions of expression of the competing identities, adding a third party to the rivalry between FPM and LF, but has not changed the institutive dimension of the demonstrations, which is still centered on inter-partisan boundaries.

The celebrations of the winning "*We Will*" campaign staged outside AUB in 2010 offer an interesting illustration. While the losers rapidly disappeared in silence, the followers of Amal, Hezbollah, SSNP and the PSP gathered in front of Main gate to form a motorcade. Brandishing parties' flags and photos of political leaders, they toured around AUB in a racket of car horns and partisan music, symbolically marking their territorial supremacy. However, the celebration was far from unified. First, FPM students did not participate, because of the tensions that had opposed them to their fellow students of Amal. They instead went to visit Michel Aoun in his residence of Rabieh. The PSP supporters did not join the other members of the coalition in their tour of the campus and remained in front of Main gate, with their own flags and music. Each component of the coalition thus displayed its own symbols, offering at best the image of a patchwork, and not of a united front.

The demonstrations observed during university elections thus determine a social essence and encourage students to position themselves and others in regard to this essence. The social system – within the campus as well as in the Lebanese society as a

whole – remains dominated by the fragmentation, whether regional, sectarian, or political, and continues to produce opposing solidarities. The rite seems as much as the echo of this fragmentation as one of the scene of its construction as groups authorized to manifest themselves during the day actualize the body, the memory, the existence of rival social communities and introduce a sense of limits, which inclines people to adopt a specific position and maintains a distance with others. The positioning ritual of student elections therefore appears as a time and space in which the grammar of Lebanese social structure is produced and thus in which identification are constructed and experienced.

To conclude, one has to insist on the circumstances of crisis in which these elections were held. The vote was coming only six months after armed clashes erupted in West Beirut between March 8 and March 14 groups. The vivid memory of violence makes the storyline about irrevocable partisan divisions even more significant and pregnant in the interpretations of the reality. Beyond the Lebanese context, we can make the hypothesis that crises convey representation of the social accentuating divisions, emphasizing narratives about pure “we” against a pure “they” overwriting alternative definitions of the social.

### 3. OPENING NEW PROSPECTS

Through the various episodes I presented, it emerges that as other social activities, student elections display specific performances in an interactional setting, using particular modes of action but also of identification supported by storylines aiming at anchoring them in the universe of signification of the actors. Therefore they sustain a grammar of the social, a structure of signification, what Daniel Cefaï defines as an operation of “framing” allowing the alignment of the modes of perception, action, and interpretation. As such, they are constitutive of a *political culture* understood as “*a collective praxis built in contexts of interactions between individuals, networks and organizations, relying on repertoires of identification, narration, and argumentation, on accumulated knowledge or ranges of social experiences*”<sup>184</sup> (Cefaï 2001, p. 98). Because they highlight parties’ storylines and stage inter-partisan boundaries, student elections stand as a time and space of production of a specific form of political

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<sup>184</sup> I translated the original formulation from French: “une praxis collective, dans des contextes d’interactions entre individus, entre réseaux et entre organisations, recourant à des répertoires d’identification, de narration et d’argumentation, à des réserves de savoirs ou à des gammes d’expériences”.

identification giving birth to social groupings unified around distinctive sub-cultures. To summarize their influence, it is preferable to return to students' stories about their own trajectory. It will allow the opening of new analytical perspectives.

Karam comes from a Maronite family from Kesrwan, where he was still living at the time of the interview. Although he grew up in a non-partisan environment, he nonetheless developed an interest about Michel Aoun and his radical stand on Lebanese sovereignty, as many young people during the time of Syrian presence. On this Saturday, he just returned from an archeological trip organized by an AUB club. In his account, the arrival in the university and the experience of student elections were presented as the beginning of his political activism:

*“Au début, avant de commencer l'université j'étais un observateur passif. Oui, j'aimais la personne de Michel Aoun. Je sais qu'il était en France. Ici, il y avait la Syrie donc personne ne pouvait rien dire [mais] on voyait toujours les jeunes, ceux du CPL surtout, être battus, être arrêtés...donc il y a eu la curiosité de savoir pourquoi. (...) Mais à l'école on ne pouvait rien faire. Il y a tes parents toujours avec toi, tu es encadré. Quand je suis arrivé à l'université ça change, surtout à l'AUB où il y a toutes les religions, toutes les confessions : musulmans sunnites, chiites, druzes, maronites, catholiques, orthodoxes, tu as même des protestants, des Palestiniens, on a de tout ici! (...) Moi, j'avais passé 15 ans dans une école à 100% chrétienne où il n'y avait aucun musulman. (...) La première année, j'étais passif. C'est-à-dire que pendant les élections j'ai voté sans rien dire à personne, dans mon coin. Il y avait encore mes parents, l'autorité (...). Mais une fois que j'ai vu comment les autres travaillent dans les élections, c'est-à-dire à mon avis très mal, je me suis dit qu'il y a un message que je veux donner, quelque chose que je peux faire. Donc le lendemain des élections, j'ai décidé que l'année suivante, j'allais m'engager. J'ai commencé à fréquenter les jeunes du Tayyâr ici, à les connaître mieux, et puis je me suis engagé et j'ai décidé de me présenter aux élections. J'ai pris ma décision sans le dire à mes parents. La majorité de mes amis étaient au Tayyâr, donc il n'y avait pas de problème. Mais pour moi à la maison c'était assez difficile. Car à la maison nous sommes tous contre les partis, contre le fait même d'être dans un parti. Donc à la maison, c'était inacceptable. (...) [Donc] à l'université, quand tu arrives pour la première fois, tu es quelqu'un de neutre. Tu vois les campagnes électorales, ils dépensent des milliers de dollar pour ça. Devant toi tout est jaune: il y a des parapluies, des balles, des stylos, des gilets, des chemises! Tellement d'argent! Tu ne connais ni Samir Geagea, ni le Général Michel Aoun, ni Saad Hariri, ni personne...tu vas là où il y a le plus de monde, pour être comme tout le monde! [He switches to English] They forgot about politics, they are just having fun! My friend is with them so I got with them. And after a while they become Hariri or Lebanese Forces or Tayyâr. It's the main problem. The government should let us establish well studied programs in school and in universities to let people understand what politics here*

*is. Because politics in Lebanon is much more difficult than anywhere else: so many parties, so many religions, even families!”<sup>185</sup>*

During his second year at AUB, Karam was elected president of the SRC for the faculty of Engineering before being selected as the FPM coordinator for the whole university. The process he described about his arrival in AUB insists on the social ties and the bonds created in the circumstances of the university polls, which tend to position students along structuring social lines built on partisan networks. His description, implying that the political ideology or knowledge about politics plays a secondary role in the construction of the groups, refers to the process of recognition/differentiation I tried to illustrate through the various episodes I commented. Perception of plurality and boundaries in the everyday life of the campuses, by contrast with the experience of the school, strongly reinforces the ritual of positioning that student elections establish. However, rather than ignorance or disinterest for politics, the sequence Karam builds echoes a perception of politics as subordinated to social divisions. The fact that he regrets this model of politization at the end of the quotation probably results from his insertion with a party that presents itself as contrasting with the traditions of Lebanese politics and encourages a rational mode of experiencing activism. In that case, his comment would be a consequence *a posteriori* of his engagement.

His account thus also provides the interpretation of a political culture in which politics is mediated by the social and relies on identification with “*parties*”, “*religions*”, and “*even families*”. In such a grammar of politics, alter-egos and, above, a leader who embody the group as well as the self of the follower, are central. Karam’s conception of the group is in that matter eloquent. After telling that his predecessor as FPM coordinator in AUB was of great influence for him, he latter commented on what the PFM represents in his views: “*For me, what matters is the General Michel Aoun. He is for me a person who speaks as I speak. He is a person who will build Lebanon the way I want. He represents me. I really think he does. I have listen to him so many times, and it happens that I say something to my parents and a few weeks or months later, I hear him saying the same thing! So many times I first believe in something and find out he thought the same. He represents for me everything regarding politics (...).*” According to his perception, the Party seems to work much more on the basis of a mutual recognition than an organization – he indeed strictly refused to take the member card when it was offered to him. Student elections represent a routinized and recurring flow of interaction in which this mutual recognition is produced.

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<sup>185</sup> Karam, interview with the author: May 15, 2008 [in French and English].

The case of Alain, coordinator in the FPM Committee of the Student Affairs illustrates this process. Originated from a Maronite family of the Metn, his father was a Kata'eb supporter. However, it was the engagement of one his elder brothers for Michel Aoun's cause that durably marked him. After living in France for a couple of year in the end of Michel Aoun's term as Prime minister, Alain studied in Jamhour, a Jesuit institution in which the vast majority of the pupils are Christian. When he joined the USJ in 2002, he was already supporting the stands of the FPM although, under the influence of his father, he expressed restraint toward the person of Michel Aoun, criticizing those "idolizing the leader", to put it in his own words<sup>186</sup>.

*"Quand je suis rentré à l'Université Saint-Joseph, j'ai tenté de faire des mouvements un peu indépendants qui ne seraient liés à aucun parti politique, pour pouvoir faire un changement, pour ne pas être lié aux personnes ou à une idéologie un peu coincée. (...) J'ai tenté de le faire lors de mon arrivée à l'université qui était une très grande expérience pour moi parce que je suis allé dans un environnement nouveau. La plupart des écoles ont un cachet religieux, il y a très peu d'écoles laïques, ce qui fait qu'à l'école, chacun est dans son environnement et chacun est dans sa pensée...et quand on arrive à l'université, surtout à l'USJ en Gestion où j'étais, il y avait vraiment de tout (...), on voit les idéologies, les religions des autres et on a un petit choc au début...Et on se rend compte qu'en fait, les gens, chacun se retire et possède son canton religieux...chacun se retire et se cache dans sa communauté, même dans l'université. (...) Alors avec pas mal d'amis on a fondé un groupe se voulait indépendant (...). Malheureusement, quand on a commencé à travailler pour les élections, j'ai remarqué qu'en fait, c'était du n'importe quoi. Des gens profitaient de ce travail pour en fait tirer leurs épingle du jeu et pour pouvoir faire gagner des voix à des personnes venues de partis à l'époque pro-syrien que je détestais. C'est ce que j'ai malheureusement découvert avec le temps, c'est qu'au Liban, créé un mouvement indépendant, bien, ce n'est pas pratique parce que chaque personne a déjà un parti. C'est-à-dire, qu'au Liban, il n'y a personne qui ne comprenne pas la politique : tu vas voir n'importe qui, il va te dire « moi, je comprends la politique ». Ce n'est pas vraiment le cas ailleurs dans le monde. Chacun a son idée et donc chacun choisi un camp et c'est souvent celui avec lequel il se reflète religieusement, celui de sa famille et tout ça. Donc j'ai vu qu'en fait, il n'y avait pas moyen de*

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<sup>186</sup> Alain, interview with the author: April 20, 2008. For example, he declared [in French]: "je n'ai jamais idolâtré Michel Aoun...parce que c'est ce que me disait mon père: 'tous ceux qui sont avec Michel Aoun idolâtrèrent Michel Aoun'. Mais moi, je ne pense pas que Michel Aoun est un dieu...c'est quelqu'un qui pense correctement, c'est tout. (...) J'aime bien la manière dont il pense, mais pour moi, ce n'est pas un dieu ou un demi-dieu (...)"

*travailler...et d'après l'expérience ancienne que j'avais, j'ai commencé à me rapprocher de ce que je trouvais le mieux, et c'était le CPL.*<sup>187</sup>

Alain's account (as well as Karam's previous one) depicts the realization of the existence of otherness and how parties' influence validate partisan forces' presence as well as their narratives about distinctive identities in the daily experience of coexistence, ensuring the effects of the positioning they encourage on the campuses. The story he voiced illustrates how student elections provide a paradigmatic illustration of the impact of the perception of boundaries in the everyday life: groups are formed because the members recognize themselves as such while delimiting a border with the outsiders. The identification processes at work among student activists are relational dynamics in which both the practical influence of the social actors (the political movements) and the interactional flow between students is fundamental as it is through the positions constructed in the circumstances of interactions that identifications manifest themselves and impact the practices of the youth.

Contrary to Karam who regretted the political ignorance of the students, Alain points out the importance of politics in the daily life of the Lebanese. Nonetheless, his observation leads him toward the same conclusion: everyone has to take a side and does often so in reference to religious or family ties. But his depiction also points out the labile nature of the references of identification. Identities are not fixed but rather rely on contextual identifications established in the interplay of strategies and concrete issues (Martin 1992, p. 752): it was in a given situation of political competition, defined by the power relations between the various actors, that Alain's identification with the FPM was activated.

These two accounts enable to highlight the location of the electoral ritual described during this chapter on the individual trajectories. Their differences and similarities show that identification is a process of construction between the individuals and their society, elaborated in interactional contexts and inspired by the actors' socialization as well as their subjective perceptions (Lafont 2001, p. 177). Personal dispositions towards collective identities are activated circumstantially. Student elections, as a routinized flow of interactions, institute the conditions in which partisan groups and boundaries become relevant as a definition of the self as well as the situations in which such identities can be concretely expressed, publicly interpreted – in the theatrical sense. The supremacy of political forces within the university settings, reaching its climax during the electoral process, enables the framing of the episode as a positioning ritual, structuring the social system according to partisan identifications.

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<sup>187</sup> Alain, interview with the author: November 7, 2007 [in French].



The ritual of student elections expresses a divided reality for the youth, providing them a way to understand what is going on in the flow of interaction they live. If alternative realities exist during the year, the time of the electoral competition drastically frames the perception of the situation and imposes the definition of the social structure carried by the partisan forces. Their interpretation of reality binds all the more efficiently than it echoes the fragmentation of the lived space as experienced by the students in the university settings. The impact of elections in the partisan identification processes in the flow of students' interactions indeed relies on pre-existing conceptions about the world – in that case a fragmented world, mainly divided along sectarian and partisan lines. “One only preaches to the converted” Bourdieu explains (Bourdieu 1991 [1982], p. 126) in his analysis of the rites of institution.

The central role attributed to student elections in the trajectory of the FPM activists like Karam and Alain can be understood in a double perspective. First, they seem to constitute an access door to the group. Their institutive nature ensures the activation of potential identification with the party while their demonstrative dimension enables a public realization of this identification in interaction. This centrality can simultaneously be analyzed as a reconstruction *ex-post*. In the ideal-type of the political career of the young activists, they appear as a must, a central reference. Indeed they represent a privileged space and time of integration of the political culture and of its mode of interpretation, in the double sense of living-out and of allocation of signification: in brief, a space and time of production of the partisan identities.

Consequently, student elections seem to constitute a “key institution” as defined by Geertz (1973), a space of arousal and of formation of a grammar of the social, but also “vectors of transmission and of diffusion, channels of impregnation and of appropriation of political heritages.” (Cefaï 2001, p. 111)

It is thus necessary to now turn toward the study of these mechanisms of appropriation – i.e. the socialization – to understand how the actors integrate, adapt, and possibly transform the grammars of the social conveyed by political movements, how these systems of interpretation become frames and resources that can be mobilized to give reality to the group, and how they construct social ties, interdependence, as well as horizons of significations constitutive of the *groupness*. This is the focus of the second and the third part of this work.





# **PART TWO**

## **Bonds, Boundaries, and Interpretative Styles**



Identification is first practically grasped in the study of circumstantial interactions. Positioning in relational situations such as student elections realizes the living out of attachment to the group. The actors learn to locate themselves in social settings, to comprehend distinctions, to adapt narratives, and to negotiate their status through dynamics encounters. Such processes participate in the socialization of the individuals understood as the interactive acquisition of an inscription to a social universe, articulated to practices and cognitive references, i.e. the learning of a “culture” defined in a sociological perspective: the insertion within a formal grouping like a political party sustains the development of activities and exchanges leading to the acquiring of “a set of publicly shared codes or repertoires, building blocks that structure people's ability to think and share ideas.” (Eliashop & Lichterman 2003, p. 735).

Cardinal reference for the analysis of socialization in the French academic field, Annick Percheron crucially noted throughout her work that political socialization cannot be reduced to the sole acquiring of a specialized knowledge and the related ability to express it discursively. It also includes the construct of an intimate attachment, the activation of internalized beliefs and values, not necessarily limited to the political field (Percheron 1993). The level of knowledge as well as the forms of attachment is itself dependent upon the position of the actor in multiple relational structures that serve as the interface between the Party and its supporters: families, social environments, localities, social networks, etc. Socialization in a political group like FPM is thus not a mono-vocal education imposed by the organization but rather the product of diverse – and possibly contradictory – processes and experiences. It can only be assessed by means of a study the articulation between the attachment and adhesion to collective norms and values on the one hand, and, on the other, the integration into flows of relationships supporting the elaboration of the bonds and boundaries that compose the group.

Joining the FPM supposes the insertion in activities and human networks that underline the proximity and the differences of each personal position and trajectory with the practical and cognitive knowledge realizing the existence of the political group. The resulting dynamics of integration and distance produce the encounter of the individual with the Party. Encounter takes the form of a double movement: the embedding of the actor within the networks and knowledge structuring the group and the tension of the individual between attachment and detachment (Bidart 2008, p. 39). The question is thus to understand this dual process: how individuals are put in position to internalize practical and cognitive models defining the modalities of existence of the group. How, in turn, personal trajectories are integrated to and differentiated from this frame.

The tension between integration and differentiation comes from the fact that individuals are not passive receptacles of the social learning. They are exposed to various influences and remain in practice the agents of the adjustments constituting the complex dynamic of socialization (Percheron 1993, p. 34). Two main theoretical traditions are to be distinguished concerning the way the tension between integration and distance is managed. The first set of studies defines socialization as a normative and cultural internalization while the second focuses on the gap between the individual and the system (Dubet & Martucelli 1996, p. 511). The former, exemplified by the views of Simmel, Durkheim or more recently Bourdieu, tends to highlight the notion of role, originally inherited from psychological conceptions, understood as the interface between the individual and the social codes (Merton 1968 [1949]). The latter, born from the post-modern perspective, underlines the growing tension between socialization and subjectivation (Dubet & Martucelli 1996, p. 519) manifested in the affirmation of a distance to the role (Goffman 1959). The epistemological debate about the conception of the individual in changing social structures, which are more and more characterized by their heterogeneity (Luhmann 1995), goes beyond the scope of this present work. Rather, I would like to mobilize the approach focusing on interactions and narratives I selected as a bridge underlining, in the limited perspective of my study, the passages rather than the incompatibilities between the two traditions.

The transition from the notion of role to the concept of positioning underscores the actors' interpretative work in situations of interactions. As such, it tends to insist more on the logic of cognitive distance to pre-established orders since the bases of actions lie in the consciousness of the actors. Nonetheless, it does not neutralize the weight of social structures. Positioning relies on a system associating a relational position, speech acts – a symbolic interaction -, and a storyline. As already noticed, the storyline composes a narrative, which is a collective work informed by various trails on which it is elaborated: it carries many embedded social meanings beyond the storyteller's own voice (Bakhtin 1981). Similarly, representations on which the symbolic interactions rely “exert a strong social force. But they are polysemous; the same symbol or collective representation can take on different meanings in different contexts” (Eliashop & Lichterman 2003, p. 736). Interactions therefore develop upon socially pre-arranged models interpreted in specific relational settings. Hence, socialization surfaces as a conversation between the two levels: the social structure and the self, that compose the duality of all culture (Vygotsky 1978, p. 57).

From the perspective defined by my hypothesis that conceptualizes Lebanese partisan societies as interpretative communities, FPM can be considered as a local system of rights and duties built upon a cognitive order historically constructed and

articulated to narrative identities. As such, the entrance in the group supposes the insertion – more or less completely realized – into this system. The cognitive order appears as the shared ground that filters the collective representations in the group as well as their practical materialization. Together, they constitute what Eliashop and Lichterman conceptualized as a group style: “recurrent patterns of interactions that arise from a group's shared assumptions about what constitutes good or adequate participation in the group setting. Group style is not just neutral medium for communicating meanings that are already fully formed before their enactment. Group styles, like collective representations, are elements of culture (...) they are patterned and relatively durable.” (Eliashop & Lichterman 2003, p. 737)

In this second part, I intend to study in-group socialization through this concept of group style: my aim is to analyze the formation of the shared assumptions about the nature and the objectives of the FPM as well as their subsequent adequate enactment. This approach necessitates integrating the socio-political context, the group internal flows of interactions, and the individual diversity of situations and relations to the Party. Such domains of investigation highlight three dimensions Eliashop and Lichterman encouraged to observe when studying the construction of group styles (ibid., p. 739):

- “Group bonds”: the assumptions about the identity and responsibilities of the members.
- “Group boundaries”: the representations about the group's relation to the rest of the society.
- “Speech norms”: the definition of what it is appropriate to talk about in the context of the group, which implies symbolic filters of the reality, issues at stake, and the practical construction of narrative about the group's existence and role.

These three aspects refer to the interpretation of membership – its enactment and the allocation of its signification – as constructed in the group's internal relations. This interpretation is realized in a socio-political context defined at the micro-sociological scale by the flows of interactions and at the macro-sociological scale by the evolutions of the Lebanese societal structure. The macro-context is essentially characterized politically by the aftermaths of the 2005 uprising and the subsequent polarization of the public arena, and socio-economically by the growing pressures imposed on the youth by the labor market and the transformation of sociability they imply. How, in these conditions, does the forging of the FPM group style operate? How, in turn, is the



shared ground composed by the group style articulated to other socialization contexts in a changing world?

Chapter Three is concerned with the socialization devices organized by the Party and their consequences in the formation of a specific group style. The loose institutionalization of the FPM's structure and its internal functioning since its creation have tended to yield a shared agreement based on imitation, moral beliefs, and intimate, naturalized, attachment more than on specialized political knowledge. The pedagogy instituted within the FPM is considered in comparison with other partisan groups and analyzed as the production of a relation of signification between members.

Chapter Four studies the insertion of personal trajectories in the group shared meaning and practices. The objective is to examine the diversity of individual situations, the inflexions or accelerations in the encounters with the organization as well as the relations and co-influences between the FPM group style and the alternative social environments in which the students are evolving. The individual “vocation” to join the group is realized upon predispositions activated in specific contexts and changing environment. All these elements necessarily impact the signification of the attachment to the Party.

A party, as a system, is in constant evolution. The FPM is not the same today as when the group emerged in the context of the civil war. If the initial configurations in which the Party is rooted continue to strongly influence the conceptions about its identity and role, the current conditions of the political arena as well as the more global evolutions the Lebanese society was subjected to since the end of the war also induce changes in the manner activism and partisanship are experienced.





## Chapter Three

# “We had to give signification to all this”

## Building and communicating interpretative filters

*“The thing to ask about a burlesqued wink or a mock sheep raid is not what their ontological status is. It is the same as that of rocks on the one hand and dreams on the other – they are things of this world. The thing to ask is what their import is: what it is, ridicule or challenge, irony or anger, snobbery or pride that, in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said.”*

Clifford Geertz (1973, p. 10)

The experience of diversity in students' lived spaces dominated by partisan networks and horizons of signification encourages the encounter with political organizations. Perception of intergroup distinction in interactions situated in time and space sustains the dynamics of identification between the individual and the Party, as an incarnation of a specific social ensemble in a fragmented social structure. Positioning oneself with reference to the Free Patriotic Movement and its associated storyline constructs bonds and boundaries. When identification is coupled with participation, even discontinuous, in the group's activities, the theme of the relation between the students and the Party looms. The processual nature of this relation makes searching for a starting point in which it originates an unachievable task. Analytically however, it is possible to distinguish the mobilization work performed by the political organizations, based on their physical and symbolic omnipresence in the university territories from the elaboration of a personalized mode of internalization, living out, and comprehension of the group's social identity realized by the actors engaged within the Party. In other words, to draw a distinction between the interpretation of the social identity constructed by the organization and addressed to its members on the one hand and the adherents' differentiated actualization of this interpretation – or to use classical terms, the institutional production of a role / position for the members and their individualized relations to it, on the other.

Before concentrating on the personal experience of activism and identification through the study of individual socialization and trajectories in the Party and the larger social world in Chapter Four, I intend to expose here how institutional devices work as filters toward the elaboration of a shared interpretation of what being part of the FPM

means among group members. These devices emerge from formal systems and informal institutions<sup>188</sup> born from routinized practices, behaviors, and cognitive perceptions produced by the interactions between members and sustaining a group style (Eliashop & Lichterman 2003). To understand attachment and engagement of young Lebanese in the FPM supposes to investigate these activities of framing (Goffman 1986 [1974]) so as to determine how the group – understood as both an organization and an interacting human community – communicates its interpretation of the situations to its members (Eliashop & Lichterman 2003, p. 777) That is, how the FPM elaborates and intends to impose to its members and supporters the signification of its cause and its essence, as well as the norms of conduct and the values attached to this construction of meaning.–This chapter aims at understanding this process of filtering the reality experienced by the students engaged within the Party, which supposedly sketches a shared model of interpretation – what other social scientists have labeled as a “regime of truth” (Lagroye 2006; Grojean 2008).

Precisely, one interesting aspect of the Free Patriotic Movement concerns its attempt to establish a program of “political education” from scratch. Banned from the public life until 2005, the foundation of the Party that year enabled the setting up of an apparatus destined to formalize, develop, and communicate to its members and supporters its horizon of signification. Most of all, since Michel Aoun's overthrowing in October 1990, the movement had mobilized almost exclusively on the opposition against the Syrian presence in Lebanon. The departure of the troops as well as the formal dismantlement of Damascus' security apparatuses in the country imposed a renewal of the FPM's rhetoric and a redefinition – or at least a revised communication – of its goals. In a word, the Party presented after 2005 the perfect situation to study the policies of construction of framing devices to organize the followers of the movement and diffuse among them the identity narrative composed by the FPM. It was possible to examine in parallel the organizational edifices being built and their echo among the youth.

In April 2008, during my second fieldwork trip to Lebanon, I was able to arrange a meeting with the coordinator of the FPM Committee for political education [*al-Tathqîf al-Siyâsî*]. The word “*tathqîf*” is directly related to the notion of culture, “*thaqâfa*”, both words being elaborated from the same root “*th-q-f*”. The official in charge of the

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<sup>188</sup> As Berger and Luckmann argue, “institutionalization is incipient in every social situation continuing in time” (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 73). Institutions provide a stable background in which activities are performed, available to all members of a particular social group. Institutions may be of many kinds. They may be formally created by organizations or laws but in other cases they might be generated by informal agreements and social consensus. They imply historicity and control (ibid., p. 72): they are the products of a history and generate patterned actions.

Committee greeted me in his house, situated in a provincial town in the heart of the Christian populated areas. My objective being also to consider the impact of the personal biographies of the Party's leading figures on the organizational devices and the content of the official message addressed to the members, the interview investigated both the educational devices created by the FPM and the trajectory of the man who conceived most of them.

Professor of Sociology in the Lebanese University (branch 2), BH presented an extended story of his political career, whose narrated outcome incorporated the description of the organizational devices of education, as if they constituted the logical conclusion of his experience as an activist in the FPM<sup>189</sup>. Originated from a high mountain village in a Christian populated area, his family was politically attached to a prominent national leader from the same region, Raymond Eddeh. Raymond Eddeh inherited his leadership position from his father, Emile Eddeh, President of the Republic under the French mandate between 1936 and 1941, and founder in 1936 of the National Bloc (*al-Kutla al-Wataniyya*). This elite-based party played an important role in the Lebanese political life before the 1975-1990 wars. The narrator associated the support voiced in his family for Raymond Eddeh with “*an education of principles*”. Raymond Eddeh himself was described by my host as an honest politician opposing the corrupt nature of the political authorities during the 1960s. The moral evaluation of the leader hardly concealed a political rivalry opposing him to the general Fuad Chehab, who had been elected President of the Republic after the short civil war of 1958. Chehab became famous for his attempt to reform state institutions and limit the influence of confessional and local elites, which potentially targeted Eddeh himself. Chehab's presidency also witnessed a growing influence of the security apparatus, known as the “*Deuxieme Bureau*”, the intelligence service of the Army. Eddeh, nominated minister of Interior, Social Affairs, Labor, and Posts and Telecommunications in 1958 in the first government under Chehab's presidency, resigned the following year officially to protest against the interference of security forces in the political arena. From that moment, Raymond Eddeh positioned himself in the opposition. My interlocutor linked this stand with the courage and the determination of the people supporting Eddeh at that time, concluding that he personally “*had no merit*” to later demonstrate such quality in his struggle alongside Michel Aoun because he was originally “*born in a family of this movement*”, adding that many people from the same region and sharing the same attachment to the

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<sup>189</sup> The following description borrows from an interview with BH, on April 27, 2008 [in French].

National Bloc logically joined General Aoun's cause in the late 1980s<sup>190</sup>. A first link between political choice and moral as well as courageous behavior was thus asserted.

Being a student in the 1970s, a period of domination of Leftist ideologies and organizations in the Lebanese universities (Favier 2004), BH adhered to Marxism and sympathized with the Lebanese Communist Party, without officially joining though. However he broke off, after experiencing what he presented as a “*deception*” of the Left<sup>191</sup>, and more precisely of the Palestinian Revolution, which exercised at that time a decisive influence over the Lebanese leftist groups (Barakat 1977; Favier 2004; Le Pottier 1998). The rupture with his former comrades intervened a bit later, seemingly at the beginning of the fighting in 1975, as he understood that “*they were ready to sacrifice Lebanon in order to liberate Palestine*”. BH refused to turn down Lebanese nationalism he had inherited from his familial socialization – he stressed the attachment to the country that existed in his family, the National Bloc belonging to the “Lebanonist” political forces. Along with some Christian friends, he tried to convince the LCP not to enter the armed clashes, claiming that communists should not interfere in “*the struggle between Muslim sectarian forces and Christian sectarian forces*”. This typifying of the first phase of the conflict in terms of religious affiliations is questionable<sup>192</sup>. It nonetheless reflects the articulation BH implicitly constructed between the conflicting political agendas of the revolutionary forces and the conservative nationalists and the religious identity of the protagonists. His refusal to fully adhere to the position taken by the Communists let him isolated: living in the dominantly Christian district of Achrafiyeh, he remained nonetheless considered as a Leftist in the eyes of the dominant force of the area, the Phalangist party. His uncomfortable posture incited him to travel to France during the summer 1976, where

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<sup>190</sup> It is noteworthy to mention that Michel Aoun himself supported the National Bloc during his youth in his home town of Haret Hreik, now located in the Southern Suburb of Beirut.

<sup>191</sup> The use of the Left/Right dichotomy is questionable in the Lebanese context. Some have claimed its inadequation to the configuration that prevailed in Lebanon (Suleiman 1967). Without adhering to the cleavage, my use of the terms follows the dominant discursive practices existing at that time, opposing *al-Yasâr* [the Left] and *al-Yamîn* [the Right]. One of my student interviewees for example told me that his father was studying in the Lebanese University in the 1970s and that the dominant struggle then opposed the Right, in which his father was situated, to the Left.

<sup>192</sup> Many are the authors who analyze the Lebanese crisis and the outbreak of violence as the result of social and economic malfunctions. The war, according to them, opposed in its first phase reformists to conservatives (e.g. Traboulsi 2007, chapter 10 and 11). My interpretation follows the description made by Elizabeth Picard, which differentiates the mobilizations on the eve of the 1975 war aiming at reforming, revolutionizing, or preserving the society (Picard 1997, p. 97-102). She demonstrated how the articulations between social, economic, and political antagonisms and the perceptions of sectarian identities (the designation of “Christian conservatives” against “Islamic progressives”) played a central part in the escalation of the violence (ibid., p. 107-110).

he obtained a doctoral degree in social sciences after defending a dissertation on the relation between secularism and Islam. He also got married and started a family. He did not come back before 1981 to occupy a teaching position in the Lebanese University, branch 2, at that time under the influence of the Lebanese Forces. The situation had indeed evolved toward the formation of de facto statelets dominated by sectarian-based militias. Asserting his rejection of this development, he recounted his participation in some small civil resistance actions before the emergence of Michel Aoun in 1988.

At first, BH argued, he expressed reservation concerning the nomination of the commander in chief of the Army at the head of the State, a mistrust he attributed to a global mistrust toward the military – originated, according to him, both in the past antagonism between the National Bloc and Fuad Chehab's Deuxieme Bureau, and in the incapacity of the Army to maintain its unity after the irruption of violence<sup>193</sup>. In the past, he argued, some generals already pretended to be national saviors<sup>194</sup>. However, he started to pay more attention to Michel Aoun after his first move against the militias' interests on February 14, 1989, when he ordered the closing of the illegal ports. One month later, responding in a TV interview about his decision to retaliate after Syrian guns bombed the regions under the control of his government, the acting Prime minister declared the beginning of the Liberation war against foreign occupation in Lebanon. “*Then, seeing in this man the incarnation of my ideas, I immediately joined his movement*”.

The next part of the story followed step by step the history of the FPM. Engaged in the popular movement aroused by the stand of the General, BH, who sees himself as a committed intellectual, started “*a civil resistance to inform the public opinion (...)*”. Having already requested a one year leave from the Lebanese University to spend some time in France with his family, he decided after many hesitations to leave the country, but only to continue his activities for the cause in France. There, he met other supporters of Michel Aoun and started to travel around Europe and the United States to advocate for the cause of “*Free Lebanon*”. He was in Paris on October 13, 1990, in

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<sup>193</sup> The collapse of the unity of Army already transpired before the escalation of 1975: “(...) when in 1973 the executive branch ordered it to intervene against the Palestinian camps on Beirut's outskirts and against the demonstrators in Sidon in 1975, some of the officers and troops rebelled. When in January 1976 its leader decided to send it against the besiegers of Damur, who were Palestinian and Druze radicals, the army splintered into partisan factions (...)” (Picard 1997, p. 107).

<sup>194</sup> The most noteworthy example was Major Saad Haddad, who early in 1975 led the “Army of Free Lebanon” in the South of the country. He rapidly allied with Israel and his troops became an army of auxiliaries of Tsahal, fighting Palestinian and Lebanese militant groups opposing the Israeli occupation of the Southern part of the country.



the crowd gathered around the Lebanese embassy, where he pronounced a speech<sup>195</sup>. Deeply affected by what he described as a “*terrible blow to our morale*”, he decided to stay in France where he became teacher in the Catholic Institute, a private university, in Paris. There he participated in the founding of the Gathering for Lebanon (RPL – from the French *Rassemblement pour le Liban*), a pro-Aoun association in charge of lobbying the French public authorities and organizing public events essentially addressed to the Lebanese community in France. One year later, in 1991, Michel Aoun arrived in France and the activities of the RPL intensified. Finally, since 1994, BH started to visit Lebanon on a regular basis, working half of the year in Paris, and in the Lebanese University the rest of the time. After five years, he took the decision to stay permanently in Lebanon, while his family remained in France.

From his position in the branch 2 of the national university, he made tied connections with the Aounist student movement and became an important figure in the FPM activism in Lebanon, especially in the LU teachers’ union. He also contributed intellectually to the cause, especially in denouncing the consequences of the Syrian presence in Lebanon. He published in the 1998 edition of the *Encyclopedia Universalis* an article claiming that not only the political domination of Assad's regime was accompanied by a kind of economic exploitation, but the massive arrival of Syrian workers coupled with the high emigration rate of the Lebanese threatened the very identity of Lebanon: the Syrian presence initiated a “rampant process (...) of Syrianization accompanied by an Islamization of the land of the Cedar” (el-Hachem 1998, p. 218). The article concluded to the long term incidence of such process on the Lebanese “traditional image”, citing in example the massive naturalization of “240,000 Syrians”, “a large majority of whom Muslims”<sup>196</sup> (ibid., p. 222). This interpretation of the presence of Syrian workers echoes the recurrence of the demographic issue related to the sectarian balance of power in the country. The sensitivity of the question nurtures potential exaggeration and political manipulation<sup>197</sup>. The debate takes place in a long story of intimate identification between Lebanese nationalism and Christian predominance (Salibi 1989 [1988])<sup>198</sup>. It somehow echoes the discourse of contempt

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<sup>195</sup> During one of our following encounters, he showed me a video of the episode from his personal archives.

<sup>196</sup> The Decree no. 5247 adopted on June 20, 1994.

<sup>197</sup> For example, the cited number of 240,000 naturalized Syrians has been at the center of many discussions. At first, the number of half a million was evoked with insistence while official figures referred in 1995 to only 70,000 according to the President of the Republic, and, in 1998, to 203,000 in a document of the Supreme Common Council (Picard 1997, p. 195).

<sup>198</sup> This rhetoric and its foundations are analyzed in Chapter Six. BH also condemned in a book published in France at the same period what he called the “*double face of Hariri*” whose “modern

and distrust toward Muslims, especially represented in the Maronite elite (Picard 1997, p. 65). BH's analysis shows that, beyond its official proclamations, the FPM leadership was already a stakeholder in the Lebanese sectarian system, reproducing the perpetual blurring between political and religious issues.

BH's role in the movement as well as his position in the university led Michel Aoun to ask him to prepare the transformation of the FPM into a political organization. In 2004, one year before the legalization of the Party, he was appointed before being confirmed in his functions after the Parliamentary elections of 2005, in which the FPM obtained a largely unexpected success<sup>199</sup>. Asked by Michel Aoun about the best way to organize the Party, BH told me he answered that the necessary starting point was to identify the social basis of the movement, in order to “*create a line that separates the FPM members from the rest (...)*”<sup>200</sup>. According to his account, he was thus designated by Michel Aoun to prepare the formalization of the FPM's “cultural stock” before being later nominated coordinator of the newly formed Committee for political education. In the end of the year 2004, the working plan of the Committee was already in preparation. BH presented it as a pivotal step in the construction of an organizational structure for the FPM:

*“La culture à lui dispenser, elle est déjà diffuse...elle est diffuse dans nos pratiques, par exemple, dans ce que j’ai écrit et ce que d’autres ont écrit, ça fait partie de notre patrimoine commun. (...) Il faut créer un esprit CPL clair qui serve d’étalon pour adhérer ou ne pas adhérer. (...) Je devais mettre en place une éducation politique (...). Il fallait donc prévoir un encadrement intellectuel, je dis bien encadrement et non pas embrigadement. La base, enfin la règle retenue est qu’il n’y aura pas de serment à prêter, comme le fond les partis généralement ici...bon, pour nous, ça devait être banni: on adhère librement à notre parti et on en sort si on le veut au moment où on n’a plus envie d’y appartenir. Mais il fallait bien que pour l’intégration de ce membre qu’il soit au courant, qu’il sache où il entre, sur la base de quels principes, quels objectifs. Et il se trouve aussi que nous avons ouvert le chantier de la transformation du courant en parti, sur la base d’une charte, ‘la Charte du CPL’, qui comprend les principes fondamentaux et les objectifs*

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outlook” dissimulated a policy of “*Wahhabi Islamization*”.

<sup>199</sup> Excluded from the main electoral coalition that grouped the Future Movement, the PSP, Amal, Hezbollah, the Lebanese Forces, and the Kata'eb, the FPM allied with local figures – inevitably, most of them being pro-Syrian politicians – to support its lists in the Christian districts: Sleiman Franjeh in northern Lebanon, Michel Murr in Metn, and Elias Skaff in Zahleh. The FPM won 21 Parliamentary seats and became the dominant force in the Christian regions.

<sup>200</sup> BH, interview with the author: April 27, 2008. The original statement was in French: “*Il fallait créer cet espèce de cercle qui sépare entre les membres du CPL et les non-membres (...)*”.

*stratégiques du CPL. Donc pour encadrer ces adhérents, j'ai trouvé que la première mission qui nous incombait était de leur expliquer la teneur de la Charte (...).*

*Néanmoins, ça c'est leur expliquer la pensée politique du CPL mais il fallait aussi comme certains d'entre eux avaient déjà été engagés dans la lutte mais sans trop réfléchir sur la signification de ce qu'ils faisaient, d'autres également étaient loin et il fallait leur faire connaître le passé, l'histoire du courant...il fallait donner sens à tout ça. Donc il fallait mettre au clair l'identité du CPL: qui est ce CPL, quel a été son combat, ses origines, quels sont ses symboles. Pour une formation sérieuse, on ne pouvait pas se limiter à ses explications qui s'adressent au mental, car dans l'histoire du CPL, le fait distinctif de ce courant a été cette admiration que les militants s'attiraient car tout le monde se résignait aux Syriens et c'étaient les seuls qui, à poitrines découvertes, faisaient face aux massues, aux coups de bottes, qui osaient faire face aux services qui semaient la terreur. Donc il y avait eu des militants qui se caractérisaient par leur courage, une espèce de renoncement à tout avantage ou bénéfices au profit de la cause nationale...on a fait de la politique du renoncement de soi. (...) Et puis il y a des qualités qui venaient s'ajouter à ces traits de caractère : l'honnêteté, la lutte contre la corruption, l'intégrité personnelle, le passé propre. (...) Notre combat ne saurait pas être continué avec la même sympathie si nous ne réussissions pas à rester, à garder cette image de nous dans le pays (...). Et puis désormais, il y a des menaces auxquelles nous avons à faire face, les menaces que font peser les rivalités, les compétitions (...) pour les différents postes à l'intérieur du parti et à l'extérieur, et il va falloir organiser tout ça. Donc il ne suffit pas de prêcher, il faut entraîner les membres sur l'éthique qui est celle du CPL”<sup>201</sup>*

According to this account, the communication of the interpretative filters that the FPM proposes to its members follows two parallel tracks: cognitive, based on the Charter of the Party, and practical, based on a specific model of activism. In both dimensions, history seems to play a central role. For the creator of these devices, political engagement in an organized group like the FPM supposes the progressive insertion within a community outlined by a specific sociability, legitimized perceptions of reality, and normative evaluations of the situations that at the same time weave the bonds between members and mark their difference with outsiders. Beyond, what seemed interesting to me was the double integration voiced in the testimony of BH: the insertion of his trajectory in a sequence of meaning that demonstrated *a posteriori* the inevitability of his adhesion – following the phenomenon of “*biographical illusion*” described by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) – as well as the insertion of the educational model created, mostly by himself, for the FPM in his personal

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

trajectory, as if this model was the only legitimate translation of the experience of the movement and its members. This construction was the reason that incited me to present an extensive account of this interview. Not only the narrator constructed along his story an identification between his own biography and the moral and symbolic foundations of the movement – starting from the values inherited from his family, mainly an attachment to the integrity, both moral and physical, of the Lebanese nation – as well as its historical phases, but he also paralleled his “exemplary” career with the essence of the message of the FPM. His life as an activist mirrors the movement and the movement is shaped in turn to mirror his life. The original function of the partisan socialization, i.e. to ensure the passage between the individuals and the collective and conversely, is clearly expressed. The story-teller staged himself as exemplification of a trajectory, a way of understanding the Lebanese situation, and a behavior that was chosen to serve as a model for the framing of the group.

The construction of the organization has thus been accompanied – and even preceded – by the shaping of an “*identity*” and the design of a “*culture*”, to highlight these two terms mobilized to describe an explicit process of allocation of meaning and framing of collective representations. The objectives recounted here endorse the main functions of the political mobilization of collective identity as listed by Denis-Constant Martin (1994, p. 18-35): “tell” a narrative identity, which supposes the existence of a designated audience (p. 20); “link” the individuals to the group through the mobilization of representations and symbols that ensure the passage from the individual scale to the social composition, but also the present of the Party to its past (p. 21), as illustrated in the selected extract; assist the members to “choose” their affiliation, in reference to the proposed narrative: in that sense, the identity narrative intends to produce the collectivity and enforce the organization that speaks in its name (p. 23); “distinguish” the in-group from the out-group: by forging a simplified grammar of representation, the narrative identity endorsed by the Party classifies the population between members and non-members, excluding the latter, draws the line mentioned in the account, and sketches a social map arranged along the partisan fragmentation – accordingly, the FPM pretends to symbolically renew the partisan experience in Lebanon by rejecting the oath (p. 24); “gather” the partisan community through the reconstruction and representation of the time, space, culture, and system of beliefs, in use within the group (p. 25); “obtain” a position in the interplay between the components of the society and in the competition for the allocation of resources: such a position is only defined in interactions with the others, highlighting the essentially interactive nature of social identities (p. 28-29); “change” the horizon in which the group evolves – here the passage from clandestine action to public political

competition (p. 31); “exchange” the relation unifying the people with another: the identity narrative enables to replace the idea by the essence (p. 32) as acknowledged in the cited passage; ideology is rejected in the name of openness but is substituted by an immutable definition of the FPM identity.

In that perspective, the program introduced here is presented as a double challenge for the partisan community. A challenge concerning the time first, touching in turn two levels: internally, to affirm the continuity of the group from its origins – hence the many references to the past and origins of the Party; externally, to target what is interpreted as the Lebanese political traditions. From the words of its official, the FPM intends to propose a new form of political relation, disconnected from the partisan practices of the past. The reference to the oath typifies its willingness to open a new era, to reform the essence of the political link in the country. The rhetoric of change is classical for new comers in the political scene. In the Lebanese history, many were the parties claiming such conversion of the modalities of the partisan relations and political competition. The two main parties of the prewar era, the Lebanese Communist Party, founded in 1924 as a Lebanese-Syrian movement, and the Kata'eb Party, created in 1936, advocated the transformation of political practices (Favier 2004, p. 191; Haddad 1993, p. 25) and instituted disciplined and bureaucratic organizations (Favier 2004, p. 241). In the case of the FPM, the intention arises from a double tropism. On the one hand, the dissociation is operated in reaction to the history of most partisan organizations during the Lebanese wars, associating the parties with domestic fighting, whereas the FPM pretends to incarnate a national movement initially instigated by the central State. On the other, the claim originates from the experience of Aounism as a social mobilization gathering people from various partisan groups and engaged on an individual basis.

Second, the description of the educational devices sets a challenge on the group itself. The story BH voiced mirrors a narrative of self-distinction, underlining the dignity and superiority of the group members in the society, a position that the new Party would have to incarnate and to maintain. The roots of this specificity are said to lay in the past history of the community and its symbolic horizon. The identity narrative of the FPM has to affirm its own conception of time, organized around the myth of its origins, and (symbolic) space, the two dimensions constituting the cognitive realms of communities (Anderson 1991, p. 36). The construction of the educational program aims at presenting this universe of signification temporally and symbolically defined to its audience so as to spark identification with the organization. The repertoire mobilized here is fully turned toward self-affirmation in confrontation with the other parties and the societal structures. The image projected in this account

hence appears in a tension between the maintenance of its original purity and its present objective to influence the political system the Party tries to integrate, in a situation comparable to the revolutionary parties studied by Alain Touraine (1974). Such a strain, I intend to demonstrate, has been playing a pivotal part in the evolution of the FPM in the recent years.

Moreover, the rhetoric of institutionalization is in turn to be considered from the point of view of the horizon against which it is voiced. The construction of the story about the political education in the FPM participates in the strategy of the Party's strategy of self-definition. The claimed modernity and rupture with the existing model of partisan socialization is in itself a representation of the collective identity of the movement, a regime of truth (Lagroye 2006) introduced as a norm and aiming at controlling the group. The institution – concretely embodied in the interview situation by the official I met – assumes the legitimate definition of its cause and its contours: “*we had to give signification to all this*”. The “*we*” rhetorically refers to the group as a collective entity but concretely to the Party's leadership and more precisely to the narrator who adopts the position of authorized exegete of the FPM identity. His account negotiates power relations in the internal economy of the group – imposing a closed definition of the movement: the narrative thus superimposes a relation of signification on what is originally a relation of power.

The communication of interpretative filters through “political education” aims at homogenizing the partisan community. As such, it incorporates power relations: the organizational leadership stages through the work of the committee a legitimate version of the identity narrative and its associated practices proposed to the members. At the same time, dissensions may exist within the organization between rival identity narratives. It is hence necessary to question the principles ordering these concurrent stories and understand how some find an echo among the activists while others do not. How does a “master narrative”, i.e. a dominant narrative – in opposition to counter or backstage narratives that compose the “hidden side” of the Party (Charlot 1989, p. 361) – emerge and how does it impact the institutions – both formal and informal – composing the Party? In the case of the FPM, the history of the movement plays a central part to understand the ways organizational devices were established, their actual modes of development, as well as the manner they have participated in the framing of a group style among FPM students. It strongly determined how the Party envisages the activities to “*regroup, gather, reassure, and face [the out-group]*” to use BH's expression of the objectives of political education in the FPM.

Before going further, a precision on the public targeted by the program of political education is needed. Originally, the second article of the FPM's rules of procedures

adopted in 2006 organized the distinction between two categories of members: the activists (*al-Multazimûn*) and the associated members (*al-Muaddidûn*). Both are characterized by their faith in the principles and objectives of the Party, but their rights and duties differ (article 2.2 of the rules of procedures). The former has to participate in the meetings of the local and national councils of the group and, in return, has the opportunity to apply for a position within the organization. The latter has fewer obligations regarding participation to the activities but is not eligible in the structure of the FPM. Both commit themselves to respect the internal rules and hold a card issued by the central unit of the Party. The number of enlisted adherents amounts to around 60,000<sup>202</sup>.

For the students however, the distinction does not apply. It has been decided since the creation of the Party that students will not have to formally adhere to the organization. The reasons are multiple. Legally, the bylaws of the political parties in Lebanon are still governed by the law on public association dating back from 1909<sup>203</sup>, at the time of the Ottoman rule over Lebanon. The law prohibits adhesion of members under 20. In Lebanon, as already mentioned in the opening chapter of this work, most of the students enter university at the age of 18. They would not be able to officially join the Party before three years. However, practical reasons seem even more relevant to explain that choice: competition between rival organizations tends to stimulate the simplification of the procedure of adhesion for the youth in order to attract a wide audience (Favier 2004, p. 194). Besides, in many families, the parties carry a negative image inherited from the various episodes of the civil war, reinforcing the mistrust of the parents – but also sometimes of the youth themselves – toward formal adhesion. If the cohabitation between the parents and their children is often organized along relatively independent realms (Volk 2001), the family nonetheless maintains a significant weight concerning such decisions. Student activists are consequently not legal members of the Party and are positioned primarily under the supervision of the Committee of Student Affairs. This committee is one of the eleven committees

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<sup>202</sup> The number of 60,000 is the one publicly mentioned. However, the exact number of adherents as well as the amount of non-Christian members is not fully accessible. A high official in the FPM evoked 16,000 Muslims in the FPM (interview with the author: December 15, 2010) but recently put the number at 12,000 in an interview to the *Rassemblement pour le Liban*, the French section of the FPM.

See: [http://rplfrance.org/index.php?content=services/forums/adonis\\_akra.php](http://rplfrance.org/index.php?content=services/forums/adonis_akra.php) [May 2013]

<sup>203</sup> The law was modified in 1928 to forbid any party advocating a constitutional change. It is worth to note that the 1909 Ottoman law was in turn inspired by the French law of 1905. See Favier 2004, p. 194.

established by the FPM in 2005. All coordinators of these committees participate in the executive committee of the Party, headed by its president, Michel Aoun.

In that matter, the solution adopted by the FPM is similar to the one existing in most of the political parties. The duality between a student group and an official party is the general rule although it does not always functions in the same way. Some, like the FPM or the Amal Movement, have no statutory youth organization, the students being supervised by members of the respective student branches of the parties. Another model is the PSP, which set up a youth division named the Youth Progressive Organization (YPO). As a youth association, it can recruit members below the age of 20. Adhesion does not impose a legal adhesion to the party as such. The Lebanese Communist Party arranged another kind of duality: a youth committee directly linked with the party itself and a student union, officially independent from the LCP although publicly known as an auxiliary group. Many students adhere to both organizations, although some only join the union, while others only the Party. Finally Hezbollah presents yet an alternative formula of implementation of the same principle. If the party disposes of a well-structured youth section, no formal membership exists at any level in Hezbollah as Na'im Qassem, deputy general secretary of the party explains: adhesion to Hezbollah is not submitted to any official membership as the Party rather functions like “a Nation” (Qassem 2005, p. 59-60). As a result, many students participate in the activities set up by Hezbollah in the universities and even outside. But various degrees of adhesion coexist at the same time and the most promising students are progressively nominated by the party's officials to further their insertion within the group. In the FPM as in most of the other parties, adhesion of the youth is defined in practice, by the engagement into activities, and not legally, by the acquisition of a card. The specific status of the youth explains that they constitute a targeted audience for the Committee for political education (Bassiouni 2006, p. 82). The relative autonomy of the student groups vis-à-vis the Party's organizational structure imposes however that their relations with BH's Committee are mediated by the FPM Committee of Student Affairs.

As for the content of the political education, BH explained how it aims at developing the political knowledge of the activists and framing their behaviors. Accordingly, two parallel programs were established by the committee: the first one focusing on the objectives, the theoretical conceptions, and the history of the Party; the second taking the form of a “training”, which concentrates on individual communication and leadership skills i.e. a range of behavioral education deeply influenced by management techniques. My intention is to envisage in turn these two dimensions – cognitive and practical – in order to analyze how they were elaborated



and how they contribute to the framing of the interpretative filters mobilized by the student activists to represent their position within the movement as well as the social realities they experience. My aim is to understand how the routinized practices and modes of interactions within the group combine with the collective representations underlined by the organizational narrative identity to produce a “FPM culture” (Eliashop & Lichterman 2003, p. 741).

The construction of interpretative filters operates in the partisan relation, i.e. the encounter between the Party and its human milieu. The organization remains, after all, an ensemble of interrelations between already socialized individuals. However, their interactions are framed by a number of formal devices (normative procedures structured by codes, regulations and programs, through which the organizational culture is communicated among the affiliates) and habitual practices that convey signification. The main objective of the organizational structures is to spread a common frame to envisage what being a FPM affiliate means. According to the classical model developed by Snow (Snow & al. 1986), engaging in partisan activities supposes to share the perception of situations, principles and objectives pursued by the organization. Adhesion, it argues, results from the alignment of frames between the individual and the group. The comment proposed by BH that the perception of a common definition of the Lebanese crisis led to his immediate adhesion to Michel Aoun's quest seems to support this claim. However, his story formulates a representation ex-post of the situation. The objective of the account being precisely to stage the identification between the narrator and the Party for the researcher – an outsider audience, it is possible to question the sequence and, beyond, the assumptions carried by Snow's theory. The limit of this model lies in the fact that it supposes the prior conjunction of interpretative frames. The accesses to the FPM for the students I met being multiple, often mediated by university comrades or family members, and sometimes resulting from an interactional positioning process as analyzed in the first part of this work, the probability of an *a priori* convergence between individual interpretation of the Party's content and the principles and objectives of the movement appears difficult to demonstrate. It seems more heuristic on the contrary to completely inverse the proposition and to argue that the congruence between the individual interpretation and the organizational filters emerges once the actors enter the universe of signification of the group. The participation in group activities, the learning of the political education as taught within the organization operate as a type of secondary socialization, developing the alignment of interpretative frames and consequently enhancing the internal cohesion of the group. The nature of these frames as well as the way they are constructed is the subject of this chapter.

Starting from the contexts of experience and practices, I am interested to see how the students extract meaningful representations from the stock of collective knowledge in use within the Party. To do so, adapting the program established by Eliashop and Lichterman (ibid., p. 785-786), I propose to start from FPM students' habitual ways of interacting and representing themselves so as to question their conceptions of bonds and boundaries, their assumptions about their responsibilities and roles as activists, their definition of a “good” member, as well as their speech norms, and to confront these dimensions with the normative models constructed by the organizational socialization devices. The hypothesis I present is that a disjunction exists between the projected devices of political education and their implementation among students. This gap leaves space for the emergence of a group style relying essentially on informal institutions that emphasize intimate bonds and exclusive partisan boundaries articulated to representations of existential conflicts, and speech acts privileging a symbolic system of activism strongly connected to the FPM experience of civil protest. This development gives rise to an ambiguous internal situation: while the FPM finds itself unable to fulfill its ambitions concerning the program of education of its members, group style highlighting affective intimacy between members prevents the rise of internal dissatisfaction and ensures the maintenance of cohesion among rank-and-file affiliates.

This chapter introduces first the origins of the FPM Charter so as to expose its historical roots (1). Then it presents the partisan socialization to demonstrate how political education was conceptualized and how it has actually been sustained through alternative modes rather than through largely dysfunctional formal devices. The modalities of students' socialization enable to understand the nature of political bonds relying primarily on an affective sense of community (2). Finally, I synthesize the FPM group style in a comparative perspective before using the occurrence of an internal crisis in 2010 to suggest how this students' group style helped maintain cohesion. The study of this particular event sheds light on the partisan relation prevailing in today's Lebanon (3).

## 1. “WE DO NOT HAVE AN IDEOLOGY, BUT WE HAVE PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES”

September 18, 2005, in the congress room of the hotel *Le Royal* in Dbayeh, the 160 members of the constitutive body of the FPM adopted unanimously its Charter (*Mithâq al-Tayyâr al-Watanî al-Hurr*), symbolically endorsing the transformation of the movement into a political party. The final version of the document is made of around ten pages. It includes the speech pronounced by Michel Aoun on the occasion. Evidence of the central part of the leader in the very existence of the institution, his inaugural speech is preceded in the document by a short introduction of the main principles (seven) and objectives (fourteen) of the organization<sup>204</sup>.

The Charter – except for Michel Aoun's speech – was elaborated by a special commission headed by Dr. Adonis Aqra<sup>205</sup>, a long-standing figure in the movement. The redaction started during the summer 2005 and was first introduced to the 160 members of the constituent body of the Party, discussed during around two weeks, before being adopted and published on September 18, 2005<sup>206</sup>. The text was distributed in a brochure entitled “Lebanon, the homeland of Man [*Lubnân Watan al-Însân*]”.

The document proclaims the recognition, as a central principle, of the human rights defined in reference to the Universal Declaration of 1948 (principles one and two). It also echoes the slogan adopted by the movement in its early days in 1988-1990 by asserting the steadfast commitment of the Party to defend the liberty, the sovereignty, and the independence (*Hurriyyeh, Siyyâdeh, Istiqlâl*) of Lebanon (principle three). Follows the affirmation of the attachment to the pluralism characterizing the country as well as to its “pioneering democratic experience in the Arab world” (principle four) and to the Lebanese constitutional rules (principle five). The Charter then mentions the adherence of the FPM to “the openness of Lebanon to, and its interaction with, its Arab surroundings” – although not mentioning the Arab identity of Lebanon – and to the world “in such a way as not to conflict with the national belonging and provided that the Lebanese will be a dimension of Lebanon in foreign countries and not a

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<sup>204</sup> The Charter is available in the appendix.

<sup>205</sup> A Lebanese University professor, Adonis Aqra holds a doctorate in Philosophy. Originating from the coastal city of Jbeil, he joined the General Aoun in 1989. Member of the semi-clandestine apparatus organized by the FPM in the 1990s, he is arrested in August 2001. He wrote a book about his experience in prison, “When 16 became my name”. Banned in Lebanon, this book contributed to his prestige among FPM activists.

<sup>206</sup> Adonis Aqra, interview with the author: December 15, 2010 [in French].

foreign dimension within Lebanon” (principle six). The last principle asserts the equality between genders (principle seven).

Among the declared objectives listed in the document feature – once again – the guaranty of the sovereignty and independence of the country (objective one), the construction of the Rule of Law [*Dawlat al-Huqq*] (objective two), the reinforcement of the democracy “as a mode of government and a way of life” (objective three), the emancipation of the Lebanese from the communal bonds and the promotion of citizenship [*muwâtaniyya*] through the legalization of a secular civil status (objective four), or the defense of the family as “the nucleus in the building of a society and a nation” (objective five). Follow the elimination of gender legal and social inequalities (objective six), the support to the youth and the promotion of their role in developing the society (objective seven), and the defense of the political rights of the Lebanese Diaspora (objective eight). The FPM moreover aspires to spread “a political culture that liberates the Lebanese from a mentality of tutelage” (objective nine), to favor economic liberalism “in the limits of human dignity and principles of social justice” (objective ten), and the implementation of meritocracy in the institutions (objective eleven). The last three objectives are concerned with environmental issues (objective twelve), education (objective thirteen), and the propagation of “the culture of peace, dialogue, and democracy” (objective fourteen).

The proclamation of the Charter manifested the founding principles of the FPM and exposed its political program. More fundamentally, it aimed at framing the period of transition from movement to party to ensure “the continuity” (Bassiouni 2006, p. 42). As such, it refers to the “identity” and the “culture” mentioned in BH’s presentation and, according to the coordinator of the political education Committee, serves as the basis for the socialization of the adherents: the communication of the FPM ideas and principles is based on the document. Hence, understanding the construction of interpretative filters necessitates considering the process of emergence of the Charter and the modalities of the transmission of the principles and objectives it contains. “Institutions always have a history” (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 72). The formalization of the principles put forward by the FPM as well as the habitualized ways of representing them results from the experience of the movement and its members.

### **A) The FPM first age: rediscovering the origins**

October 31, 2007, Achrafiyeh. My first fieldwork had started only for a few days when I was able to arrange an interview with Marc, representative of the FPM Student Affairs in charge of the relations with Media. Born in 1983, Marc became active in 2002, participating in many demonstrations against the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Student in the Political Science Institute in Huvelin, he was a key figure in the FPM student activism. Because he was accustomed in his contacts with the Media to communicate in the name of the organization, his answers to my questions always adopted primarily a general point of view aiming at presenting to me the “voice of the FPM”. After I introduced him to my research interests, he immediately started:

*“Au début, il n’y avait pas d’inscription au CPL. Le CPL était un courant qui en fin de compte représente une vision et une façon de penser à laquelle on adhère. Jusqu’à l’année dernière, ce n’était pas un parti, au début on adhérait à cette vision d’un Liban libre. (...) Donc moi c’est à partir de 2002 que j’ai vraiment commencé à agir au sein du CPL, lors des manifestations qu’on faisait contre l’occupation syrienne (...) c’était le seul endroit où l’on pouvait vraiment adhérer à cette vision de libération du Liban. Au sein de l’université, on a commencé à développer un militantisme (...). C’était assez difficile, puisqu’on était persécutés par les Renseignements et par les partis politiques qui maintenant se disent anti-syriens (...).[Avec le retour du Général] nous avons commencé à introduire au sein de la scène politique la façon de faire qui a toujours existé au sein du CPL, puisque le Général Aoun était un général d’armée et pendant son combat des gens de toutes confessions combattaient dans son armée. Nous avons réussi à rallumer cette flamme entre les communautés libanaises, surtout entre les communautés chrétienne et chiite (...)”<sup>207</sup>*

At the end of the interview, he added:

*“Son retour représente la fin d’une phase et le début d’une autre...le début d’un nouvel espoir pour nous, d’une possibilité de changement au sein du pays...si vous voulez, c’est une étincelle d’espoir.”<sup>208</sup>*

From his words, it is possible to understand how the adhesion is conceived as a recognition of bonds articulated to a specific vision and experience, of boundaries excluding the out-group – “the parties that claim today to be against the Syrians” – whose position is dismissed, and of the mobilization of a specific vocabulary to describe the Syrian “occupation” and the vision of “Free Lebanon”. The rhetoric of

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<sup>207</sup> Marc, interview with the author: October 31, 2007 [in French].

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

occupation and liberation echoes the phases of the movement that precede the new era opened by Michel Aoun's return. It also results from a periodization of the history of the Party, which sketches the horizon of signification of the outlined group style staged in Marc's account. To that effect, the notion of "occupation" seems in that case overstated: according to Samir Kassir (Kassir 2000, p. 12-13), if the Syrian authorities undoubtedly imposed a strong control over the Lebanese politics and society, scuttling all the opportunities that could lead to a reinforcement of the Lebanese state, the existence of "nested network of interests between the Syrian apparatus and the Lebanese political elite", the fact that the security was enforced by Lebanese institutions, in spite of the coordination that existed at all levels with the Syrians, and the absence of a concrete military framing of the Lebanese territory by the Syrian troops impede to consider the Syrian presence as an occupation and rather suggest to conceptualize it as a "tutelage". However, the author added, it does not mean that the Syrian presence did not trouble the Lebanese. The idea of guardianship acquires more ground in reference with a "Treaty of Fraternity, Cooperation, and Strategic, Economic, and Social Coordination" signed between Syria and Lebanon, which strengthened the penetration of security services and the realization of the Syrian interests in Lebanon (Picard 1997, p. 193).

The description of the Syrian presence as an occupation already positions the speaker in a horizon of thought intimately linked with the history of the FPM. A history that started on September 22, 1988, around midnight, when Amine Gemayel decided to transfer his power to a Council of ministers composed of the military council [*al-Majlis al-'askarî*] in order to prevent the state leadership from remaining vacant after no agreement had been reached to designate his successor:

*"A minuit, Amine Gemayel a quitté ses fonctions et nous avons pris le pouvoir. On est passé directement du commandement de l'armée au commandement du pays, au gouvernement. (...) Nous avons donc pris le pouvoir à minuit. A minuit et quinze minutes, les membres musulmans [du conseil] ont démissionné. (...). Alors nous sommes resté tous les trois."*<sup>209</sup>

During the days preceding the expiration of Amine Gemayel's term, the negotiations to nominate his successor were in full swing. Militarily present in most of Lebanon, at the exception of the South controlled by the Israeli Army and of the territories under the Lebanese Forces, Syria was a key actor in the Lebanese situation at that time, all the more since al-Assad benefited from the support of the US Administration to manage the Lebanese issue (Corm 1992). After the failure of a first

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<sup>209</sup> General Issam Abu Jamra, interview with the author: April 29, 2010 [in French].

attempt to designate the new president, the US Ambassador, John Kelly, asked the Christian leadership to propose a list of three or four names. On September 14, after negotiation between Amine Gemayel and Samir Geagea, four names were submitted: Rene Moawad, Michel Eddeh, Manuel Yunes, and Pierre Helu. Four days later, Richard Murphy, Assistant secretary of State of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, came to Lebanon. With him, he brought a list on which a fifth name appeared, Mikhail Daher, the only one on which US officials and Syrian authorities had agreed. According to a leading Lebanese analyst, David Newton, Murphy's assistant, declared: "it is Daher or chaos" (Pakradouni 1991, p. 24-25). Both Geagea and Michel Aoun, at that time commander in chief of the Army, refused what was later denounced as a "diktat" (Davie 1991, p. 154). Unable to find an alternative, Amine Gemayel finally decided to transfer his powers to a transitional government composed of members of the military council in charge of organizing new elections.

The new Council of minister originally counted six members, representing the main communities (Sunni, Shiite, Druze, Maronite, Greek-Orthodox, and Greek Catholic). However, the three representatives of the Muslim sects stepped down. The conformity of Amine Gemayel's decision with the consensual spirit of the constitution had been questioned, especially since the National Pact of 1943, an unwritten common law, allocates the position of Prime Minister to a Sunni Muslim<sup>210</sup>. After the resignation of the Muslim ministers, the cabinet only represented the Christian sects. While the international community expressed its reservation, Syria encouraged the maintenance of the outgoing government, headed by Salim al-Hoss whose rule extended over most of the Lebanese territory.

Rapidly, the government went beyond its initial task – ensure the organization of elections – to proclaim its intention to save the Lebanese Nation by reestablishing the authority of the central State. Michel Aoun presented himself as a Savior. After almost fifteen years of fighting, the Lebanese were sensitive to this discourse of union carried by the Army, which, in spite of its many divisions, remained one of the last symbols of the nation. The popularity of the Prime Minister started to increase significantly once it confronted the militias' grip over the territory, with his decision to close all illegal ports, taken on February 14, 1989. Michel Aoun accused the Lebanese Forces of constituting a state within the state and condemned the negative role played by the international community in Lebanon, more precisely Syria and the USA. The message was that the military government would restore national coexistence the militias had

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<sup>210</sup> A historical precedent existed. In the 1950s, the President of the Republic Bechara al-Khuri designated a Christian as Prime Minister. However, the reactions forced the rapid nomination of a Sunni Muslim, in accordance with the National Pact.

destroyed. Within the “Christian regions” that remained largely under the control of the LF, the population greeted this initiative as an alternative to the militia order (Davie 1991, p. 155-156):

*“L’attachement de la population à nous, en tant que gouvernement militaire, tenant le pouvoir, augmentait d’un jour à l’autre. Une fois je me rappelle, il devait y avoir un rassemblement. Je m’étais dit que j’allais aller voir, et j’ai confié que s’il n’y avait pas plus que 20,000 personnes, nous allions peut-être démissionner. Je venais de Hazmieh, tout près, pour monter à Baabda. Mais je n’ai pas pu arriver jusqu’au palais présidentiel. La foule était telle que je ne pouvais pas avancer. Il y avait plus de 200,000 personnes. Finalement, je suis arrivé au palais. En montant sur le toit, j’ai vu la masse des gens qui étaient venus. Ils étaient là, prêts à se sacrifier, pour qu’on tienne. Alors j’ai dit au Général: ‘Vous pouvez être tranquille, la population est avec nous.’”<sup>211</sup>*

A myth was born. According to the opening paragraph of the FPM Charter, the Party incarnates “the extension of the Lebanese phenomenon that began a long journey filled with struggle on which Michel Aoun embarked.” The association with the character of the leader is thus presented as constitutive of the group itself. Noticeably, the movement is twice qualified as a “phenomenon” whereas the mention of the collective as a party is only asserted in a second short paragraph advocating the renewal of the political life in Lebanon. The notion of phenomenon etymologically evokes a self-manifested occurrence, an observable display appearing at a given moment. Often associated with scientific experiments or natural events, the term tends to connote the description of an objective and sensible reality. In his philosophical approach of human experience, Immanuel Kant opposes phenomenon to noumenon, which is not directly accessible to observation (Kant 1992 [1770], p. 373-416). The interpretation proposed here constructs the rise of Michel Aoun as the inauguration of a popular gathering whose meaning is objectified: it is the story of an encounter between a leader and a people sharing awareness of the causes of their misfortune – foreign occupation – and of the urgent necessity to transform the Lebanese scene.

The numerous discourses pronounced by the General in front of the Presidential Palace he renamed the “Palace of the People [*Qasr al-Sha'b*]”, the propaganda organized by his services, and the real enthusiasm of important segments of the population staged the image of an encounter – “un homme, une société,” as the Lebanese historian May Davie wrote (1991, p. 166). A feeling perfectly summarized by one of my interviewees:

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.



*“Le CPL est né du peuple (...) en 1989, lorsque le Général était à Baabda. Il y avait les bombardements syriens et un million de Libanais regroupés autour du Palais (...). C'est le peuple qui a soutenu cette personne à ce moment là, cette personne qui le représente (...). Ce n'est pas quelque chose que l'on a décidé, c'était comme ça (...). Un million de personnes qui se sont retrouvées au même endroit au même moment...c'est quelque chose qui ne s'est jamais passé dans l'histoire du Liban”<sup>212</sup>*

Aoun pledged an alternative to the militia order, a reform of entire Lebanon, and the defense of the voice of the people internationally. The population responded to these promises all the more since the traditional elites, the political parties in the Christian regions especially, the National Liberal Party of the Chamouns, the National Bloc, or even the Kata'eb, had proved unable to influence the course of the events. The Maronite Church at least some of its elements, had been too closely associated with the militia order imposed by the LF – in particular the Order of the Maronite Monks in Kaslik – to represent an alternative for Salvation. Consequently, Aoun's discourse incarnated for his followers an unique occasion to reverse the course of History. The youth, who had grown up with the war and the militia as their only horizon and symbol of the future of the country, played an important part in the mobilization – the schools and universities in the Christian regions were the first institutions mobilized by the government (Davie 1991, p. 149).

Aoun's rhetoric staged a glorification of the people – the famous poet Said Aql, cantor of Phoenicianism<sup>213</sup>, rallied the cause of the General and drafted the address Michel Aoun used to begin all his speeches in front of the crowd: “*Yâ Sha'b Lubnân al-'azîm [Oh, great People of Lebanon]*”. The movement he carried out between 1988 and 1990 embodied social protest against the war, the militia, and international interferences in Lebanon. It exemplified rebellion against injustice and the traditional elites although without the support of a structured organization or a clear ideology. As such, it expressed all the characteristics of populist charisma conceptualized by Alexandre Dorna (2004, p. 147). Emotions as well as the illusion of a direct connection between the leader and the people played a key part in the development of the movement. The launching of the “Liberation war” against the Syrian military presence in March 1989 and the rejection, seven months later, of the Taef Agreement marked the culmination in the mobilization for “Liberty, Sovereignty, and

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<sup>212</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: November 14, 2007 [in French].

<sup>213</sup> Phoenicianism sustains a form of Lebanese nationalism, claiming that the Lebanese originated not in the Arab population but descended from Phoenicians, the ancient people of merchants that lived in the coastal areas of the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean. The theory, though a scientific non-sense (Salibi 1989 [1988]), has worked as a myth of origins that enabled the creation of an ethnic distinction between Christian and Muslim Lebanese and assertion of the superiority of the former.

Independence”. Between November 1989 and January 1990, in order to prevent a coup from the alternative Lebanese institutions that emerged from Taef with the assistance of the Syrians, the crowd rallied in front of the “Palace of the People”, sleeping outside the building, singing every morning the national anthem, carrying portraits of the new hero (Bourre 1990, p. 172; Davie 1991, p. 147-149), one of which featured the General as Saint George killing a Dragon identified as Hafez al-Assad. Famous artists manifested their support for the cause, in particular Fayruz and Majida al-Rumi, two of the most popular singers in the whole Middle East. Political figures like Dany Chamoun, son of the former President of the Republic Camille Chamoun and its successor at the head of the LNP, or Gebran Tueni, editor of Lebanon’s leading daily *al-Nahâr*, publicly joined the movement.

Michel Aoun himself participated in the construction of the myth of union – another tropism of populism, claiming that he was able to maintain harmony within the Army units under his command (Bourre 1990, p. 162). The return of “legality” brought by the “National Army”, the fight against “foreign occupation” and the militias, the reconstruction of intergroup coexistence (*al-'aîsh al-Mushtarak*) composed the rhetoric of what was designated as “Free Lebanon”. This cause attracted especially sympathy from France, a country in which the discourse about Human rights found a positive echo. French Politicians – mainly from the Right – traveled Jean-Francois Deniau, a member of the UDF – a French derivative of Christian Democracy – and later elected to the French Academy, was the most famous of them. However, it was among the artists and journalists that enthusiasm was the most acute. Guy Béart, a famous singer, composed a song for “*Free Lebanon [Liban libre]*”. The journalists and novelists Daniel Rondeau and Jean-Paul Bourre wrote books hailing the “Rebel Lebanon” (Rondeau 1991) or the “Aoun generation” (Bourre), which became part of the FPM patrimony<sup>214</sup>. Both books multiplied the platitudes about joint prayers between Christians and Muslims, dance between a “veiled woman” and a “girl wearing skirt” (Rondeau 1991, p. 27), and the Manichean opposition between an innocent, brave, and dignified people and Barbary. The themes of sacrifice – deeply correlated in the eyes of the authors with Christianity – and coexistence were the shared background of these texts imbued with a kind of Orientalist mysticism.

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<sup>214</sup>The personality of these authors are interesting as both, although from very different background, seemed to find in Aoun's movement a mode of returning to their Christian roots. Rondeau's book, beyond its direct attacks on the French Socialist President, Francois Mitterrand, narrates the moral path of a mature man, back to his rightist political culture. In a time when European Lefts expressed support for the Palestinian cause, Rondeau expiates his Maoist youth by joining the Lebanese Christians on the roads of Baabda. Jean-Paul Bourre, an extravagant far-right character, also came to embrace the “Christian resistance”.

However, the narrative of Free Lebanon remained a disputable construction. If Michel Aoun could invoke legality to face the militia order, this legal dimension was all relative: to begin with, the controversy about Gemayel's decision and the resignation of the Muslim members of the cabinet persisted. Then, Aoun controlled only a small proportion of the territory (around 20%) and population (around one third). Additionally, the General's armed forces were made of only five of the eleven units of the Lebanese Army, with a large majority of Christian soldiers (Davie 1991, p. 172). Finally, Aoun's decisions to launch his Liberation war and to reject the Taef agreement have been strongly criticized. His armed struggle against the Syrians was doomed due to the balance of power and the General had to accept a cease-fire in September 1989 after six months of intense fire. His refusal of Taef was also a denial of a solution that eliminated his own position of power. The liberation he fought for remained a myth, so did the political change: the new society he promised never took place, corruption lingered because of the impossibility to revoke the state employees, and Army soldiers themselves were accused of abusive behaviors (ibid., p. 175). On the international scene, Michel Aoun, who also demonstrated a tendency to privilege his personal power, probably bet on the wrong horse in accepting the assistance of Saddam Husayn against the Syrian American entente on the eve of the Gulf War of 1991. The narrative about the origins is thus largely composed of myths and does not stem from a consensual definition of history. It rather reflects a specific position in the Lebanese social structure and political field. Armed oppositions against which the General had to fight are an indication of the fragmented perception of his adventure. Beyond the narrative claiming the unity of “one people, one army, and one nation”, the movement finally composed the last episode of intergroup confrontation and Michel Aoun was seen as a warlord like any other (ibid., p. 178; Picard 1997, p. 152).

## **B) The FPM second age: from military struggle to civil movement**

A “long journey filled with struggle”, Aounism is defined in the FPM Charter by a succession of battles: against the Syrian army during the “Liberation War”; against the militias during the battle of Suq al-Gharb waged against the PSP of Walid Joumblatt, allied with Damascus, in the Summer 1989; above all during frontal fighting against the Lebanese Forces in what remains in the opinion as a bloody inter-Christian strife recalled as the “Elimination War [*Harb al-Îlghâ*]”, a term coined by Samir Geagea, head of the militia and used mainly – though not exclusively – by LF supporters; the resistance against the Syrian attack on October 13, 1990; the subsequent social movement to tirelessly denounce Syria's armed presence in the country and its political domination. Charter thus builds a link between the various phases of the history of the

FPM, the military and civil struggles being represented as the two faces of the same coin, the successive steps on the same path, hence heading toward the same end, the liberation of the country.

After the expulsion of Michel Aoun from the Presidential Palace in October 1990, the leadership of the mobilization was destroyed. While the General took refuge in the French Embassy, accompanied by his ministers, generals Abu Jamra and Maalouf, along with their respective family, the new Lebanese authorities, the Army units loyal to President Elias Hrawi, headed by general Emile Lahoud, as well as the Syrian military and security forces started to chasten the Lebanese Army. Officers were arrested and incarcerated, others were revoked (Khoury 1998, p. 220; Picard 2012b). Many of those militarily engaged with the Aounist movement had to hide or flee the country in the days following the Syrian penetration in the Christian regions. Among the civilian leadership and activists, many escaped to foreign countries, especially France, either because they feared repression or because they felt unable to live in a country under Syrian domination as they saw it. Yet, acts of resistance rapidly started again among the youth. Small groups, independent from one another, began to marginally give evidence of the presence of the Aounist movement in the society. The most famous of these groups, created in 1991, was known under the acronym MUR – *Mouvements Unis de Résistance*. In 1992, former activists participated in a campaign for boycotting the first postwar Parliamentary elections (Corm 2003, p. 234; Kassir 2000, p. 6; el-Khazen 1998). But it was in universities that Aounists were the most active.

While activism progressed in Lebanon, the movement started to get organized in France, around the figure of Michel Aoun. After several months of seclusion in the French Embassy, in Hazmieh, Aoun who was charged for rebellion by the Lebanese authorities, was exfiltrated to France with his entourage in August 1991. First established in Marseille, Michel Aoun moved for several years in a village near Paris, then to the French capital. Officially, French authorities prevented him to engage in political action. However, it rapidly evolved, especially after his installation in Paris. With the assistance of the Gathering for Lebanon (RPL) which was already active in mobilizing the Lebanese community in France, collecting funds and lobbying, Michel Aoun organized comparable structures in other countries, namely Belgium, the USA and Australia. The Lebanese diaspora, mentioned in the Charter, constituted since then a central part in the FPM. This progressive reconstruction of a proto-organization around the General led to efforts to structure – and control – the existing movements in Lebanon, jointly conducted from France and Lebanon in the mid-1990s. Bachir, who

headed the FPM semi-clandestine student unit between 2002 and 2005, took part in the first implantation of a centralized structure in Beirut's universities:

*“J’étais à l’université à ce moment-là. Je me souviens à un certain moment les services de renseignement, vu la diversité des groupes, étaient parvenu à infiltrer certains d’entre eux. Certains avaient changé leur fusil d’épaule, avaient décidé de collaborer avec les services de renseignement mais d’autres étaient restés fidèles au Général. Je me rappelle qu’il y avait eu beaucoup de problèmes, sur la stratégie à adopter. On avait commencé de plus en plus à parler de “Aounistes sans Aoun”. (...) Donc certaines personnes ont été séduites par ce discours, je ne juge pas parce que se sont des situations psychologiques difficiles quand on est en prison, moralement abattu...Je crois qu’ils se sont rendus compte qu’il fallait unifier pour faire face à la démobilisation, l’infiltration par les services de renseignement, la désorganisation. (...) Elle [l’unification] s’est faite assez péniblement, (...) parce qu’il a fallu sacrifier quelques symboles, quelques personnes qui avaient refusé cette unification. (...) [Une] première tentative d’unification entre ces deux groupes (...) s’est soldée par un échec. Alors, certaines figures du groupe le plus faible ont été écartées et les militants qui dépendaient de ces chefs de groupe ont dû rejoindre la nouvelle organisation. (...) Bien sûr, chaque université avait gardé une certaine marge de manœuvre, (...) on avait laissé à chaque groupe le soin de faire ce qu’il lui plaisait en fonction des contraintes et de la situation à l’université...Mais disons que s’il y avait un tract, il n’y avait plus qu’un seul tract, un seul discours”*<sup>215</sup>

The story is not without contradictions. Justified by the needs to face repression, unification appears for the most part an operation of takeover impelled by the necessity for the organization under construction to control its activists and define a common filter of interpretation of the situation. The composition of a unique public narrative about the reality as understood by the group. The conflict of legitimacy implied by such an operation of framing – if there is only one discourse, who has the authority to impose this message? – is incumbent to any construction of a symbolic universe. Here, the source of legitimacy incarnated by Michel Aoun implied to turn the dominant narrative toward the past and construct a sense of continuity. As noted in the quotation, it was not the only option: the failure of Michel Aoun in 1990 could have led to a redefinition of the objectives, all the more since the absence of the General had left the leadership vacant. However, his symbolic weight has allowed the takeover of the movements that existed in Lebanon. From that moment, and in spite of the repression, the Aounist movement continued to structure itself. The name of Free

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<sup>215</sup> Bachir, interview with the author: November 16, 2007 [in French].

Patriotic Movement was adopted as soon as 1997, when a semi-clandestine organization was settled:

*“Depuis l'exil du Général, nous avons commencé à communiquer entre les différents groupuscules aounistes qui s'étaient formés. Mais on ne les connaissait pas tous. Par oui-dire, on entendait parler d'une personne. On le contactait et on essayait de savoir si c'était vrai qu'il était avec nous ou non. Mais on est arrivée à la fin 1997 où les choses se sont mises en place presque officiellement. Nous étions à ce moment là mieux structurés. Il y avait alors un comité qui s'appelait al-Haî'a al-'amma, le 'corps fondamental' (...). C'était comme un corps constituant, qui regroupait une vingtaine de personnes qui représentaient d'abord les régions, ensuite les corps de métier, l'information, et enfin un poste s'occupant des actions de mobilisation [ta'bi'a] auprès de la population. À la tête de ce groupe, il y avait le général Nadim Lteif qui était le représentant personnel du Général au Liban. Ce corps constituant organisait, planifiait et appliquait les actions, chacun dans sa région. Chacun des membres allait dans sa région pour appliquer ce que nous avons décidé. Nos actions étaient pacifiques. Les armes ne faisaient jamais partie de nos actions. La violence n'était pas de notre ouvrage. La violence, ça ne se faisait pas. Les armes ne sont pas une constituante de notre parti. Et à partir de la fin 1997, le nom de CPL fut adopté. A partir de là, on a continué de travailler sous le nom de CPL. Les contacts avec le Général en France étaient permanents, que ce soit par téléphone ou par le biais de personnes se rendant en France pour le rencontrer avant de revenir au Liban. (...) Il ne fallait plus rester dans l'ombre, travailler la nuit. Il fallait faire les choses de manière manifeste et ostensible. Il fallait organiser des meetings, des dîners politiques, mais de manière visible, que les agents de l'Etat sachent, que tout le monde soit au courant. Il faut publier nos actions dans les journaux, s'appuyer sur les mass-media, et quoi qu'il arrive, il fallait être là.”<sup>216</sup>*

A better organization enabled the multiplication of mobilizations. The Party progressively entered the public sphere. Occasions such as the commemorations of the Liberation war on March 14, of October 13, of the Lebanese Independence Day on November 22, witnessed demonstrations or gatherings in universities – mostly in the USJ and the branch 2 of the LU – in front of public institutions such as the Justice Hall – a place in Beirut where the General Security Offices are located, referred to as 'Adliyyeh – or the Military tribunal (*al-Mahkama al-'askariyya*), where the arrested activists were sometimes deferred. Beyond this regular demonstrations, specific events had participated in the construction of the story of the FPM civil resistance movement: the street protest of December 1997 (after the cancellation of a TV interview of Michel Aoun scheduled on the TV channel MTV), the invasion by the Army of a summer

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<sup>216</sup> Adonis Aqra, interview with the author: December 15, 2010 [in French].

camp organized by FPM students in August 2000, the mobilization of December 2000 (in support for the Lebanese detained in the Syrian prisons), the participation in the 2002 partial Parliamentary election in Metn (in support of Gabriel Murr, owner of MTV), followed by civil protests after the cancellation of the results and the closure of MTV, the 2003 election in Baabda (in which the movement presented a candidate, Hikmat Dib, for the first time). Among these events, often cited in interviews or in the official productions of the Party, the episode of the August 7 (2001) arrests as well as the subsequent demonstrations and repression stand out as the symbol of this period:

*“Ca a été le moment de répression le plus dur, ils ont mis en prison tout le comité directeur [al-Haï'a al-'âmma] (...), sauf un, par miracle. Il montait l'escalier pour nous rejoindre à l'étage où nous étions, mais il a vu les gendarmes. Il a alors continué de monter l'escalier, faisant semblant d'habiter plus haut. Il a pu aller jusqu'au toit, téléphoner à Michel Aoun et aux médias pour dire ce qui se passait. Sinon, la chose aurait été secrète. Mais en une vingtaine de minutes les TV étaient sur place et la chose a pris l'envergure qu'elle a eu. (...) Nous sommes restés [en prison] pour quinze jours”<sup>217</sup>*

Today, the Party carries on with the narrative about these episodes through the production of TV documentaries or reports, most of which are available on the websites of the FPM and its affiliated organizations like the RPL in France<sup>218</sup>. In its press releases dating back from that era, the FPM kept on denouncing the repression conducted by the “extra-legal police regime”, “satellite of the Syrian authorities” as well as the absence of freedom of speech and opinion<sup>219</sup>. The mobilization of the vocabulary and techniques used in civil movements mirrors the use of justice as an instrument of repression by the Lebanese authorities at this time. In an article published in 2000 in the French academic journal *Maghreb-Machrek*, Ghassan Mukheiber, member of the Human Rights commission in Beirut and future Member of Parliament on FPM list, blamed the regime for using Law as a political resource (2000, p. 80). Many were the activists arrested and incarcerated, accused of causing public disorder or even threatening the “privileged relations with a brother country”.

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> For example, a forty-two-page report on the August 2001 events including press releases from Lebanese and French media is available on the RPL website: [http://rplfrance.org/documents/2001-0809\\_Press-Book%20Aout%202001%20-FR.pdf](http://rplfrance.org/documents/2001-0809_Press-Book%20Aout%202001%20-FR.pdf) [May 2013]. Another focuses on the student movement between 1990 and 2005: [http://rplfrance.org/documents/2003-0321\\_Etudiants%20CPL%20-%20Manifs%20&%20Actions%20%28FR%29.pdf](http://rplfrance.org/documents/2003-0321_Etudiants%20CPL%20-%20Manifs%20&%20Actions%20%28FR%29.pdf) [May 2013].

<sup>219</sup> Some of these press releases collected from the French-speaking newspaper *L'Orient le Jour* are available in the appendix.

History of this second period enables to understand the importance attached to the Human and Civil Rights in the rhetoric of the FPM. In the strategy of the movement, which tried to attract the attention of the Western media on the Lebanese situation to prompt international action against the Syrian presence, the insistence on Human Rights appears as a key tool. The intellectual education of many FPM officials strengthens these references since it bears the influence of a French model of thought inspired by the philosophy of Enlightenment that presided to the French Revolution. The main writer of the Charter, Adonis Aqra, exemplifies in his trajectory this intellectual filter. Born in Jbeil in 1946, he obtained a doctoral degree in Philosophy in the Sorbonne before graduating from Science Po Paris. BH, in charge of the political education, whose introduction on the partisan socialization was reproduced above, also defended his doctoral dissertation in Paris – a profile shared by many other Party officials I met<sup>220</sup>. My suggestion here is not to suppose a direct imposition of ideas but rather to circumscribe the cognitive horizon in which the ideas of the Charter are inserted<sup>221</sup>. The proximity of the humanist discourse voiced in the social milieus of the FPM with the French doctrine of equality and political secularism – not to be confused with atheism – also partly explains the support manifested in France for the Aounist movement.

### **C) The FPM third age: from liberation to emancipation**

The 2005 Syrian withdrawal opened a third phase in the history of Party. An opportunity to publicize its cause, this new era also posed a difficult challenge. The struggle against the Syrian presence in Lebanon had been the main object of mobilization of the FPM activists, almost their unique demand as all other issues had been subordinated to a redefinition of the Syrian-Lebanese relations. The question of the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon for instance, although mentioned in the public declarations or the press-releases of the movement remained marginal in comparison with the constant call for a departure of the Syrian troops. The withdrawal was seen as a prerequisite. In such conditions, the 2005 events represented at the same time an incontestable success for the FPM and a potential threat: would the movement be able

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<sup>220</sup> For example, Tanios obtained a doctoral degree in Paris. Albert graduated from the ENA, the National School of Higher Administration, one of the most famous advanced schools in France. See the list of the interviews, in the appendix.

<sup>221</sup> A horizon of thought that is not alien to the FPM youth. Among the students supporting the FPM considered in this study, a vast majority were educated in – at least partly – French-speaking schools, often Catholic and more precisely from Jesuit tradition. See the interview tables, available in the appendix.



to renew accordingly its universe of signification, to transform its repertoires of actions, and to maintain the attachment of its members? The transition was made by asserting the connection between two objectives and building a narrative rooting both of them into the same horizon – the mythical origins of the group: *Tahrîr*, the liberation of the national territory, and *Taharrur*, the emancipation of the Lebanese from the constraints of their society materialized in the divisions of sectarianism, the domination of the elite, or the plague of corruption:

*“Après 2005, il y a eu quelque chose de très joli, une nuance en arabe, que nous disons souvent et que les gens ne comprennent pas...on en parlait l’autre jour et on disait qu’après 2005, les membres du CPL n’étaient plus enthousiastes : “on s’en fout, on a gagné la libération, c’est bon”. En fait, ils pensaient juste que les Syriens nous occupaient (...) il y a une nuance dans l’arabe: Tahrîr et Taharrur. Tahrîr, c’est la libération du pays ou la souveraineté. Taharrur, c’est la libération de soi-même, la libération interne des chaînes que nous avons dans notre société, dans notre religion et dans notre système politique. Et là a commencé une toute nouvelle bataille: la bataille contre la corruption, contre la politique qui était vraiment très, très, mesquine.”<sup>222</sup>*

*“La transition est le passage de la libération de l’Etat à la libération de l’esprit lui-même. Ce que le Général appelle min al-tahrîr ila al-taharrur. Taharrur, c’est la libération de nous-mêmes, de nos stéréotypes sur les gens, les autres partis politiques, mais aussi la libération de soi-même vis-à-vis de la corruption, se libérer de la tentation de la corruption, ou la tentation du sectarisme, de tout comportement négatif envers nos principes. Cette bataille était difficile parce que la résistance contre l’occupation est quelque chose d’évident, toujours à la surface. C’était toujours à la Une des journaux. Mais le passage à la résistance contre la corruption et parfois contre soi-même est plus difficile, ça prend plus de temps, c’est quelque chose qui se déroule de manière plus cachée, plus discrète.”<sup>223</sup>*

The proximity of the two words in Arabic – both words being a derivative from the same root “*h-r-r*” that moreover composes the adjective “Free [*Hurr*]” in the name of the Party – reinforces the link between the two dimensions. They are staged as two faces of the same cause, equally present in the initial project of the Aounist movement in 1988. The departure of the Syrian “occupants” thus became the first step in a longer process, much harder to achieve. The opening of the new era has strongly emphasized the discourse on corruption. Already part of the FPM narrative, the denunciation of the corrupted nature of the Lebanese politics and society came foreground. It has

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<sup>222</sup> Alain, interview with the author: November 7, 2007 [in French]

<sup>223</sup> Issam, interview with the author: May 24, 2010 [in French].

especially targeted the “Hariri empire”. Rafiq Hariri and his son, Saad, seem to exemplify a series of repulsive characteristics and perceived threat in the horizon of the FPM. Accused of managing the country “like a firm”, the Hariris represent in the eyes of the FPM activists the incarnation of the supremacy of personal over general interests. Besides, the close link of the family with Saudi Arabia – Saad Hariri has the double-citizenship, like his father did – fuel the suspicion of favoring investments originating from Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia. Anti-corruption and anti-Hariri discourses further involve a hint of unequal treatment between the constituencies of the nation. These critics intend to position the FPM as the defender of the “middle-class” but also include the perception of the threat posed by Hariri's policies against the very presence of the Christians in the country<sup>224</sup>.

The transition from liberation to emancipation has obviously been an important theme of communication toward the adherents during the first years after the legalization of the Party. Almost all the activists I met in 2007 and 2008 mentioned it, generally with many details and much insistence. Later, the use of the expression became frequent, and most often limited to the students deeply inserted within the organization: coordinators in universities, members of the Student Affairs Committee, individuals whose family members belonged to the FPM or had been activists in the past. In his introduction of the socialization program of the Party, BH insisted on the necessary continuity to maintain adhesion of the people to the cause. Likewise, the reorientation of the universe of signification from liberation to emancipation intends to actualize the principles of the Party and adapt them to the new political configuration. Rooted in history, the cause of the third age of the FPM is organized according to a triple struggle:

*“Three forces stand in Lebanon against the reformist project: political feudalism, embodied by the traditional notabilities, the sectarian warlords converted in politics, and the political affairist class. Sectarianism constitutes the business of these three forces and the mean through which they maintain and reproduce their power.” (Aoun 2007, p. 49, cited in Abirached 2012, p. 47)*

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<sup>224</sup> The theme of the Islamization of the country is never far away. Jamil, a third-year USJ student, declared to qualify Hariris policies: “*Rafiq Hariri a dit que si tu ne peux pas islamiser le peuple, islamise la terre, selon un adage musulman et c'est clairement ce qu'il a fait et que son fils continue de faire en faisant acheter des terrains un peu partout au Liban.*” Interview with the author: May 1, 2010 [in French].

## 2. STUDENT EDUCATION: IDEALS, PRACTICES, AND GENERATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

How did the newly legalized FPM intend to lead its triple struggle and “*to give signification to all this*”? The transition from a clandestine movement to a legally registered political party, in particular, marked an important inflection in the conceptualization and the operation of devices designed for the transmission of the group's identity narrative. The creation of the organizational framework during summer, 2005 rearranged the “structures of opportunity” (Tarrow 1998) for the management of the partisans, a process all the more necessary since the reshuffling of the political field that followed the Syrian withdrawal and the electoral success of the Aounists in the Parliamentary elections paved the way for a sensible increase in the audience of the group. Already, since autumn, 2004, the Lebanese scene had witnessed an escalation in the political crisis opened by the renewal for three years of the term of the President of the Republic, Emile Lahoud. Imposed by the Syrian government against the will of Rafiq Hariri, whose relations with Lahoud had always been tense<sup>225</sup>, the renewal voted by the Lebanese Parliament on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2004 took place in a regional context dominated by the adoption two days before of the resolution 1559 by the Security Council of the United Nations, calling among other things for the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon. On October 20, Rafiq Hariri resigned. The next day, a new government was formed under the leadership of Omar Karami, composed in majority of pro-Syrian politicians<sup>226</sup>. The deepening of the internal crisis on the one hand, the reinforcement of the international pressures of Syria on the other, tended to indicate the imminence of a shaking of the national political situation. Accordingly, the FPM started to prepare the new phase. In February 2005, days before the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, a meeting was held in Paris, gathering the FPM main members both from France and Lebanon. Michel Aoun allegedly called for a general mobilization ahead of the up-coming changes that would

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<sup>225</sup> Emile Lahoud was elected President of the Republic in 1998, for six years according to the constitution. He nominated Salim al-Hoss Head of the government, in replacement of Rafiq Hariri. The declared objectives of the new cabinet was to fight corruption, to go after a sanitation of public finances, and to ensure a more balanced development of the country, directly hinting at Hariri's policies which focused almost exclusively on financial services and were widely suspected to nurture endemic corruption in both public and private sectors of the economy (Corm 2003, p. 234-237, p. 246-266). The election of Lahoud generated a short-lived wave of optimism in the population but government's efforts remained largely unsuccessful (Idid., p. 276-288). In the 2000 Parliamentary elections, a coalition led by Rafiq Hariri and Walid Joumblatt ensured a comfortable majority (Nassif 2000, p. 122-123). As a result, Rafiq Hariri returned as Prime minister. His relations with Lahoud remained dominated by reciprocal mistrust.

<sup>226</sup> See *L'Orient le Jour*: October 22, 2004.

not fail to happen in the country and accordingly encouraged organizational efforts to develop formal structures<sup>227</sup>. This task was conducted in a double dimension: cognitive (A) and practical (B). It is my hypothesis that the combination of both aspects gave birth to an internal economy valuing an interpretative model of the position of activists.

## **A) On teaching and framing**

At the time of his legalization, FPM officials harbored ambitions about the implementation of a complete program of political education, aiming at founding a new class of citizens. However, the plans established by the Committee for political education rapidly collapsed. As a consequence, alternative modes of socialization have prevailed.

### ***The failure of the educational program***

Drafting theoretical bases for the political education resulted from an intense work of mobilization and creation. The model includes fourteen themes selected by the Committee. Dealing with each theme required the setting up of a lecture prepared by a university teacher or a specialist in the domain. Some contributors officially belonged to the FPM, others were simple sympathizers, more or less well disposed toward the Party. The presence in the committee of several social sciences and humanities scholars, starting with its coordinator, recognized for his activist career and its engagement in the Teachers' union of the Lebanese University, undoubtedly made the recruitment of these contributors easier. The selected themes, based on the Charter principles, are the following<sup>228</sup>:

1. "The FPM from a popular movement to a party: the obligation of the transformation and its goals [*al-Tayyâr al-Watanî al-Hurr min Harakat Sha'biyya îla Hizb: Mûjibât al-Tahwal wa Âhdâfihu*]" / an alternative title was: "The FPM: the story of the struggle and a promising party [*al-Tayyâr al-Watanî al-Hurr: Sîrat al-Nidâl wa Hizb Wâ'id*]" by Pierre Raffoul, a high-ranking FPM official, companion of Michel Aoun since 1988;

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<sup>227</sup> Adonis Aqra, interview with the author: December 15, 2010 [in French].

<sup>228</sup> The themes are reconstructed from two sources: an application form to the training and the texts of the conferences provided by a participant to the first general session who afterwards became counselor in the partisan political education. The two sources sometimes differ, thus I indicated the two versions I found. The translations from Arabic are mine and thus remain elementary.

2. “Us and the other parties: our expected behavior [*Nahnu wa al-Âhzâb al-Âkhîra: al-Sulûk al-Matlûb minnâ*]” by Dr. Bassam el-Hachem, professor of Sociology in the Lebanese University;
3. “The FPM Charter and its reformist program: an overall explanation [*Mithâq al-Tayyâr wa Barnâmajuhu al-Islâhî: Sharah Ijmâlî*]” by Dr. Adonis Aqra, professor of Philosophy in the Lebanese University;
4. “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its application in Lebanon: actual situation and perspective [*al-I’lân al-’âlamî li-Huqûq al-Insân wa Tadbîqâtihi fî Lubnân: al-Wâq’ al-Qâ’im wa al-Murtajî*]” by Dr. Yusef Kamal al-Hajj, M.A in Philosophy, associate professor in Notre-Dame University (NDU);
5. “The State of Law and the question of equality, justice, and social symbiosis [*Dawlat al-Haqq wa Mas’alat al-Musâwâ’at wa al-’adâla wa al-Takâful al-Ijtimâ’î*]”, by Dr. Jacques Kabanji, professor in the Institute of Sociology of the Lebanese University;
6. “Democracy: its culture and forms as a system [*al-Dîmuqrâtiyya: Thaqa’fatahâ wa Îshkâlahâ ka Nizâm*]” by Dr. Nawaf Kabbani, professor in the Lebanese University;
7. “Secularism and Citizenship in Lebanon: actual situation and perspective [*al-’almâniyya wa al-Muwâtiniyya fî Lubnân: al-Wâq’ wa al-Murtajî*]” by Dr. Rashid Shukair, professor in the Lebanese University;
8. “The liberal economic system and social justice [*al-Nizâm al-Iqtisâdî al-Hurr wa al-’adâla al-ijtimâ’iyya*]” by Dr. Butros Labaki, professor of Social Sciences, Lebanese University;
9. “The city and the countryside in Lebanon: the issue of balanced development [*al-Madîna wa al-Rîf fî Lubnân: Qadiyyat al-Inmâ’ al-Mutawâzin*]” / an alternative title found was: “The difference between the sectarian strain in the segmented development and the patriotic action in the integrative development: social economic system in balanced and unbalanced development” by Ahmad Baalbaki, social economic researcher and professor of Sociology in the Lebanese University;
10. “The Woman in Lebanon and in the world: Legal rights and the reality [*Qadiyyat al-Mar’â fî Lubnân wa al-’âlam: al-Mu’ta al-Huqûqî wa al-Wâq’ al-Qâ’im*]” / an

alternative title found was: “The Lebanese Woman [*al-Mar’â al-Lubnâniyya*]” by Dr. Fahmiah Sharaf al-Din, director general of the Arab Social Sciences Institute in Beirut;

11. “Lebanon and Arabism [*Lubnân wa al-'urûba*]” by Dr. Abd-el-Hamid al-Ahdab, lawyer specialized in International Relations and Business Law;
12. “Lebanon and the Mediterranean: the history and future under construction [*Lubnân wa al-Mutawasitiyya: al-Târîkh wa al-Mustaqbal al-Jârî binâû'hu*]” / an alternative title found was: “About Us and the Mediterranean partnership [*Nahnu wa al-Shirâkat al-Mutawasitiyya*]” by Dr. Bassam el-Hachem;
13. “The regime of the Party [*Nizâm al-Hizb*]” by Fady Gemayel, specialist in administration and strategy in enterprises;
14. “The general administration in Lebanon [*al-Idâra al-'Âmma fî Lubnân*]” by Dr. Georges Labaki, associate professor in Notre Dame University.

The first mission of the program was to educate a team of “*transmitters of thought*”<sup>229</sup> in charge of conveying these lectures to the members. On the basis of the fourteen themes, a session was organized in Antelias<sup>230</sup> (Northern suburb of Beirut) between January 14 and February 12, 2006. Each thematic dealt with in a one hour course followed by thirty minutes of discussion. The objective was to recruit several tens of activists in order to send them in the various regions of the country to teach in turn the adherents of the Party in its local branches. The session was advertized on the FPM web site in an announcement dated from December 1, 2005, calling for volunteers interested to become (unpaid) “missionaries” of the FPM ideas. Prerequisites for applying were to be aged 30 or more, to hold a degree in social sciences, to have a previous experience in teaching and training. Around three hundred volunteers applied<sup>231</sup>. After the end of the fourteen classes, the participants were gathered again in Antelias on February 24, 2006. They were asked to choose between one and three lessons they would prefer/favor to teach in the future. Based on their

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<sup>229</sup> The expression was used in French by BH: “*transmetteurs de pensée*”. Interview with the author: April 27, 2008.

<sup>230</sup> The room rented for the occasion belonged to the Maronite Mar Elias church in Antelias (Bassiouni 2006, p. 86, note 1).

<sup>231</sup> Sources: BH, interview with the author: April 27, 2008; Halim, interview with the author: March 14, 2009; completed by Bassiouni 2006, p. 85.

choice they were submitted to an examination. Presiding over the meeting, the coordinator of the political education was specifying that “what matter[ed] most [wa]s that the members of the movement [*Âhl al-Tayyâr*] in all the regions receive the bases of the intellectual content of the *Tayyâr*, which [had] to be transmitted without distortion [*Tahrîf*], [because] it represent[ed] the culture of the *Tayyâr* family [*Thaqâfat Âhl al-Tayyâr*]” (cited in Bassiouni 2006, p. 86, note 1).

After the evaluation, volunteers were classified in three groups. The C-class, the less successful, was to improve their knowledge and understanding of the themes. The B-class, around fifty to seventy people who performed average, and the A-class, the top thirty, were submitted to an oral exam so as “*to check their ability to communicate*”<sup>232</sup>. The elite group was then sent in the regions to educate the party's adherents. Around ten sessions were organized locally between 2006 and 2007. Besides, a series of DVDs was produced by the FPM showing the videos of the lectures given during the first session in order to maximize the spreading of their content. However, in May 2007 the outburst of fighting in the Palestinian camp of Nahr al-Bared, near the northern city of Tripoli, and the general deterioration of the security in the country that went along<sup>233</sup> imposed to stop the process<sup>234</sup>. Although some sessions were later organized sporadically, the program never acquired a systematic dimension. Throughout my regular encounter with BH, I learned that the failure of this ambitious socialization program mirrored a more profound institutional paralysis that appeared in full light during the spring 2010. The manner the Party dealt with this paralysis exemplifies the kind of partisan relation being built within the FPM.

Originally suspended for security reasons, the sessions were in fact almost interrupted. Among student groups, the Committee of the Student Affairs continued to manage the groups in the various universities of the country like it did before the legalization of the Party, on the basis of occasional conferences or workshops. These were of two kinds. During the academic year, episodic meetings with Party officials focusing on current political issues (among the examples mentioned by the students: the Document of Understanding signed with Hezbollah, the Electoral law and electoral

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<sup>232</sup> BH, interview with the author: April 27, 2008 [in French].

<sup>233</sup> On May 20, 2007, fighting started between Lebanese Army units and militants said to belong to an Islamic jihadist organization Fatah al-Islam. The battle lasted until September 3, 2007 and caused the destruction of the whole refugee camp and several hundred victims. During the first period of fighting, a series of bombs exploded in Beirut and its near suburbs: two bombs in Beirut on May 21, one in Aley on May 23, one grenade attack in Beirut on May 27, and a car-bomb attack killing Future Movement MP Walid Eido.

<sup>234</sup> Sources: BH interview with the author: April 27, 2008 [in French]; Halim, interview with the author: March 14, 2009 [in French].

practices before the 2009 elections, the roles of the ministers during the formation of the National union government in 2009, etc.) or on the history of the FPM. They were either set up directly in universities or in the FPM offices. In the spring 2010, a cycle of lectures was organized in AUB about the trajectory of Michel Aoun “*from 1986-1987 until 1992-1993, and another one about the Movement since he came back from France (...) each session lasted for three, four hours, the time to go in a deep discussions*”<sup>235</sup>. At the same period, another formation destined to students was set up in the FPM central office in Sin el-Fil: “*It was a one-day workshop. Pierre Raffoul was present. People came to talk about history between 1948 and 1975. Then other people talked about the period between 1975 and 1990. [Finally] Pierre Raffoul told us about the period between 2000 and 2005.*”<sup>236</sup>

The second kind of sessions refers to summer camps, lasting between two and three days, and combining both intellectual formation and practical education. However, contrary to the first type of conferences, they were not opened to everyone. A selection was operated that reflected the FPM activists’ group style as I detail in the next subsection. It is noteworthy to mention that it has been difficult for me to establish an exact picture of the various conferences organized during the recent years as the Committee of Student Affairs became reluctant to communicate me precise information and prevented me from attending any of these events. The details I was able to collect were provided by students who attended these conferences or lectures. Their memories were not always accurate enough to propose a complete description.

### ***Maintaining ideals in default of education***

No continuous and structured intellectual formation has been organized on a systematic basis for FPM groups of supporters in the universities. The system prevailing before the legalization has thus been maintained, all the easier since the public identity narrative of the Party emphasizes gathering around ideals, exemplified by the rallying of the people to Michel Aoun in 1989. Accordingly, the interviewees justified the absence of formal education program by asserting their lack of concern for ideology and commitment to openness among the youth:

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<sup>235</sup> Assaf, interview with the author: May 22, 2010 [in English].

<sup>236</sup> Tino, interview with the author: May 29, 2010. The original statement was in French: “*c’était un workshop sur la journée. Il y avait Pierre Raffoul. Des gens nous ont raconté l’histoire de 1948 et 1975. Puis d’autres ont parlé de l’histoire entre 1975 et 1990. Pierre Raffoul nous a parlé de la période entre 2000 et 2005.*”



*"We are very proud to say that we have different points of view in the FPM. Not everyone agree on everything. There are lots of discussions between us, it's very democratic."*<sup>237</sup>

*"Nous n'aimons pas faire du lavage de cerveau, comme tous les autres partis au Liban...même Hezbollah. Même maintenant il y a des formations, mais pas comme les autres (...), parce que maintenant, il y a beaucoup de jeunes qui aiment Aoun mais qui ne savent pas expliquer ce que l'on fait avec le Hezbollah...alors il faut savoir des trucs comme ça"*<sup>238</sup>

*"(...) je suis contre le fait de faire un lavage de cerveau aux jeunes sous prétexte qu'ils sont encore jeunes et qu'ils ne comprennent pas. Alors c'est très délicat (...), on doit faire des conférences pour les jeunes, de tous les points de vue, mais que eux choisissent (...), leur point de vue, leur vision politique, leur vision de l'Etat, quelle qu'elle soit. Entre le lavage de cerveau et plus de responsabilité qu'il ne faut, ça peut être assez pervers."*<sup>239</sup>

Diversity among the activists is a thematic often underlined by the FPM youth:

*"Il y a des militants qui sont proches de la droite, des militant proches de la gauche, il y a des militants qui pensent que Chamoun était bien, d'autres qui pensent que Bachir Gemayel était bien, alors qu'il y a des militants qui détestent les deux...mais ils sont tous dans le CPL...c'est quelque chose de nouveau, c'est vraiment une pensée vers le Liban...ce n'est pas comme les autres qui continuent de penser à partir de la religion et de leur propre.....par exemple, quand Michel Aoun est en train de parler des Chrétiens, il n'est pas en train de parler des Chrétiens parce qu'il est chrétien, mais simplement il parle d'une partie du Liban qui est en train de souffrir"*<sup>240</sup>

The pluralistic image emphasized here echoes the conditions in which the FPM emerged in 1989. People who rallied to support the cause came from a variety of political horizons: "The Aounist movement, originally extremely heterogeneous, (...) grouped non-politicized individuals, as well as former members of the National Bloc, the National Liberal Party, the Kata'eb and the *Tanzîm* around a common cause (...)"<sup>241</sup> (Abirached 2012, p. 45). The diversity shows in the range of former partisan affiliations of the parents and families of my interviewees before the advent of the

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<sup>237</sup> Assaf, interview with the author: May 22, 2010 [in English].

<sup>238</sup> Khalid, interview with the author: November 3, 2007 [in French].

<sup>239</sup> Maroun, interview with the author: November 6, 2007 [in French].

<sup>240</sup> Paul, interview with the author: November 21, 2007 [in French].

<sup>241</sup> I translated this quote from French.

military government<sup>242</sup>. Moreover, the personality of Michel Aoun, who came from a modest family disconnected from the elites and reached the political scene through the mediation of the Army, a national institution, as well as the message used as vector of mobilization, explains that the FPM did not emerge from a strictly defined familial or territorial basis. Whereas the Kata'eb and the Progressive Socialist Party for example were created in the frame of powerful families, respectively the Gemayels, who were notables in the Metn region from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the Joumblatts, reigning over the Chouf from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Aounist movement did not present such anchors. The specific conditions of its birth constitute a foundation that sustains the claim of a distinctive nature compared to the rest of the political organizations in the country:

*“La menace du CPL, c’est qu’on essaie de le caser dans un des partis comme les autres, qu’on essaie de caser Michel Aoun et les hommes du CPL comme des politiciens comme les autres. Donc, là c’est la menace la plus grande pour nous et qu’il faut, déjà, qu’on fasse comprendre ça à nos militants, que nous, dans le CPL, on a plusieurs gens dont certains sont de droite, de gauche, des centristes, du parti démocratique, du parti vert, je ne sais pas moi, n’importe quoi mais on a tous une idée du Liban, c’est ça l’idée...Il y a des gens qui pensent de façon très différentes, des gens qui sont pro-chrétiens, des gens qui disent ‘mais non, il faut être laïc’ et en fait, il y a cette chose-là qui nous joint c’est ça qui est bien*

*- Cette idée du Liban, laquelle est-ce?*

*Notre vision, ce serait un Liban purement démocratique, où il n’y aura pas de clientélisme, tous les gens sentiront que l’Etat est leur soutien, et ils sentiront qu’ils peuvent vivre normalement, dans toutes les religions, ou dans des façons laïques à 100%, et où on respecte les religions et où on respecte les traditions arabes sans vraiment faire trop...et sûrement un Liban qui est souverain, libre (...). Et c’est ça la vision du Liban, c’est ça la charte du CPL.”<sup>243</sup>*

The description made by Alain stages an idealistic image of Lebanon, almost a utopia, which founds the bonds unifying the FPM community. The Party is represented as the place of transcendence of the differences. Its identity narrative rejects the codes usually organizing politics: it is neither a religious party nor a secularist party, neither a leftist party nor a rightist party, neither a Unionist party nor an anti-Arab party. In other words, the FPM proclaims to transcend the political cleavages that have structured the Lebanese political field. The opposition between “Unionism”, advocating the integration of Lebanon within the Arab world, and “Lebanonism” had

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<sup>242</sup> See the interview tables in the appendix.

<sup>243</sup> Alain, interview with the author: April 20, 2008 [in French].

prevailed for decades since the creation of the Lebanese state under the French Mandate (Ishtay 1997, p. 448-449). Clearly, the FPM is inscribed in the realm of Lebanonism, however, as mentioned by Alain, contrary to the traditional stand in this political family, it does not infer a rejection of Arabism. Lebanon is a country with an “Arab face,” claimed the National Pact of 1943, as a result of a compromise between the Unionists defending Arab identity and the Lebanonists inclined to associate the country with the Western world rather than with its neighborhood. Quite similarly, like previously did the Kata'eb, the FPM Charter mentions the Arab surroundings without explicitly claiming adhesion to an Arab identity (principle 6), thus positioning the Party in a stand mirroring the National Pact. The FPM further cannot, according to its own narrative, be located on the right/left cleavage. It hence claims to represent “something else”, different from the rest of the parties.

This mode of distinction is classical in the case of newly created parties that try to enter the political field (Favier 2004, p. 207). It stems from the repertoire mobilized by Michel Aoun and his supporters during the 1988-1990 episode. At that time the need to distinguish his movement from the parties came from the strong identification between the parties and the militias. As already mentioned, the word “parties [*Ahzâb*]” was then used to designate the armed-groups. The image of the militia worked – and continues to do so – as a counter-model for the FPM. The definition of the openness of the Party may thus be more a mark of distinction from the Other, i.e. the militia, than an inclusion of all political positions. The vision of Lebanon voiced by the FPM, beyond the vagueness of its constitutive traits, consequently acquires its meaning in a hollow definition built in contrast to the militia order. According to the Party's narrative, Lebanon should be democratic while the militias imposed their domination by force, open while the militias rejected any form of deviance, respectful of religions as well as secularism while the militias built sectarian strongholds, sovereign while militia groups were backed by external powers:

*“L'Etat idéal, si on veut lancer quelques idées...déjà c'est rejeter le fédéralisme qui est quelque chose d'abject et de non praticable au Liban (...) car il n'y a pas de continuité géographique du point de vue démographique, religieux ou quoi que ce soit. Je suis pour un Etat central. Un Etat central qui soit puissant et fort, qui impose sa définition de l'Etat, de manière à ce que cet Etat soit le représentant unique de toute la population libanaise. Pour l'heure, le Liban n'est puissant que nominalement, dans les textes. Car dès que l'on sort de Beyrouth et du Mont-Liban,*

*l'Etat se désagrège petit à petit et est en pratique inexistant. Au Akkar ou dans le Sud, l'Etat est à peu près inexistant.*"<sup>244</sup>

*"Le Liban idéal, pour moi, c'est loin du fédéralisme. C'est [un Liban] où on pouvait vivre dans un immeuble et dans le même immeuble, il pouvait y avoir des Chrétiens, des Musulmans, des Druzes, des je ne sais pas quoi...le fédéralisme, c'est loin de ma vision. Peut-être c'est (...) le Liban dans lequel il y a la convivialité entre les différentes communautés, une capacité de vivre ensemble, et de se comprendre (...). Un Liban libre (...)."245*

The bond linking the FPM members is thus at the same time a boundary, defined in opposition to the federalist project strongly associated with the Lebanese Forces – importantly, this boundary is anchored in history and memory although the Lebanese Forces no longer officially advocate federalism. The idea of a strong and powerful central state makes sense within the FPM once again against the backdrop of three experiences that ruined the authority of the national institutions: foreign influence – and its culmination in military occupation; the power of the militia during the war – prolonged after 1990 by the integration of the militia leaders into the state leadership; and the “Hariri system”, symbolizing in the eyes of the activists of the *Tayyâr* the rule of personal interest, corruption, as well as the subjugation of the national welfare by external powers – especially Saudi Arabia. This rhetoric may also echo the posture of the Christian nationalist camp when the country was confronted to the armed presence of the Palestinian organizations from/since the second half of the 1960s. It may further reflect a perception of insecurity: a social and economic insecurity due to the growing pressure of the labor market on the Lebanese youth, forcing them to emigrate in search for better working opportunities<sup>246</sup>; a more existential form of insecurity, deriving from the perception of explicit or latent conflicts between the components of a fragmented reality, emphasized by the feeling of evolving in a Muslim-dominated environment – a feeling expressed by many Christian members I met. Finally, the tropism toward a strong central state may refer to the status of the leader within the movement: an Army general, Michel Aoun is often perceived as a skilled powerful decider. It seems however important to differentiate between two levels: while the tendency of the leader to exercise a personal and, as the third section of this chapter describes, somehow authoritarian power, – can be positively evaluated as a demonstration of strength, experiences of repression by the military and security

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<sup>244</sup> Virgil, interview with the author: May 14, 2010 [in French].

<sup>245</sup> Caroline, interview with the author: October 31, 2008 [in French].

<sup>246</sup> This dimension is further developed in Chapter Four.

services during the 1990s limits adhesion to military rule. The military service – suppressed in 2005 – is for instance perceived negatively, mainly due to painful experiences:

*“[Pendant mon service] j’ai été emprisonné pour mes idées politiques...je n’avais pas commis de faute mais ils ont dit que j’étais aouniste, ils ont fait une enquête sur moi, ils m’ont questionné et j’ai été mis en prison, au ministère de la défense pendant deux jours le temps de l’enquête et puis pendant 10 jours dans le camp d’entraînement de l’armée, mais uniquement pendant la nuit, pas la journée. Le jour je faisais le service normalement et la nuit j’allais en prison.”<sup>247</sup>*

*“Le service militaire au Liban a été instauré comme outil de propagande politique...c’était un outil pour inculquer aux jeunes des principes qui à mon avis vont contre l’indépendance du Liban...c’est un outil de propagande pour calmer les jeunes et les terroriser...il n’y avait pas véritable politique de formation de cette jeunesse.”<sup>248</sup>*

Appreciation of the authority of the leader is thus mainly constructed in terms of power relations with the other partisan groups, in what surfaces as logic of confrontation. This interpretation is illustrated by the choice of historical characters mentioned as remarkable in the interviews: Charles de Gaulle, whose trajectory Aoun is said to mirror (the exile and the organization of the resistance against the occupation from abroad), Nelson Mandela, for his persistent refusal of the Apartheid regime, but also figures like Napoleon, for his military strategies and his capacities to impact History, or even Adolf Hitler. The reference to such a negative figure is always sensitive to analyze, especially outside the European context. Without undermining the inseparability between the criminal nature of the Nazi regime and the stands adopted by its leader during the 1930s and 1940s, the German leader typifies in the eyes of many FPM activists an extreme posture of rejection of decisions coming from external powers, similar to the decisions they perceive as forced on Lebanon: students value the image – largely inaccurate in a historical perspective – of Hitler refusing the “diktat” imposed at Versailles in 1918 and taking in hand its country’s destiny. They seem largely ill-at-ease when mentioning the name of the Nazi leader, always noting that they support neither his ideology nor his criminal monstrosity<sup>249</sup>. Overall, these various characters, beyond their diversity, seem to match the different phases of the

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<sup>247</sup> Michel, interview with the author: April 30, 2008 [in French].

<sup>248</sup> Bachir, interview with the author: November 16, 2007 [in French].

<sup>249</sup> This discomfort may originate in a real ambivalence in their evaluation of the character but also in the awareness of my European origins, forcing them to adopt a more cautious attitude than with fellow Lebanese – the reference to Hitler being less subjected to tabu in the Arab East than in Europe.

movement: Hitler symbolizing the refusal of the “diktat” imposed on Lebanon by external powers, de Gaulle the exile and the resistance of the leader, Mandela the endurance of repression and the prison experience that plays an important part in the interpretation of activism in the FPM.

“*This thing that unites us*” is not an ideology but a utopian Lebanon that integrates the activists into a moral horizon valuing authenticity, typified by the language style of the leader, who generally expresses himself in the vernacular language. His strong suburban accent and his frequent vulgarity, mocked in the media or among his enemies, are associated by the FPM activists with his popular anchoring and military straightforwardness, far from the hypocrisy and verbiage they relate to traditional politics:

*“Je crois qu’il est franc. Qu’il dit ce qui est dans sa tête. C’est pour cela qu’il parle à la TV, parfois son attitude n’est pas adaptée...tout le monde se demande pourquoi il était comme ça, que ce n’était pas bien. Mais c’est ça, soit tu veux quelqu’un de franc, ce qui peut avoir des points négatifs bien sûr dans la forme, soit tu veux quelqu’un qui ne fait que dans la forme. (...) Le Général est militaire...un militaire, c’est toujours comme ça, c’est direct.”<sup>250</sup>*

*“C’est quelqu’un qui vient de l’armée: ce qu’il dit en face de toi, il le dit aussi quand tu n’es pas là. C’est une personne franche, pas comme les autres politiciens. Les autres politiciens au Liban, on dit d’eux qu’ils sont des menteurs. Lui, non. Il est franc. C’est lui que nous voulons pour diriger le Liban.”<sup>251</sup>*

Adhesion to the Party evokes the attachment to genuine ideals; the rest of the political space on the contrary is perceived as corrupt or dominated by regimentation. A situation perfectly illustrated by the vision voiced about the Lebanese Forces' activists:

*“Je crois qu’il y a les gens qui sont limités à leur confession qui sont instinctivement avec lui, parce qu’ils vivent toujours dans cette peur d’être envahis et éliminés. Il y a les gens qui pensent que c’est dans leur intérêt d’être avec lui, que son arrivée au pouvoir leur bénéficierait. (...) Ses partisans sont principalement des gens effrayés et la peur affecte leur sens du juste, la raison.”<sup>252</sup>*

*“I classify them [LF supporters] under two categories. The first category is made of people that benefit or used to benefit from the LF: they got paid, they got insurances*

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<sup>250</sup> Nassim, interview with the author: December 2, 2010 [in French].

<sup>251</sup> Elie, interview with the author: March 13, 2011 [in French].

<sup>252</sup> Issam, interview with the author: December 2, 2010 [in French].

*or I don't know what. The second category is made of ignorants. If they really knew, if they really read, if they really thought, they wouldn't be with that guy.*"<sup>253</sup>

### ***Evolving in a self-referential affective horizon***

The centrality of ideals rooted in a myth sustains a universe of signification constructed from auto-referential symbolic references. The sense of belonging to a common legacy underlines affects over abstract ideas. Rejection of ideology surfaces in the reading habits of the students. Books are not a central part in their political horizon. Many of my interviewees confessed not reading at all, or reading only newspapers or novels. No specific book was systematically cited as a source of inspiration, except for the book written by Michel Aoun – his interview by a French journalist, Frédéric Domont. Other mentioned readings consisted mainly in history books, often cited without the exact title, either because translation from Arabic did not exist, or because it was not perfectly recalled. The most frequent references are the books dealing with the 1989-1990 period, like the ones by Salvatore Lombardo, Daniel Rondeau or Jean-Paul Bourre mentioned above. These books contribute to the construction of a narrative asserting the continuity of the group and its principles since its origins<sup>254</sup>. Also mentioned are the series by Karim Pakradouni, a long-standing Kata'eb official, focusing on the war period. *The art of War* of Sun Tzu is a relatively frequent reference but it does generally not entail a detailed description. A last kind of reading concerns biographies of historical characters, mainly political leaders like Bachir Gemayel, Camille Chamoun, Fuad Chehab, or Charles de Gaulle. In all cases, these readings are personal readings and not imposed by the group. Interestingly, comparable situations have been observed in other contexts. In her study of youth activism in the Italian right, Stéphanie Dechezelles (2006) highlighted a very similar case within the youth section of the *Lega Norte* – a party that advocates the independence of Padania, the Northern part of Italy. She analyzed the absence of reading among activists as a mark of a universe of signification rooted in a strong emotional identification with the group valuing ideals over ideology (p. 246-261). Like the FPM, the Lega Norte originated in a protest movement that strongly impacted the conception of the party as an open grouping that aimed at the moralization of the

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<sup>253</sup> Malek, interview with the author: October 26, 2010 [in English].

<sup>254</sup> On a FPM-related discussion forum, a contributor named Julien noted that: “*les livres de Rondeau, j'ajoute les deux derniers de Salvatore Lombardo et de Frédérick Domont, nous écrivent une histoire qui a un sens, une direction, un horizon.*” See: <http://www.oroom.org/forum/showthread.php?32236-G%E9n%E9ration-Aoun-vivre-libre-au-Liban/page2> [May 2013]

political scene (p. 247). In these conditions, knowledge is above all acquired through oral and visual sources:

*"I learned with Internet, books, documentaries or [TV] archives (...). Also with films and old newspapers to find information. And a lot of discussions. My aunt was there [in the demonstrations of 1989]. She told me a lot about it."*<sup>255</sup>

*"J'ai appris en regardant des DVD et des reportages qui parlaient de la situation politique, de la guerre, du Hezbollah, notamment sa formation au début (...). Par contre, je ne lis pas trop d'ouvrages politiques, non. (...) Aussi, je me souviens d'un documentaire sur les FL. Ça aide à comprendre comment ils ont pu convaincre par cette idée depuis Bachir Gemayel jusqu'à Samir Geagea et quelle est leur vie aujourd'hui (...)." <sup>256</sup>*

The Party itself intentionally plays a central part in the acquisition of such knowledge by producing its own documentaries:

*"Il y a le livre du Général, son livre d'entretien, Une certaine vision du Liban. Sur l'époque de 1988-90, il y a le journal al-Diyâr qui avait fait un dossier avec tous les articles écrits à l'époque tout au long de la période. J'en ai lu une grande partie, surtout sur les moments importants. Et il y a aussi les documentaires, sur le 14 Mars 1989, le 13 Octobre 1990, et même sur le 14 Mars 2005. Il y a un documentaire qui retrace les étapes entre le 14 Mars 1989 et le 14 Mars 2005. C'est une série de documentaires sur les périodes qui déterminent notre politique aujourd'hui: il y a 1988-1990, puis 1990-2005 et enfin 2005-2010. (...) Deux de ces documentaires ont été produit par l'OTV, celui du 14 mars et du 13 octobre. Il y a 2 ou 4 DVD pour chacun. Il y en a d'autres qui sont fait directement par le CPL. Peut-être il y a des sources plus indépendantes, mais ces reportages sont bien documentés, en archives sonores et vidéos. (...) Sur cette dernière période, je n'ai pas tellement besoin, je suis plus conscient de ce qui se passe, je suis les journaux au jour le jour. Il n'y a rien de politique qui m'échappe."*<sup>257</sup>

Therefore, if it is not in position to implement the program conceived by the Committee for political education, the FPM is nonetheless able to communicate a narrative about its own history, depicted in the succession of the three phases already identified in the study of the Charter. The meaning attached by the organization to these successive steps is underlined by the selection of events supposed to define the periods and their articulations: March 14, 1989, October 13, August 2001, and the

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<sup>255</sup> Safa, interview with the author: December 14, 2010 [in Arabic].

<sup>256</sup> Layla, interview with the author: March 25, 2011 [in French].

<sup>257</sup> Issam, interview with the author: May 24, 2010 [in French].



beginning of the new era opened by the 2005 “Beirut Spring” and the return of Michel Aoun. The incorporation of these various events in a same story, presented as the story of the FPM, enables to give a sense of continuity, essential in the construction of the sense of attachment to a group. This project is particularly explicit in the last documentary mentioned by Issam in which not only the signification of the various events from 1989 to 2005 are linked, but the present posture of the FPM acquires its meaning in a reinterpretation of their sequence. Its title is particularly eloquent: “*This is the whole truth*”<sup>258</sup>.

The weakness of formal education is counter-balanced by the strength of the partisan communication networks. One of the first decisions after the legalization of the FPM was the creation of an audio visual network. A TV Chanel was established in Mkalles, not far from the FPM central office of Sin el-Fil. Named *Orange TV* in reference to the color adopted by the movement, it started broadcasting on July 20, 2007. The *OTV* group also incorporates an advertising company, called *Clementine*, managed by one of the daughters of Michel Aoun. The radio station *Sawt al-Mada* completes these devices. Such a move is understandable in the Lebanese context. Most of the leading TV channels in the national landscape are related, at various levels, to political parties. This situation originates in the construction of the statelets during the reign of the militias: the creation of information networks was an important component of the control and the mobilization of the population living in the community’s territory (Picard 1994). In the Christian areas, the Lebanese Forces established in 1985 the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC), today a major independent channel. The “Civil Administration of the Mountain”, established in the Chouf by the PSP in October 1983, was associated with a radio channel, the *Sound of the Mountain (Sawt al-Jabal)*. Almost immediately after the end of the fighting, in June 1991, Hezbollah established a TV channel, *al-Manâr*. Similarly, the Future TV network, founded in 1993, belongs to the Hariris, whose political movement and newspaper bear the same name (*al-Mustaqbal* [the Future]) while NBN (*National Broadcasting Network*), officially founded in 1996, is the official channel of the Amal Movement. The fragmentation of the audio visual landscape thus echoes the partisan competition, each group offering space of for its supporters. It gives birth to an “information-mobilization” (Choueiri 2006) nourishing the cognitive construction of the partisan sub-societies. A tradition of political songs also exists in Lebanon, inspired by the cause of Arabism and the Palestinian struggle (Puig 2009, p. 167-168). According to

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<sup>258</sup> The documentary is available from *You Tube* in 5 parts. See (for the first part): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0WqxRYnUeU> [May 2013]

the students I met, the FPM established a special committee in charge of the management of cultural creation in the Party<sup>259</sup>. These self-centered cognitive spaces are articulated to the existing social networks:

*“You learn from others first. And then you watch TV, history programs, also Internet, etc. But you learn mainly from others. You learn from your parents, your friends, your family, from the society, and from TV programs also because they are very engaged in politics. (...) When a TV channel diffuses a series about a political character for example, (...) like Camille Chamoun, Pierre Gemayel (...), or Kamal Joublatt (...), I watch it.”*<sup>260</sup>

A kind of auto-referential community surfaces. Of course, it has to be relativized as FPM supporters do not watch exclusively *OTV*, far from it. The documentaries mentioned by Anis were broadcasted by the LBC. Still, the capacity of the partisan forces to integrate the sociability networks as described in the previous chapter, combined with the strength of the family heritage in political identification, generates a situation in which, although evolving together, the various groups construct their cognitive universe in an auto-referential mode. Partisan groups build concurrent regimes of truth communicated directly through relations, in the family, between friends, etc., nourished by sources of information available within the in-group. Moreover, inter-individual discussions are completed by virtual form of conversations, in particular Internet forums. The FPM offers its own discussion forum platform, “*The Orange Room*,”<sup>261</sup> in which the partisan community can debate about a wide variety of topics, from the latest news to historical issues nurturing the memory of the group. Therefore the human partisan communities are coupled with virtual ones: supporters of the FPM gather to exchange in the “*The Orange Room*” as well as at home with friends and family.

Internet sites and fora currently play the role played before by bulletins and press-releases. FPM used in particular to publish a small periodical entitled “*al-Nashra [the Bulletin]*” to communicate news, Michel Aoun’s declarations, and other information related to the movement’s cause. With the development of computers, the importance

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<sup>259</sup> Unlike Hezbollah however, the FPM do not have its own orchestra to produce songs on its own. The FPM songs result from collaboration with artists. It was especially the cases in the 1988-1990 era, when renown singers came to Baabda to “offer” their creation to the cause of the General. Jacques, interview with the author: April 30, 2008 [in French]. The “FPM songs” are available for download from FPM related websites. See: <http://www.vcoderz.com/list.php?t=1&s=5> [May 2013]

<sup>260</sup> Anis, interview with the author: May 25, 2010 [in English].

<sup>261</sup> The site also enables online visitors to play arcade games and follow football matches. See: <http://www.oroom.org/forum/activity.php?s=0c7cc0563f6032670a48905ec67579b7> [May 2013]

of *al-Nashra* decreased, even though the FPM continues to publish it<sup>262</sup>. Another magazine destined in particular to university and high-school students was created in 2005: *The Alternative*. The habitual thematics favoured by the FPM are presented in this trilingual magazine (Arabic, French, English): glorification of the Lebanese Army (see e.g. the article “*Taslam yâ ‘askar Lubnân*”<sup>263</sup>) and its “martyrs”, the memory of the Syrian presence in Lebanon (see e.g. the article “*Qânûn Ghâzî Kan ‘ân [The Law of Ghazi Kanaan – the former head of the Syrian security services in Lebanon between 1982 and 2002]*”), the memory of October 13 (see e.g. the article “*Entre le 24 avril et le 13 octobre: histoire de deux peuples déchirés*” comparing the Syrian attack on Baabda with the Armenian genocide), advocacy of secularism and national independence (see e.g. the article “*Tangible sectarianism and the clandestine occupation of Lebanon*”), debate on the conflicting interpretations of the political events (see e.g. the article “*We want the Truth...which Truth?*”), and portraits of model members (see e.g. the article “*Ziyâd Abbâs*”)<sup>264</sup>. However, the impact of this magazine seems to remain relatively limited: no students beyond those who participated in the redaction mentioned it during our interviews.

Today, the mobilization of multimedia sources emphasizes specific stories that compose the identity narrative of parties like the FPM:

*“C’était peut-être en terminale que j’ai commencé à m’intéresser à l’histoire. (...) J’ai trouvé des vidéos à la maison et j’ai commencé à faire des archives sur mon ordinateur (...). Je conserve les vidéos sur cette époque et les discours, les reportages de TV-Liban qui sont passés à la télé, sur la LBC aussi. J’ai presque systématiquement enregistré tous les reportages de TV-Liban de l’époque, c’était le Général qui dirigeait alors la TV publique (...). L’histoire dont je me souviens est que les gens avaient tous donné pour aider l’armée et le Général. On m’a raconté comment ils montaient juste pour venir donner de l’argent (...). Par amour pour l’armée et l’unité du Liban (...).”<sup>265</sup>*

As noted by Jamil, TV-Liban, the public broadcasting company, was under the control of Aoun’s government between 1988 and 1990. The context of open war, in particular with the Lebanese Forces, who at that time still controlled the LBC, deeply impacted the content of the documentaries. Extracts of these documentaries and TV

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<sup>262</sup> Some recent *al-Nashra*’s covers are available in the appendix.

<sup>263</sup> The title is borrowed from a song performed by Sabah [“Salute, soldier of Lebanon”]. See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vuesNKmWD4> [May 2013]

<sup>264</sup> An outline of issue no. 2, vol. 1, April-May 2006, including a selection of articles, is available in the appendix.

<sup>265</sup> Jamil, interview with the author: December 1, 2010 [in French].

reportages are accessible on the Internet, directly on sites like *You Tube*, or in specific section of the Party's own web pages. They popularize the heroic story of Michel Aoun. Yet, concurrent "truths" exist as documentaries or books, mainly produced and published by FPM's rivals, construct alternative versions of the story. It is the case of an anonymous book entitled *Aoun, the double face of a trajectory* [*Aoun, le double visage d'un parcours*] published by the *Centre Libanais d'Information* (CLI), officially founded in December 1975 but which started its work after the Cairo Agreement. The small book, sold for 2000 Lebanese Pounds (less than one Euro) intends to "investigate the contradictions of Michel Aoun". It rather highlights his "felony" (p. 22) revealed by his adhesion to the "Syrian Iranian axis" (p. 3), under "the pretext of fighting corruption" (p. 16)<sup>266</sup>. Soon after, "*the Aoun Project, 1988-2009*"<sup>267</sup>, produced by a company named *Zemma & Lemma Films*, presented a negative counter-type of the Heroic tale elaborated by the FPM. The one hour and fifteen minutes long film was directly diffused on the Internet platform *You Tube* a few weeks before the 2009 Parliamentary elections and described Michel Aoun as "a traitor", denouncing his "suicidal" Liberation and Elimination wars. These examples typify the construction of mutually exclusive narratives about the past, at the heart of the processes of partisan identification.

*"(...) In 2005, I was around 15, General Aoun came back from France and Samir Geagea went out of prison. I was following the political situation 24/7, always reading, watching the news, especially on the Internet on tayar.org or lebaneseforces.com, etc. So I started to look logically who is right and who speaks truthfully. I realized the FPM was more transparent party, with nothing hidden (...). I was an anti-Hariri, anti-Future Movement, as a Christian because in Beirut the rights of the Christians were neglected. (...) So this also made me support the FPM. From that time, I started to look back at history, the end of the war and the conflict between Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea. You could see that General Michel Aoun was, after the death of Bachir Gemayel, the only leader who fought the Syrians. You can see it. Although he occasionally helped Michel Aoun, Samir Geagea never at any time fought directly against the Syrians."*<sup>268</sup>

This statement came as my interview with Fouad started. The young man, then vice-president of the *Freedom Club* in AUB, introduced thereby his encounter with the

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<sup>266</sup> Interestingly, the cover bears the logo of the BCCN, the mobilization unit of Aoun's government in 1989, which encourage thinking about the work of a former collaborator the General.

<sup>267</sup> The documentary is available from *You Tube* in 16 parts. See (for the first part): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzhpmLz1Hdo> [May 2013]

<sup>268</sup> Fouad, interview with the author: May 24, 2010 [in English].

Party. The quotation opens with the expression of a political frustration: the absence of the main Christian leader from the political arena. Beyond the attempt at rationalizing on can notice in his claim to have seen “*logically who is right*”, the extract displays a strong attachment articulated to a sense of political and religious belonging. Fouad’s father, as he explained in the interview, had been a Lebanese Forces fighter at the beginning of the 1975-1990 wars before supporting Michel Aoun. The implicit initial alternative between the FPM and the Lebanese Forces, surfacing in the name of the websites, attests the positioning of the self within the field of Christian politics. The acquisition of knowledge described at the beginning thus gives progressively ground to an *a priori* identification. The image of Michel Aoun as the sole opponent to the Syrians is not only a distorted vision of the situation, framed by the FPM identity narrative, but it also anchors the definition of the sense of attachment in the memory of the past: the reference to the occasional help provided by Samir Geagea clearly situates the affirmation in the exclusive context of the Liberation War. Fouad explains that he joined the FPM today because Michel Aoun fought against the Syrian army in 1989. Perception of the past acts as a key interpretative filter to justify present identification. Accumulation of knowledge starts from the consciousness of a specific inherited position in the Lebanese social structure, leading to a group-centered construction of reality that excludes alternative perceptions.

Medias and human inter-relations compensate the failure of the educational program. Instead of formal conferences – themselves often focusing on ideals rather than constituting a structured ideology – the intellectual education is realized through the immersion into a community of representation: a human group using shared references to interpret the past, the present, and the future.

## **B) The value of experience: in-group practices and interpretative models**

The knowledge informing the interpretation of the situations is not only intellectual and abstract. As Giddens notes (1984, p. 4): “The mutual knowledge incorporated in encounters is not directly accessible to the consciousness of actors. Most such knowledge is practical in character: it is inherent in the capability to ‘go on’ within the routines of social life. The line between discursive and practical consciousness is fluctuating and permeable, both in the experience of the individual agent and as regards comparisons between actors in different contexts of social activity.” The routine practices shared in the group set the understanding of reality as the partisan collectivity builds it. The incorporation of knowledge in practical activities is all the more acute since the FPM student groups’ norms particularly value field experience.

Throughout the opening months of my fieldwork, one of my main objectives was to identify the socialization devices deployed by the organization. I systematically questioned the members of the FPM Committee of Student Affairs on that particular issue so as to be able to map the educational practices as precisely as possible. Marc, already cited above, was my first official contact. He depicted the existing devices as follow:

*“Nous avons au CPL ce qu’on appelle ‘l’Ecole des Cadres’. Pendant les périodes de clandestinité, les Ecoles des Cadres étaient beaucoup plus des cours historiques, sur l’histoire du Général car son histoire a été souvent...il y a eu une très grande désinformation sur son histoire pendant la période syrienne...alors on faisait les Ecoles des Cadres, donc des conférences pour montrer aux jeunes en fin de compte quelle était la réalité, les faits. Puis, avec le temps, nous avons commencé à monter des Ecoles des Cadres d’organisation, de leadership, de psychologie du management: comment être leader.”<sup>269</sup>*

His answer suggested that the legalization of the movement generated a transformation of the process of the political socialization of the members. He then mentioned the educational program that BH would later present to me, adding that the project included an exam as a means of evaluation of the members. Intrigued about this last precision, I asked for more details during my next interview with a member of the Committee of Student Affairs, Alain one week later. His reaction proved illuminating:

*“Je n’ai aucune idée à propos de ça...et je trouve ça même aberrant. Bon Marc, c’est quelqu’un avec qui on était dans la même université, on travaille ensemble depuis pas mal d’années et il a toujours eu cette proposition. Je ne sais pas s’il l’a appliquée quelque part (...) mais je trouve ça impossible, parce que pratiquement, la vie d’un parti, ce n’est pas un cours de maths (...). Je préfère qu’on ait une formation avec les gens et qu’on ait un suivi personnel pour les gens qui sont responsables...on peut leur faire une évaluation hebdomadaire par exemple lors de la réunion, une évaluation de leur façon de travailler, de leur approche...mais c’est vraiment absurde de faire un examen pour les militants, c’est comme si on leur disait que ‘moi je te juge parce que je connais plus que toi’. Mais qui es-tu pour m’évaluer? Moi, je ne crois pas dans ce point-là...je suis plus pour bâtir une relation avec les responsables, bâtir une relation avec les militants. (...) Pour moi non, les lignes directrices, les gens qui veulent travailler, ils doivent les avoir, c’est un minimum. Mais si je suis en contact avec quelqu’un que je vois chaque semaine (...) dans les universités, si moi je ne suis pas capable de savoir tout seul s’il a les lignes*

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<sup>269</sup> Marc, interview with the author: October 31, 2007 [in French].

*directrices, c'est qu'il y a un problème. C'est que quelqu'un dans cette chaîne ne fait pas son travail...et c'est beaucoup plus efficace et beaucoup moins insultant pour les gens...parce que, imaginez, on se rend compte que quelqu'un n'a pas les lignes directrices, qu'est-ce qu'on fait de lui? (...) On les exclut en faisant un problème grave? Non, je les exclus dans ma relation directe avec eux, je préfère cette solution."*<sup>270</sup>

The exposition of the distinction between an intellectual and a practical conception of political education reveals a conflict of legitimacy. Alain rejects the evaluation of knowledge because it would question his own ability to supervise the student groups' members. Referring to his experience, he refuses to see his field of competence hampered by the introduction of abstract knowledge and claims that concrete interactions within the group constitute a more efficient mode of framing activism. In the first years following the legalization of the Party, most of the members of the FPM Committee of the Student Affairs were logically former field activists, trained in the context of the civil protests organized by the movement and of the repression of the security forces. Their experience therefore tended to highlight a mode of legitimacy centered on action, rather than intellectual competencies. This may explain partly the difficulties encountered by the FPM in its attempt to institutionalize political education in its student branch. For years, the FPM semi-clandestine situation had prevented any officialization of enrolment, thus strengthening the practical definition of membership within the group:

*"Nous n'avons pas de carte de partisan ou on ne doit prêter serment. Nous n'avons pas cela. Une personne est active parce qu'elle veut être active. On ne reçoit pas de salaire ni rien. Moi, je suis une de ces personnes. Parce que je crois."*<sup>271</sup>

The cognitive dimension of interpretation is thus inseparable from the performance of an activist. This practical dimension outlines normative behaviors attached to the position enacted by the youth engaged in FPM's collective actions. The FPM group style – i.e. routinized modes of interaction – is thus produced by a joint construction articulating the cognitive schemes associated to the idealistic model of activist spread among members and the concrete networks activated and mobilizations implemented by the group. The conjunction between both elements composes the practical education and designs how the FPM community is constructed and actualized in

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<sup>270</sup> Alain, interview with the author: November 7, 2007 [in French].

<sup>271</sup> Farid, interview with the author. November 9, 2007 [in French]. The original statement was in French: *"Nous n'avons pas de carte de partisan ou on ne doit prêter serment. Nous n'avons pas cela. Une personne est active parce qu'elle veut être active. On ne reçoit pas de salaire ni rien. Moi, je suis une de ces personnes. Parce que je crois."*

collective action. This construction was deeply influenced by the experience of activism during the years 1990-2005. The constitutive body of the Party, established during the summer 2005 to prepare its legalization, found its legitimacy in activism. Its 160 members were described as “*the people on whom our struggle relied between 1990 and 2005.*”<sup>272</sup>.

### ***The conception of a model***

While the FPM Charter aims at introducing the principles and objectives of the Party, a code of ethics, dated from July 3, 2007, focuses on the performative message of activism. It presents an ensemble of norms and values that completes the construction of the universe of signification of the FPM. On these bases, it proposes patterns of conduct and the moral evaluation attached to them, thus sketching the models for framing the interpretation of the activists' position. The document can hence be considered a narrative about the ideal incarnation of the affiliated member. As such it discloses the social experiences as well as the power relations that impacted its elaboration. Entitled “The message of the Free Patriotic Movement [*Risâlat al-Tayyâr*]”, it states<sup>273</sup>:

*“The FPM is looking forward to build a free and independent Lebanese state opened to the Arab world and interacting with it. It advocates the Rule of Law within a secular and democratic state, the rights of the individual which, whether male or female, constitute a value in himself, and defined on the basis of the content of rights, freedom and dignity, regardless of what may vary in his other kinds of affiliations, in particular sectarian, and free of all dependencies (...), both internal and external.*

*The FPM is aware that the most important causes that led the public opinion to support it during the battle of liberation were its commitment to justice, (...) sovereignty, and (...) morality pillars (...) [of its members]: their national and moral principles, their bravery in front of risks and challenges, their dedication in defending the right word and deed, their respect for each other and their solidarity with one another (...) as well as their ability to cope with all this (...) with integrity and cleanliness (...) in giving priority to public interest (...) without pursuing their personal interests. It also is aware that its ability to continue to attract public support (...) in its struggle for the goals embodied by its message, will determine the*

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<sup>272</sup> Adonis Aqra, interview with the author: December 15, 2010 [in French].

<sup>273</sup> The translation presented here is mine. The original document (in Arabic) is available in the appendix.



*survival of its family, officials and activists together, and the continuity of its objectives.*

*The members of the movement, committed to look for the support of public opinion in pursuit of the objectives referred to, whose determination is matched (...) only by their attachment to their heritage, of which they take pride, (...) declare with the adoption (...) of this anchor (...) to adjust their behavior towards each other and towards others. They are ready, everyone of them, whether in a leadership position or in the position of [simple] activist, to do what they can to embrace the following values as a base in the life of the Party, and to translate them into acts (...).*

*Those affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement (...) always strive for excellence and values of the following behaviors:*

*- In uprightness*

*Avoid gossip, the use of improper expressions, and devious methods in dealing with others.*

*Acquire possessions cleanly, in full transparency and integrity, and seek to combat corruption.*

*Accept accounting willingly.*

*Adhere to the living conscience and sense of duty.*

*Refrain from looking for the power in itself and from using it for personal purposes.*

*Speak the truth and testify of it.*

*- In commitment*

*Perform one's duties seriously, focus on the Party, and refrain from bullying and committing abuse.*

*Manifest solidarity with the comrades, and defend them (...).*

*Abide by the party decisions and work to implement them immediately with sincerity.*

*Keep calm and restraint in all cases.*

*Respect the partisan structures vertically and horizontally, and abide by the Charter and the regulations of the movement.*

*Seek to spread the spirit of brotherhood and promote trust, to put aside the differences, jealousy, and envy within the movement.*

*Voluntarily participate in the activities of the movement (...), and contribute to meet its needs and to disseminate its principles.*

*Raise the interests of the movement over one's own interests.*

*Respect the promises and be committed voluntarily (...).*

*- In fairness*

*Behave toward the others as much as one wishes others to behave towards him. (...)*

*Work with the principle of equality, and encourage honest democratic competition.*

*Estimate the people's sacrifices and efforts, and refrain from distorting their image for any reason.*

*- In openness*

*Avoid prejudices.*

*Deal flexibly with others and realistically.*

*Accept the other, and respect the right to dissent.*

*Search for knowledge and expertise.*

*Believe in constructive criticism as a way to improve performance.*

*Listen to others' interest and favor understanding (...)*

*Maintain the spirit of fun away from degrading [humor].*

*- In detachment*

*Bear responsibility for all error or omission.*

*Accept the results of the democratic competitions with fair-play.*

*Honor the positions and raise public interest over private interests.*

*Accept that political work aims at serving the public and not (...) private benefits.*

*Resist the temptations of all kinds.*

*Live in humility and respect for the relationship with the other and be content to work without public recognition when needed.*

*- In courage*

*Initiate actions with courage and responsibility without recklessness.*

*(...)Persevere in front of obstacles and endure the difficulties with determination.*

*Bravely defend [what] needs to be courageously protected*

*Dare to take decisions in difficult situations.*

*Boldly present one's ideas and discuss everything that might be confused in one's understanding.*

*Develop a sense of critical discussion and constructive criticism practiced towards oneself and others. (...)"*

The Code covers behavioral templates intended for organizing the internal life of the Party. The six core values put forward are declined in very concrete situations to propose the framework for interactions between members and define the ideal-type of the FPM activist. The Code, emerging from a specific experience, exemplifies the master narrative, i.e. the dominant definition that imposes the canons in use within the group to understand and perform activism. Largely inspired by field activists like BH, the main contributor to the text, the Code has, according to my hypothesis, two complementary objectives: in front of the out-group, it reminds the 1990-2005 fight thus asserting the superiority of the FPM over the rest of the political forces, accused of having hijacked the March 14 movement; internally, it intends to establish the supremacy of the former field activists over the newcomers. The Code can thus be interpreted as a response to the perception of a double threat over the legitimacy of the activists – their legitimacy in their fight against the Syrian presence, adopted after 2005 by most of the political parties, and in their primacy over the more recent FPM members.

Besides responding to ethical concerns, the promulgation of the Code was therefore also intent to deal with an internal cleavage. The legalization of the Party and the

return of Michel Aoun led to a massive inflow of adherents and officials who led their career in France in the surrounding the General. A division consequently surfaced between those members and the core nucleus of activists who were leading the movement in Lebanon. The latter saw the former as opportunists, in search of high-ranking positions in the new organization, and taking advantage of their struggle (Abirached 2012, p. 50). The Code may be seen as an attempt by the “field” activists to reaffirm their supremacy over the officials having worked with Aoun in France. It was the expression of an internal tension that would appear in full light a few years later, in the spring 2010. Knowledge always incorporates power relations: the definition of the ideal-type of the activist establishes the legitimacy of specific actors intending to organize the internal economy of the group.

### ***An inspirational story***

The Code relies on a storyline rooted in the successive struggles waged by the movement. Already, the introduction of the Charter noted: “With pioneering, humanistic, and brave conduct, the FPM opposed the occupation of Lebanon domestically and internationally and presented many sacrifices while defending its freedom, sovereignty, independence, and the dignity of its people.” The description contained in the Code echoes this rhetoric and sustains an activist ethos rooted at the same time in the 1989-1990 episode – in particular the engagement in the wake of the Liberation War of thousands of “*Ânsâr al-Jaîsh* [the supporters of the Army]” to assist the Army with logistic tasks (Davie 1991, p. 153) – and in the experience of repression between 1990 and 2005, which also nurtured a glorious story of sacrifice. The documents published by the Party contribute to the communication of this storyline. Models of heroic activists are emphasized. The story of “Rami”, a student originated from the North tortured by the security services, was for instance detailed in a FPM report centered on the student civil movement between 1990 and 2005<sup>274</sup>. The document, praising the “sacrifices and perseverance for a Free Lebanon”, claims 16,000 arrests among FPM activists since 1990. Like other stories, the FPM narrative has its heroes: anonymous heroes, immortalized in the imaginary of the group through photographs, like this young woman trying to protect her brother during the repression of the demonstration of August 9, 2001, or heroes incarnated in real-life people, such as Tony Orian, “known for the number of times he had been in prison after he participated in anti-Syrian protests and, above all, for the hunger-strike he started in

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<sup>274</sup>See:[http://rplfrance.org/documents/2003-0321\\_Etudiants%20CPL%20-%20Manifs%20&%20Actions%20\(FR\).pdf](http://rplfrance.org/documents/2003-0321_Etudiants%20CPL%20-%20Manifs%20&%20Actions%20(FR).pdf), p. 3 [May 2013]

[the prison of] Roumieh after his arrest on August 7, 2001. (...) [He] is the prototype of the activist in his faith and in his engagement. A hard-liner who was only sixteen when he was thrown in jail for the first time (...)”<sup>275</sup>.

Echoing the model, the experience of incarceration plays a central part for the activists in the representation of their own trajectory. Students who underwent imprisonment often detailed the number of times they had been arrested, the circumstances and the length of their captivity. During the time-line interviews, both Marc and Elza wrote down the date of their first arrest<sup>276</sup> which seems to work as a ritual of initiation marking the line between “genuine” activists, i.e. those whose career matches the ideal-type in use within the group, and the rest. Imprisonment denotes a shared experience of activism, pivotal in the sense of community within the FPM. However, the number of activists' arrests strongly declined after the culmination of August 2001. The role played by incarceration in the construction of a practical model of activism has consequently been more and more filled by another high-point: the participation in demonstration and the confrontation with the security forces.

*“Je me rappelle du 14 mars 2004 (...) on est descendu à une manifestation au centre-ville (...) arrivant en bas, c’était tout cool, (...) on faisait une manifestation pacifique. Mais à un moment donné, ils ont commencé à nous attaquer avec les tuyaux d’eau et tout ça...je me souviens que personne ne pouvait faire face à eux, parce qu’ils étaient beaucoup plus nombreux et avaient réussi à nous encerclés. Sûrement voulaient-ils nous faire du mal et pas simplement nous empêcher d’être ici, vraiment nous blesser”<sup>277</sup>*

The story works at several levels to stage the model of righteous activism. A first obvious opposition is constructed between peaceful demonstrators and the security forces although the outcome of the showdown proved minimal – a cellphone broken. But the narrative further designates the Lebanese Forces, which shared with the FPM its semi-clandestine status and its opposition to the Syrian tutelage over Lebanon, as inferior in their practice of activism: the LF demonstrators are not only presented as followers of the FPM – they “*had joined us*” – but they are also said to have feared to openly support the United Nations resolution 1559. The FPM activists, on the contrary, are depicted as expressing their full commitment to their cause in accordance with their code of conduct. These representations of the activist generated among FPM

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<sup>275</sup> This portrait was published in an article entitled “Tony Orian: le parcours d’un combattant”, in the newspaper *L’Orient le Jour*: October 13, 2005.

<sup>276</sup> The time lines they drew are available in the appendix.

<sup>277</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: November 14, 2007 [in French].

students a sense of belonging to an avant-garde, all the more acute since their struggle against the Syrian presence in Lebanon finally reached its objective during the spring 2005. Many expressed the conviction of belonging to an elite, even compared to the FPM followers who did not engage in mobilization:

*“Mes frères sont engagés dans le sens où ils appuient la cause à la libanaise, dans les salons, ils ne sont pas engagés sur le terrain. Si vous voulez, ils sont des sympathisants...”*

*- comment voient-ils ton engagement?*

*Avec beaucoup d'estime, du fait qu'être militant est aussi un sacrifice, quelque part, on rêve d'autre chose...”<sup>278</sup>*

The distinction additionally operates against the members of the rival political groups, in particular those accused by the FPM to have hijacked their role in the anti-Syrian demonstration held on March 14. The frustration of FPM activists coming from their exclusion of the March 14 coalition once the departure of the Syrian troops acted, has fueled a feeling of having been robbed of their political victory. In front of this failure, the affirmation of a moral superiority over their opponents works as a catharsis and inspired the redaction of the Code of ethics. A situation illustrated by another quotation from my encounter with Marc:

*“J’ai été arrêté maintes fois...humilié si tu veux par les services [de renseignement]. Ce qui fait rire c’est que j’ai été humilié par un officier qui aujourd’hui se considère comme un héros de la libération contre le Syrie. Cet officier, je l’ai rencontré depuis (...) et il m’a dit: 'tu te rappelles, c’est dommage qu’aujourd’hui tu sois devenu syrien'. Je l’ai regardé et je lui ai dit: 'quand il fallait des hommes pour être contre la Syrie, tu n’étais qu’un collaborateur, aujourd’hui que la Syrie a quitté [le Liban], qu’il faut de nouveau des hommes pour se réconcilier avec elle, tu collabores avec quelqu’un d’autre’. Imaginez-vous qu’en France Pétain soit resté au pouvoir après la guerre? Est-ce concevable pour un Français?”<sup>279</sup>*

Marc’s story about his encounter with a security officer has a double purpose echoing the motives that presided to the redaction of the Code. First, it reaffirms the moral ascendancy of the FPM members over the rest of the society. Second, it tends to justify the evolution of the Party, which rapidly mended fences with the Syrian regime after 2005. Marc’s account positions the FPM turn in the same moral posture than their past rejection of the Syrian presence. The question is not to be for or against Syria, but

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<sup>278</sup> Marc, interview with the author: October 31, 2007 [in French].

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

to demonstrate moral virtue and act positively for the country. This sense of superiority is also manifested in considerations not directly related to politics. The interpretation of the activist's model, *in fine*, represents a definition of the individual as such:

*“En plus, il faut savoir qu’on était toujours sous pression. Moi, par exemple, j’ai passé mon dernier examen de licence alors que j’ai été malade pendant treize jours parce que j’avais été en prison et j’ai eu plusieurs problèmes de santé (...). Mais j’ai pu passer mon examen et j’ai eu ma licence malgré tout parce que, c’est bizarre mais c’est comme ça, les étudiants du CPL ont été en majorité des étudiants brillants....c’est la crème, c’est vrai.”<sup>280</sup>*

### ***A failed implementation***

To implement this ethics, the idea imagined by BH and later developed by the Committee for political education was to benefit from the professional competencies of FPM supporters to train the future members. The Party intended to form its own trainers in order to be able to progressively teach the partisan collectivity on a large scale. The first step thus consisted in recruiting volunteers who aspired to become themselves trainers. One hundred and twenty applications were submitted. Around fifty people were selected for the opening session, from various professional backgrounds: lawyers, managers, engineers, etc. The initial training sessions were planned months before the return of Michel Aoun from exile. A cycle started in January 2005, originally for three months, which had to be stopped after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. The session started again in the beginning of 2006. The session was opened by a Marc Asmar, the manager of an enterprise specialized in the training of senior bank or firm employees<sup>281</sup>. The training cycle included sixty hours of teaching, divided into eight themes that the successful volunteers would have to present in turn in the regions for the adherent of the Party: “The character of the activist; [how to] create a common language” (3 hours); “The group: its configuration, its essence, its viability, the causes of its creation”; “belonging” (6 hours); “Acting within the group: the mechanism of decision making, the communication within the group, the organization of a meeting and its management, discussion management, the conflict and its management, how to enhance the mobilization within the group” (15 hours); “Mobilization” (6 hours); “Communicating with the Other” (3 hours); “Membership” (9 hours); “Peaceful protests: their types, objectives, and the means to

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<sup>280</sup> Paul, interview with the author: November 21, 2007 [in French].

<sup>281</sup> Sources: BH, interview with the author: April 27, 2008 [in French]; completed by Bassiouni 2006, p. 83.

organize them” (3 hours); “Planning” (5)<sup>282</sup>. The participants were evaluated on the basis of a presentation in a workshop then divided into three groups: those able to train the FPM members in the regions (6 people), those who had to improve their skills (40 people), and a last group that would be rejected (4 people).

Again, the ambitious objectives of behavioral training could not be fulfilled. Training for students – designated as an “*Ecole des cadres*” – has therefore to rely on the resources of the FPM Committee of Student Affairs. It consists in workshops and training sessions, most of which are scheduled during the summer months. Camps lasting between two and three days are organized every year for the elite members of the FPM student groups. The organization of such summer gatherings already existed since the late 1990s. According to Bachir, coordinator of the Student Affairs between 2002 and 2005, they were most often organized in the regions of Jbeil and Kesrwan, the heartland of the Christian populated areas in which the Syrian presence remained minimal. Those camps were generally hosted in convents, such places being difficult to enter for the security services. They rallied between fifty and one hundred participants who paid between 10,000 and 20,000 Lebanese Pounds (5 to 10 Euros) so as to contribute to the funding of the camp – mainly the rent of the premises<sup>283</sup>. A notable incident occurred during one of these events, in 2000. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, the Lebanese Army raided a camp in Bejjeh, in the mountains above Jbeil. The FPM activists were in the middle of a meeting with PSP students when they were forced to dismantle their tents and leave the camp<sup>284</sup>.

In 2006, the first summer camp in the post-Syrian era was settled in Harissa, a pilgrimage site, accessible from the coastal city of Jounieh during a week-end. It gathered around seventy students who benefited from “technical training”:

*“Le premier soir deux [personnes sont venues nous parler], ensuite quatre le dimanche. Il y avait des politiciens, dont Pierre Raffoul [et] Gebran Bassil [son-in-law of the leader]. Les autres étaient politiquement avec le CPL mais ils sont venus nous parler de choses techniques: comment parler, comment bien articuler, quoi faire avec ses mains quand on parle, (...) comme ne pas mettre les mains dans les poches pour parler. (...) Le camp s'appelle « camp de formation », c'est pour se former parce que n'importe qui dans le CPL peut devenir un cadre. Ce n'est pas qu'il*

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<sup>282</sup> Sources: mainly Bassiouni 2006, p. 84; completed by BH, interview with the author: April 27, 2008 [in French].

<sup>283</sup> Bachir, interview with the author: November 16, 2007 [in French].

<sup>284</sup> Michel, interview with the author: April 30, 2008 [in French]. The incident is also mentioned in the RPL report on student activism between 1990 and 2005. See: [http://rplfrance.org/documents/2003-0321\\_Etudiants%20CPL%20-%20Manifs%20&%20Actions%20\(FR\).pdf](http://rplfrance.org/documents/2003-0321_Etudiants%20CPL%20-%20Manifs%20&%20Actions%20(FR).pdf) p. 7 [May 2013]

*y a un clan familial. (...) En plus, on est des étudiants à l'université donc on a l'occasion de parler à la presse parce que chaque année pendant la semaine des élections universitaires, (...) il y a des journalistes qui rentrent à la fac et nous posent des questions. Donc ce camp nous a préparés pour savoir comment parler et quoi dire.”<sup>285</sup>*

Due to the inability of the Party to educate enough trainers, the Student Affairs Committee had to call independent professionals to train the students. This was not without causing some trouble. For example, during a camp held in the summer 2009 near the city of Batroun, the students, unsatisfied with the content of the sessions, entered in a dispute with the organizers:

*“L'an dernier c'était à Batroun, un camp de formation pour tous les coordinateurs de faculté dans toutes les universités [privées] de Beyrouth: USJ, AUB, LAU et Université Antonine. Et donc c'est là que Gebran Bassil est venu. (...) Il a parlé de la politique en général et on lui a posé des questions. Il y avait aussi des professionnels qui nous enseignaient comment parler en public, comment travailler, etc. C'était pour trois jours mais on a quitté au bout de deux jours, car il y a eu un conflit entre nous et les organisateurs du camp.*

*- Pourquoi?*

*Tu sais nous les Libanais, on ne peut jamais être d'accord! Les organisateurs n'étaient pas contents...ils n'étaient pas du Tayyâr, c'étaient des professionnels [de la communication] qui ont une compagnie, mais nous n'étions pas satisfaits. C'est une expérience que nous ne referons plus.”<sup>286</sup>*

An important feature is that these camps are organized for the coordinators of the different faculties in turn from the LU or the private universities, thus reserved for the “elite” of student activists. The aim is to educate a minority that would in turn frame the activities of the groups in their respective establishments. They play the role of expert technicians operating the university activities: elections, organization of lectures and social events, finding sponsorship for happenings, etc. The yearly training of a minority of ten to fifteen people in a university like USJ or AUB is sufficient to run the whole group as the rapid succession of students – staying between three and five years at most in their university – necessitates a regular actualization of the leadership. A continuous chain of people are thus trained, some of whom would re-invest their knowledge and know-how in the local sections of the Party. The system confirms the hypothesis that attachment to the party mainly results from identification: the mass of

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<sup>285</sup> Emile, interview with the author: November 12, 2007 [in French].

<sup>286</sup> Tino, interview with the author: May 21, 2010 [in French].



the students occasionally participating in FPM activities or simply defining themselves as FPM supporters does not need specific education to maintain its sense of belonging but rather relies on a core of activists able to organize the events that enable them to activate their identification.

The loose character of the “Ecole des cadres” necessitates searching for alternative modalities of practical training for members. As was the case of intellectual formation, the gap in the partisan education is filled by practices highlighting inter-personal sociabilities and emphasizing a distinctive identity narrative.

### ***Student practices: experience and sociability as alternative foundations***

The minority elite are primarily formed through the acquisition of practical experience in the daily activities of the student groups. Evolution within the hierarchy of the group is globally linked to the progression in the university curriculum. The first year in the university is usually the occasion to participate – sometimes quite marginally – in the student elections. For the most active, the experience accumulated during a first campaign enables to play a more important role in the second year before being designate coordinator in a faculty, generally at the end of the second year. Most of the students with responsibilities I met followed such trajectory highlighting their involvement. This practice echoes the lack of intellectual or ideological references: abstract knowledge is not a source of promotion as can be the case in the Lebanese Communist Party for instance, in which mastering Marx’s writings and thought favors the ascension within the group. Karam, coordinator of the Party in AUB during two years, illustrates this aspect:

*“Maintenant, je suis en quatrième année. La première année, j'étais passif. C'est-à-dire que pendant les élections j'ai voté sans rien dire à personne, dans mon coin. Il y avait encore mes parents, l'autorité, ils avaient engagé pour mes études. Donc je devais un peu rester à distance. Mais une fois que j'ai vu comment les autres travaillaient dans les élections, c'est-à-dire à mon avis très mal, je me suis dit qu'il y a un message que je veux donner, quelque chose que je peux faire. Donc le lendemain des élections, j'ai décidé que l'année suivante, j'allais m'engager. J'ai commencé à fréquenter les jeunes du Tayyâr ici, à les connaître mieux, et puis je me suis engagé et décidé de me présenter aux élections. (...) Donc aux élections de deuxième année (...) j'ai pu être élu président de la faculté. (...) L'année suivante, je ne me suis pas présenté aux élections, mais on a gagné trois postes sur quatre. Cette année je me suis présenté de nouveau et j'ai encore gagné. Je suis maintenant membre de l'USFC, le conseil des étudiants de l'université. (...) Parce qu'après que j'ai été président de ma faculté, je suis aussi devenu responsable du Tayyâr à l'AUB.*

*(...) C'était donc en 3ème année. Donc ils avaient confiance en moi, j'avais confiance en eux, ça a bien marché.*"<sup>287</sup>

The progressive acquisition of competences illustrates the parallel between the socialization of the members – the acquisition of the mutual trust mentioned by Karam – and the process of politicization. The value of experience implies the progressive acquisition of knowledge and status: adhesion thus works as a form of cognitive mobility, characteristic of secondary socialization. Engagement often increases along with the growing familiarity with the group. Concrete participation in events such as the student elections and interactions between members construct at the same time the conviction of the individuals and their gathering around a common project. This mode of reproduction of the student leadership ensures the maintenance of relatively homogeneous modes of mobilization and action, specific to the university spaces and, as I presented throughout the first part, relatively similar between the various partisan groups. Anis, another AUB student, perfectly summarized the situation when asked about the political education he had received: *“University is our formation!”*<sup>288</sup> Training is consequently conceived as *“sharing experience”*<sup>289</sup>, working on a genealogical model, new comers progressively taking over from the elder<sup>290</sup>, mirroring the construction of a communal relation (Weber 1978 [1922], p. 40). Politicization originates from concrete interactions (Hamidi 2006) in the university settings and strongly relies on social ties existing between members. These bonds sustain a high degree of esteem for the predecessors, as Karam underlined:

*“How did I learn [how to do politics in the university]? I was here one whole year before getting really involved. So I went to the meetings and look[ed] how they were doing things. I was also looking at what students are interested in, what do they want, what are they asking for (...). You have to learn from the others. You know Mario [head of the FPM Student Affairs]? Mario influenced me a lot. You have to learn from them. You just look at them, what are they talking about, how they talk, why they say this, why they say that. (...)”*<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Karam, interview with the author: May 15, 2010 [in French].

<sup>288</sup> Anis, interview with the author: May 25, 2010 [in English].

<sup>289</sup> Assaf, interview with the author: May 22, 2010 [in English].

<sup>290</sup> The same mode of management exists at the level of the Committee of the Student Affairs. The general coordinator generally stayed for three or four years before being replaced. Three people have successively occupied the position since the legalization of the Party: Fadi Hana (between 2005 and 2009), Mario Chamoun (2009-2012), and Antun Souaid (from 2013). The latter had been active in the Committee for years before being appointed.

<sup>291</sup> Karam, interview with the author: May 15, 2010 [in English].

The Party thus takes advantage of the social networks existing in the university. It has integrated them to ensure the transition between the successive waves of students. The coordinators of the FPM in every university are sources of inspiration. They convey ways of managing the group and its activities in the territory of the university, as well as the signification attached to them. They are also in a position to identify those among the active participants who are the most likely to reproduce their practices and communicate them to the rest of the activists. Thereby the group is able to maintain and reinforce its institutions, the habitualized ways of implementing activities and interacting with the student in university settings<sup>292</sup>.

Theoretically, the leaders of the student groups in the various universities – called coordinators – are to be elected by the members of the local groups. However, the members of the Committee of the Student Affairs supervising their activities tend to promote a specific profile. Themselves former university activists, they define normative models and practices they wish their successors to perpetuate. Consequently, they influence as much as they can the choice of the coordinators in the various universities. In practice, the coordinators are either directly named by the Committee of the Student Affairs, or, more frequently, chosen by a small group of activists from the university, generally the most active students of the various faculties composing the university in question. Having themselves been selected for the consistence of their engagement and ability to reproduce the techniques used by their predecessors – translated and valued as “experience” – the members of these limited assemblies tend to select someone with the same profile. This person often benefits from a position of moral authority, either because he or she was already the coordinator during the previous year, or because he or she is recognized for his/her mastery of the interpretation of the model of the activist. For example, Malek, coordinator in AUB during the last phases of my fieldwork, depicted his confirmation as the FPM leader in the university as follows:

*“Now, I am the one in charge of AUB, knowing that I didn't ask to be. When the representatives of all the faculties met [to name the coordinator of the university], I proposed someone. I thought they would follow that because there were only two candidates. And I left the room. I didn't want to be a fourth year student telling what to do. I wanted them to choose. (...) When [I] came back, they told me that they had chosen me. I didn't want at first but I accepted because there was tension*

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<sup>292</sup> See Part One.

*between the two candidates. Now, I think that this is a good thing that I accepted because I have many ideas (...)*<sup>293</sup>

His account illustrates at the same time the influence he manifestly already exercised on the rest of the group and his ability to present himself in accordance with the ideal-type of the activist: his story stages him as taking initiatives and responsibilities without having been in search of personal glory, hence typifying the virtue of detachment asserted in the Code of Ethics.

The insistence on experience further relates to the range of the habitual activities within the student groups: most of them are university-centered. The social activities detailed in Chapter one constitute, along with university elections, the quasi-totality of the mobilization of activists. The social activities organized by the activists ensure the presence of the FPM in the lived space and strengthen the existence of the networks on which the Party relies to recruit. They enable the existence of parallel spaces of sociability mutually exclusive along partisan lines, which institutionalize the “entre-soi” of each group. These activities borrow the codes of partisan mobilization – in particular in the competition with the other political forces – and the codes of the youth at the same time. Commemorations and conferences by politicians are, in that respect, explicitly demonstrative of group boundaries.

The electoral moment remains the climax of mobilization in university territories: it keeps the activists busy and gives them the opportunity to test and improve their influence on the student population. It is around this rite of institution that the acquisition of the “experience” is primarily considered. The techniques of communication, the leadership skills, and other practical competences valued in the FPM training are above all mobilized during this time, before ideally being transferred to the other spheres in the life of the activists. Their repetitive nature enables to learn the specificities of the techniques used to negotiate alliances, convince voters, etc. The importance of elections in the university life offers the perfect ground for the partisan forces to penetrate the sociability of the youth through the efforts of the nucleus of active members. In that sense, the FPM, like most of the dominant political parties in the university scene, takes advantage of existing social networks and bonds between young people as much as it participates in their construction and reinforcement through the social activities its student groups organize.

Outside universities, the FPM activates its networks in the universities for the sake of its electoral machine in national or local elections. At the occasion of the 2009 Parliamentary elections, student volunteers were recruited to work in call centers to

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<sup>293</sup> Malek, interview with the author: May 26, 2010 [in English].

contact the voters<sup>294</sup>. Others were mobilized during the day of the elections, most often to participate in the management of a polling station<sup>295</sup>. The next year, during the 2010 local elections, a polling station in Beirut was entirely managed by students, under the supervision of the coordinator of the FPM in AUB:

*“In the elections of Achrafiyeh, the students were in charge of the elections. Not many know that, but we were in charge. Students from LAU, AUB, USJ, Antonine University, and Lebanese University. We were in charge of everything: all the political problems, all the jurisdictional problems, everything. (...) I was in charge of the Hikmeh school voting station, which was the biggest voting point in Achrafiyeh. I was responsible for everything. Nassim was in charge of the food: he had to bring the food for the people who stay inside. I had Fouad in charge in the pointage. I was in charge of the organization and if any problems arose, I had to understand what it was about and to figure out how to solve the problem.”<sup>296</sup>*

The students are thus mobilized as the Party's primary force, a role traditionally devoted to local notabilities and their followers. A group of volunteers has even been constituted, mainly from young activists, to serve as bodyguards and internal security services during partisan events. The *'awniyûn* [Aounists] were formed after the return of Michel Aoun, to ensure the safety of the leader:

*“En plus du Tayyâr, il y a les 'Awniyûn. Ce sont des groupes qui, s'il y a un problème quelque part, interviennent. Ce n'est pas un parti, c'est un groupe d'aounistes qui, parfois, quand le Général se rend quelque part, assure sa sécurité. Nous sommes des volontaires, et moi je travaille avec eux. Quand le Général se rend dans un hôtel, on contrôle les voitures qui viennent, les choses comme ça. Je suis avec eux depuis un an. (...) [Ce groupe existe] depuis le retour du Général. Il y a des groupes dans tout le Mont-Liban. (...) Quand il se passe quelque chose (...), nous y allons (...). On s'assure qu'il y ait une bonne ambiance, ces choses-là.”<sup>297</sup>*

This model clearly reflects the classic pattern of recruitment organized around one leader that prevailed in militia-like organization, widely spread in Lebanese parties – a pattern that the FPM pretends to reject.

Students' and general elections epitomize the logic of conflict that prevails on the political scene. In Lebanon, an activist is most of the time designated as “someone

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<sup>294</sup> Jim, interview with the author: December 9, 2009 [in French].

<sup>295</sup> It was especially the case of AUB students: Assaf, Fouad, Issam, Malek, and Nassim all recounted the episode.

<sup>296</sup> Malek, interview with the author: May 26, 2010 [in English].

<sup>297</sup> Patrick, interview with the author: March 4, 2011 [in French].

who fight” – the term in Arabic is *al-munâdil* from *al-nidâl* meaning “the struggle”. Students' mobilizations are turned toward the out-group, bringing about episodes of confrontation with the rival partisan forces. Activities turned toward the in-group are less theatrical, and often confined to daily interactions between the members. Beyond the feeling that “nothing happens” (Becker 2002 [1998], p. 160) in the daily life of the student groups, surface developments of interpersonal bonds, continuous discussions between members who generally spend the breaks together, talking about the last events, or preparing their next social activity. The bonds are not exclusive – the activists have relations with other people – but the partisan groups are privileged spaces of interaction.

The group appears more as a community of living than a cell of active individuals. It is designed in many aspects as an intimate collectivity whose members may very well spend time on their own, outside its boundaries, but whose bonds and perceptions prevail. The evolutions of the group activities witnessed since 2005 have had paradoxical effects on the way activism is constructed within the FPM.

### ***Paradoxical outcomes: a new profile of activists?***

The scarcity of formation outside university and the progressive end of the street demonstrations re-centered the student groups on their own territory. While universities were for the FPM students the point of departure of mobilizations to raise national issues during the period of the Syrian tutelage, they have lost their symbolic role of substitute political space after the legalization of the Party in 2005. With the integration of the Party into the official political system after 2005, the emphasis put on student activities relapsed. FPM students did participate in the demonstrations organized by their Party along with Hezbollah and Amal against the March 14 government in December 2006 and January 2007, as well as in the failed attempt to impose a blockade on center Beirut to paralyze the institutions and force a demission of the cabinet between December 2006 and May 2008. Although they were mobilized and numerous as the youth represent an important portion of the partisan masses they did not initiate these mobilizations as used to be the case with the anti-Syrian demonstrations during the 1990s and the early 2000s. After 2005, the group daily routine consists rather in the framing of the university territory.

The participation in the opposition sit-in represents a sound illustration of the paradoxical construction of activism in the post-2005 FPM. When the occupation of down-town Beirut started in December 2006, enthusiasm was high and many expressed their conviction that the government would not stand in front of such a mobilization. It is noteworthy to precise that the demonstrations held at that time

gathered around one million Lebanese, in a country of less than four millions inhabitants. However, the initially crowded sit-in site was progressively left empty. While young activists from the various parties of the “national opposition” populated the area days and nights during the first days, the camp was only visited during the day after a few weeks. Within months, the tents were all deserted, except for a ten of activists. None of the FPM students I met participated for more than a few days, and all stopped visiting the camp all together after a few weeks. Importantly, one has to note that being a party with relative little monetary resources, the FPM does not benefit from enough funds to pay professional activists to stay in the camp. All FPM participants were volunteers. Nonetheless the relatively low participation in the sit-in denoted a change in the way activism works in the Party.

Paradoxically, the memory of the sit-in was mobilized by the student to perform another trait of the FPM identity narrative: the inclination toward coexistence. The participation in a joint mobilization with Shiite parties has been used to interpret the political model of national unity. This incidently underlines that the FPM activists often conceive their Party as a representative of the Lebanese Christians. More fundamentally, the decline of activism observed during this episode did not entail a reconsideration of the FPM narrative identity. The ethics encouraged by the Party remained omnipresent in spite of the objective decrease in commitment. This confirms that the evolution in the practices of the group can be counter-balanced by alternative interpretations that ensure the maintenance of the identity narrative of the group.

Overall, the incapacity of the FPM to implement its ambitious program of education, both intellectual and practical, was offset by alternative modes of socialization that emphasize self-referential practices. These modes position the student activists in a heritage line, in which they learn from their predecessors – both symbolically, i.e. from the deeds of the previous cohorts of activists during the early phases of the history of the movement, and practically, i.e. in their training in university settings.

### **3. THE FPM GROUP STYLE IN PERSPECTIVE**

The construction of the model proposed to the members as an ideal interpretation of the position of the activist on both the intellectual and the practical levels informs the routinized modes of interactions within the group and the significations attached to them. The aim of this conclusive section is to sketch a comparative analysis of the FPM socialization process and then to present a summary of the interpretative filters in use among FPM student activists, defined in reference to the perception of bonds,

boundaries, and speech norms. Finally, I draw on the irruption of an internal crisis to present how this students' group style helped maintain cohesion, this episode highlighting the main features of partisan relation prevailing in today Lebanon.

### **A) Political education in perspective: the case of Hezbollah**

To what extend is the socialization work in the FPM specific? What are, for example, the differences with a movement equipped with an explicit and integrative ideology? In order to position the educational devices, formal and informal, used in the FPM in relation with other cases existing in contemporary Lebanon, I propose to briefly compare them with the mechanism of education and training existing in Hezbollah. Unlike the FPM, Hezbollah is structured on the model of Leninist organizations (Hamzeh 2004, p. 4) and displays an ideological frame inspired by the religious and political doctrine of Khomeyni.

Within Hezbollah<sup>298</sup>, participation in educational sessions focusing on political and religious themes represents the most accessible dimension of the socialization. These sessions are varied in their forms. Most often, they consist in theoretical lectures centered on issues such as the Resistance in Lebanon, the position of the party regarding the Taef Agreement, relations with Iran<sup>299</sup>, or on the current public issues. Other sessions introduce the political thought of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni or focus on the “Israeli enemy” to learn its way of understanding the world, its values, strengths and weaknesses<sup>300</sup>. As in the lectures organized in the FPM, history is also an important part of the teaching. Each theme is developed within a session lasting between twenty and thirty hours. The sessions are scheduled all year long but are often more intensive during the summer, so as not to disrupt the academic duties of the students. This general education is completed by many reading activities centering mainly on Khomeyni’s writings, but also on the works of the Iranian sociologist Ali Shariati whose thinking – a kind of theology of Liberation associating Shiite religious traditions (the ritual of *'âshûrâ'*) to revolutionary and anti-colonialist Third-worldism inspired by Franz Fanon – was central in the course of the Islamic Revolution. Many of these sessions are directed by the students themselves and encourage active

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<sup>298</sup> Like in the FPM, no official numbers are available on student membership in Hezbollah. Nizar Hamzeh argues that 23,000 students benefit from the financial support of the party (2004, p. 57). However, this only gives an approximative idea of the enrollments as various levels of attachment coexist.

<sup>299</sup> Bouchra, interview with the author: February 17, 2006 [in French].

<sup>300</sup> HY, coordinator of Hezbollah student branch in Beirut region, interview with the author: March 1, 2006 [in French].



discussions. As such, the education practices within Hezbollah appear comparable to other examples in Lebanese parties endowed with a structured ideology such as the Lebanese Communist Party and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.

These sessions participate in the adoption of a specific interpretative filter defined by the *Hezb*. The same applies to practical training and workshops organized for the youth and aiming at enhancing their leadership skills and their abilities to organize events like meetings, demonstrations, or debates. These gatherings are an occasion to develop interactions and sociabilities between members and multiply the shared experiences and habits. Demonstrative rallies are an important component of the practical training. Also, more than any other political party in Lebanon, Hezbollah has established a calendar of commemorations (Mervin 2008, p. 335-337). It includes celebrations and memorials related to the history of the organization, sometimes lasting for several days (e.g. the week of the Islamic Resistance – culminating in the commemoration of assassination of Hezbollah’s leaders Raghīb Harb and Abbas al-Musawi – on February 16; the Day of the Liberation to commemorate the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, on May 25; the Day of Martyrdom on November 11), political commemorations (e.g. the anniversary of the Iranian revolution on February 11; the Day of the Land, in solidarity with Palestine, on March 30), Islamic celebrations (e.g. the anniversary of the Prophet), or specific Shiite events (e.g. ‘*ashûrâ*’; the Day of the Downtrodden; the anniversary of the Twelfth Imam). Many of these commemorations mix political and religious insights. They are occasions for rallies generally held in Beirut’s Southern Suburb, either in public or reserved to party members. Such frequent gatherings enable the community to physically materialize, more frequently than the FPM. Street demonstrations are also more numerous for Hezbollah students, who for example had set up between 2005 and 2006 a public campaign against the American influence in the Middle-East, called *Wisâya* – “the Lebanese Youth Campaign against American Tutelage” (Lefort 2006, p. 82-87)<sup>301</sup>.

The importance of religion in the universe of signification of the Party is reflected in the organization of a specialized education. Religious sessions deal with thematics such as the principle of *Wilâyat al-Faqîh* [“the guardianship of the Jurist”], a new doctrine in Shiism (Mervin 2000, p. 95) re-adapted by Khomeyni to accompany the creation/Law of the Islamic State. Traditionally, the Shiites select a religious scholar as a source of religious education and inspiration (*Marja’iyya*). On the contrary, the precept of *Wilâyat al-Faqîh* positions the community of believers under the tutelage of a supreme source of inspiration embodied by the most recognized religious scholar,

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<sup>301</sup> Placards calling for mobilizations are available in the appendix.

who is, in practice, the Supreme Guide of the Islamic Revolution in Iran<sup>302</sup>. The students are initiated to this principle and encouraged to follow it. In the universities controlled by the Hezbollah, mostly in the Lebanese University in the Southern Suburb of Beirut, religious *shaykh*-s regularly visit the students to dispense religious teaching. Their lectures are open to all and not only Hezbollah activists for whom other sessions are organized outside the universities, in specialized institutions (mainly *Hawzât*, sort of religious schools). The religious norms play a key part in the construction of a shared space of identification.

While the FPM imposes a normative definition of the good activist echoing its humanistic ideal, the existence of an assumed and distinctive ideology confers to the partisan education in Hezbollah a more integrative nature. Insertion within Hezbollah is additionally more controlled, through a series of rites of initiation. Fundamentally, Hezbollah ambitions to build a new Man. Introduction to its ideology constitutes the first step in the integration of the universe of signification of the party. It is completed by a more extensive compartmental framing imposed through participation in a multiplicity of specially selected activities. The respect of strictly defined religious practices and of gendered dressing and appearance codes (wearing the *hijâb* for women, a clean outfit and a neatly trimmed beard for men) defines a vision of the Human being structured by religion.

Hezbollah promotes a model of dedicated students through practices comparable to what was observed in the FPM: the organization of additional lectures, environment-friendly summer camps<sup>303</sup>, or graduation ceremonies in the Lebanese University as well as in the private establishments belonging to its network of educational institutions. Finally, students, especially girls, are strongly encouraged to participate in the charities and associations linked with the party. Men are also integrated to military training camps, which incorporate them in the global resistance effort of the party. Only a minority will be invited to advanced training in order to become professional or reservist members in the Hezbollah guerrilla units. Yet, many participate in the basic training so as to giving them a place, even symbolic, in the *Muqâwama*, the Resistance, a central feature in the identity narrative of the group. Girls do not fight

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<sup>302</sup> In the name of this principle, Hezbollah prompts its members to follow the rule of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who took the succession of Khomeyni (Mervin 2008, p. 207 and sq). However, the control over the full respect of the doctrine increases with the elevation in the hierarchy of the party.

<sup>303</sup> During the summer 2005, Hezbollah organized a free-of-charge camp focusing on environmental issues for participants aged between 15 and 25. See “Hizbullah organizes first Lebanese environmentally-friendly summer camp”, *The Daily Star*: July 21, 2005.

but participate in specific sessions in which they learn “moral steadfastness” [*Sumûd*], the feminine counterpart of the armed struggle (Chaib 2010, § 40).

Interestingly, the participation of the students in these various activities, from the ideological lectures to the military training, is progressive. “Every category [of students] follows adapted seminars” explained during our encounter the representative of the party in the Lebanese University main campus back in 2006<sup>304</sup>. This mode of integration ensures a high level of control over the future members. Only those responding to the expectations of the leadership reach the core of the organization. Between them and the ones who only participate sporadically in open activities, infinity of degrees of integration exists giving Hezbollah its particular structure. For those able to progress within the group, the succession of selective rituals of initiation considerably strengthens their cohesion. In doing so, Hezbollah ensures the recruitment of highly devoted members in key positions.

If the control of the organization is much tighter than in the FPM, due to its integrative ideology structured by religious and philosophical references ensuring a great cohesion within the universe of signification of the party, thus a greater efficiency of the internalization of its interpretative filter<sup>305</sup>, its general objective seems parallel. Hezbollah like the FPM intends to propose a role model for the interpretation of the position of the activist and, by doing so, sustain the production and representation of a collective differentiated “We”, internalized by its members.

Beyond the (important) variation in the degree of control exercised toward student members, both parties seem to conceive political education as a means for defining and communicating a sense of being, an identity, and a mode of doing, a culture:

*“Culture is a very important thing for us in our work. It is the most important thing. We focus on culture because our enemies want us to abandon our historical and religious culture. (...) They want to decide for us what is sacred and what is not.”*<sup>306</sup>

These words strangely resonate with the conclusion of the discussion I had four years later with Malek, the coordinator of the FPM in AUB:

*“I am a 22 year-old student who has never lost faith in his country because of Michel Aoun and the FPM. When all the rest lost faith, we didn't. (...) Because we are working honestly. Because we believe in what we are working for. We believe it's our*

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<sup>304</sup> Ali, interview with the author: February 22, 2006 [in English].

<sup>305</sup> Berger and Luckmann note that the more integrated the devices of maintenance of the universe of signification are, the more this universe enters all the facets of the perceived and experienced reality, leading to a complete re-socialization or “alternation” (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 176).

<sup>306</sup> HY, coordinator of Hezbollah student branch in the Beirut region, interview with the author: March 1, 2006 [in French].

*right to live in this country, it's our right to work here, it's our right to eat kebbeneyeh and tabbouleh [Lebanese meals] and not to go to the US and eat hamburgers and pizzas! We like hamburgers and pizzas, but we are Lebanese. They are stealing our identity from us. When the Christians leave the South or the North, when the Shiites leave Mount-Lebanon, they are stealing your identity from you.”<sup>307</sup>*

In the end, the issue for Hezbollah as well as for the FPM is the definition of “the Sacred and the Profane” (Eliade 1957). The ambition is to recompose social relations and perceptions of reality according to an identity narrative<sup>308</sup>. Both interpret partisan relation on the basis of a confined “entre-soi”. Political positions are conceptualized, understood and integrated through socialization as existential, exclusive of one another<sup>309</sup>. This socialization composes a narrative that sustains a distinctive identity relying on a plurality of inspirations strongly articulated to the partisan experience (the history of the movements and of their members, their symbolic references, etc.). An interesting counter-example to this mode of socialization centered on partisan identity is provided by the case of the Future Movement of the Hariris, in which political identity has been exclusively implemented through a confessional mobilization. The absence of an identity narrative specifically defined by and for the Future Movement undermined its anchoring in the society and weakened the leadership of Saad Hariri. As a result, the party is more and more overpowered by radical confessional groups (Gervais 2012, p. 132-133)

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<sup>307</sup> Malek, interview with the author: May 26, 2010 [in English].

<sup>308</sup> In the same interview, Malek explained how the implementation of the FPM ideals aimed at creating a new society: “*When I first entered AUB, there was a major sect cleavage. The Sunnis would seat together, the Christians, the Shiites and the Druzes too. It was disgusting. Especially since I was raised in a family where we make no difference. (...) With time we tried with some friends to change that has much as we can. We are trying to show the students that it's not the sect that matter, but the person. That you should judge someone by his essence: judge a book by its content, not by its cover. This is what we are trying to do. We are succeeding at a very slow rate, but we are succeeding and I can promise you that we will keep on working on that because this is what we believe in. I hope that someday, there will be no more problems with the sects in Lebanon (...) through everything that we do (...).*” Interview with the author: May 26, 2010 [in English].

<sup>309</sup> As an illustration, Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces, declared in December 2012 that the opposition between the March 14 coalition and its rivals is not a political struggle between parties in the classic sense of the term but takes an existential character. See *L'Orient le Jour*: December 3, 2012.

## **B) Identifying the FPM group style**

Beyond their differences, both groups envisage adhesion as the construction of an identification space defined by bonds, boundaries, and institutionalized narratives, highlighted in the various features of student activism. Coming back to the case of the FPM, a specific group style can be identified.

### ***Group boundaries***

The first dimension in the study of group style is the assertion of boundaries (Eliashop & Lichterman 2003, p. 785): how do the members make reference to institutions or categories in order to position themselves, and how are these respective positions evaluated? How does the group interact with the out-group and how are their interactions different from in-group relations? How, finally, does the group access to the public arena?

In the case of the FPM students, the group universe of signification and habitual practices exposed various sources of distinction. A first clear line separates the in-group from the out-group along partisan belonging. In that aspect, the reference to the FPM is positively evaluated whereas the mention of rivals is systematically associated with negative perceptions: misleading definition of history, “false truth”, immoral political projects (the federalism associated with the Lebanese Forces and the corruption associated with the Future Movement). The figure of the enemy often appears inseparable from the definition of the group itself, beyond the confrontation of political plans, excluding any shared ground: *“there is a Lebanese Forces’ mentality, which is far away from the one of the FPM. There is no common point.”*<sup>310</sup> A second line, more tacit but strongly interconnected with the first one, marks a distinction between Christians and Muslims, especially Sunnis. Christians are linked intrinsically with the FPM and presented as victims of the domination plans elaborated by the “Sunni majority,” which has taken various faces: the Syrian presence through the influx of migrant workers, and the Hariris. Finally, a third line differentiates within the group members between “passive” supporters, or even, in the worst case, opportunists, and “activists”, the latter being positively evaluated in reference with an array of moral values and ethical behaviors.

The interactions with the out-group strongly differ from the in-group activities. They rely mainly on confrontation as the example of the student elections illustrated. The out-group is perceived as a hostile environment against which the group has to protect itself, as the refusal of my presence during educational sessions confirms.

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<sup>310</sup> Elie, interview with the author: December 8, 2010 [in French].

However, the out-group *stricto sensu* is limited to the circles related to other political forces. A mass of people remains within reach and one of the main objectives of activists' actions is to attract them into the orbit of the FPM, to incite them to adopt the FPM interpretations of the memory, political situation, and social imaginary. This distinction aims at recruiting new dedicated members, who in turn will transmit the Party's filters, but also more modestly to ensure a responsive social basis, mobilizable during election times or crises.

To do so, FPM, as is the case for Hezbollah, relies primarily on inter-personal connections. The public is reached via human mediations as the study of individual trajectories in Chapter Four further demonstrates. This first step toward attachment, often built on affectiveness, constitutes an entry door toward the horizon of the group: the reading of FPM magazines or websites, the learning of history through partisan documentaries, the training through observation of the other more experienced members. The FPM also accesses the public space thanks to its presence on the university territories and demonstrative mobilization – especially during student elections – as already described in the part one of this study.

### ***Group bonds***

The second dimension of the group style is concerned with the construction of bonds within the collectivity. It “puts into practice a group's assumptions about what members' mutual responsibilities should be while in the group context.” (Ibid., p. 785) To test this aspect, I asked the students about their conception of the ideal member for the FPM, their perceptions of what unites the group together, and what the Party represented for them. The analysis of their answers coupled with the observation of the practices highlighted within the group enables to underline several constituents of the bonds.

A first element is the identification between personal and group's objectives and existence. The FPM is associated with the values, the goals and the hopes of the members. The Party is depicted as sharing a common culture and horizon. The deep association between the self and the group gives to the latter the image of a family or of a group of friends, as often mentioned. The image of intimate “entre-soi” displayed in the conception of the group socialization and members' practices is thus consciously confirmed by the actors themselves. Different degrees of insertion exist but, at best, the assimilation between the self and the group can be total:

*“Avant tout, une identité politique...je fais partie du CPL, je suis impliqué dans ses événements, dans son travail culturel, donc...qu'est-ce que ça représente...je sais pas comment dire ça, comment l'expliquer...c'est une existence qui est né en moi et qui*

*m'aide à pouvoir vivre et à appliquer mes idées sociales, culturelles et même politiques...pour moi, tout ça c'est le CPL...je sais pas comment dire...mais vous avez l'idée, c'est pour moi le CPL...Peut-être c'est un peu familial, c'est un peu à cause de mon entourage, de voir des gens, un million de personnes qui se sont mises ensemble autour d'une même idée, d'une même pensée...et je me considère comme une continuité de cette idée, en tant que membre, et n'importe quelle personne au sein du CPL est la continuité de cette idée qui a existé comme ça.*"<sup>311</sup>

*"Ecoute, le CPL, c'est une partie de moi au niveau personnel...une partie de moi parce que je suis des co-fondateurs du CPL si on peut dire...c'est un mouvement du peuple, vraiment c'est un mouvement du peuple...et je pense que si le Liban doit exister, le CPL doit être aux côtés du Liban, vraiment...parce qu'il a tout changé...il a tout changé au sein de la personnalité d'un Libanais..."*<sup>312</sup>

The FPM is further strongly connected to Lebanon. For many of the students I met, the FPM represents the promise of a better Lebanon. The combination of this assimilation between the Party and the country with the identification of the Party as an "entre-soi" strongly associated with the self, displays the misunderstandings between political forces at the national level: "*We all want a Lebanon, but no one agrees on which one*" once told me a student in an informal talk. Each party lives in the certainty to embody the "Truth", the very existence of the country. Political positions consequently become so closely associated with the self that negotiation and compromise over the future of the country seem illusory. If the existence of Lebanon as a state is not at the center of the political debate any more, debate on the formula of association of its various components is still to be found. The claim of the FPM to moralize the political life is for example hardly compatible with the respect of the other groups because it is directed against them and carries the weight of past confrontations, concrete in the case of the Lebanese Forces, and symbolic with the Future Movement.

Finally, the most cited common point between group members remains the figure of the leader, Michel Aoun. The role of the leader as the unifying factor within the group illustrates its identificatory function. He symbolizes the collectivity in front of the out-group and, at the same time, offers a landmark for the identification process. He personifies the existence of the group, summarizing in his character the attributes allocated to the ideal of the members. Michel Aoun enables his supporters to assert their political and social position in interactions, attached to a particular definition of

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<sup>311</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: November 14, 2007 [in French].

<sup>312</sup> Paul, interview with the author: November 21, 2007 [in French].

the nation, its represented past, and foreseen future. Defining oneself as “Aounist” demonstrates that it is firstly through the character of the leader that the affect of attachment is canalized. In that perspective, the bonds with the leader inform the very nature of the political relation and, beyond, of the social ties constructed in contemporary Lebanon.

Unsurprisingly with regard to the content of the political education in practice within the FPM student groups, the definition of what is being a good member incorporates the ethics detailed in the Code. Contrary to the Hezbollah, in which religious prescriptions play a central part, the morale of activism in the FPM is secular. Yet, as in a family, the relationship between members relies on mutual moral obligations that do not essentially differ in their motives from religious norms. The newcomers position themselves in the path of their predecessors, whose commitment and idealism are constantly reaffirmed. As such, the entry in the Party undeniably operates a process of secondary socialization, i.e. cognitive learning inspired by significant others.

### ***Speech norms***

The last dimension of the group style refers to the discursive practices. When positioned in the group context or in a situation in which their attachment to the group is highlighted – like during the interview – what do the members speak about? What do they think they should mention?

The FPM student members assume that the speech norms adapted to their position aim at representing the characteristics associated with the ideal-type of the activist: their point is to present the boundaries separating the FPM from its opponents, in particular the LF. The consequence is the quasi systematic discursive construction contrasting the situation prevailing in the Party and the representations of the rival groups. The narrative identity of the FPM is thus elaborated in mirror with the identity ascribed to the LF: militia vs State; *za'rân* [thugs] vs. *âwâdim* [honest people]; federalism vs. unity; isolation vs. coexistence; sectarianism vs. secularism. The horizon of signification of the Party is interpreted in an opposition point by point with what is presented as a negative alternative to the project and identity of the *Tayyâr*. In FPM as well as in Hezbollah, The speech repertory deployed in interaction by the activists is mainly a register of justification, aiming at asserting the superiority of their sub-universe over the other, mainly through the mobilization of a moral repertoire.

The rhetorical devices are also strongly sustained by the use of historical cases. In Hezbollah, the stories of past colonial conflicts and occupations fuel the speeches about the resistance in South Lebanon. One interesting example among FPM students



arose during collective interviews I held with a group of Lebanese University first year students in Karm al-Zeitoun. The first interview was originally thought as a classic head-to-head encounter with Maya, a 18-year-old student originating from Batroun in Northern Lebanon. However, her comrades rapidly joined the conversation. As I decided to let the discussion going, another girl, Stephanie, rapidly took the preeminence over the rest of the group, mainly due to her ability to refer to precedents in the political history of Lebanon. She took, according to what she said, her understanding of the Lebanese politics after one of her aunts, attached to the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, a group strongly structured ideologically. Although the content of the SSNP universe of signification is largely antithetic to the FPM values, her knowledge about the past political leaders, the conflicts that structured the political scene, and the major events in the modern history of the country enabled her to gradually position herself practically as the spokesperson of the Party in front of me.

The activists further assume that their cause displays all the characteristics of disinterestedness as the lack of funds of the movement as well as its refusal to participate in state institutions before 2005 have situated the retributions of engagement almost exclusively on the symbolic level. In spite of the integration of the FPM within the regime after 2005, the staging of lasting absence of personal gain in activism remains omnipresent throughout my interviews, once again in a dialectic opposition to the members of the other partisan groupings. The question of possible personal interest in activism is not mentioned not only because it would present a negative image of the narrator, but also, and more deeply, because such discourse is simply unthinkable within the universe of signification constructed in the movement. Like the young seminarians were not in the conditions to consider their “vocation” as a mean to reach a respectable social position (Suaud 1976, p. 45-49), the horizon in which adherents evolve impedes them to perceive their participation in the Party as a potential personal gain.

A last instance in which speech norms are clearly distinguishable is the occurrence of conflicts about what should be said within the group. During a conversation with Nader and Patrick<sup>313</sup>, two students of the Lebanese University introduced in Chapter one, Nader started to introduce the issue of power relations between religious groups as one of the focus of the PFM politics and described the Christians as historically “*more developed than the Muslims. They are more developed in all the sectors, like science or...*” Patrick immediately interrupted and put him right saying that: “*You are talking wrong right now*”. Comparable symptoms arise when the speaker takes

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<sup>313</sup> Nader and Patrick, interview with the author: December 4, 2010 [in English].

“rhetorical precautions” before mentioning sectarian issues, such as “*I don't like to speak like that but...*” or “*we are secularist but the country is sectarian*”. Such recurrent justification attempts highlight by contrast the norms of discourse that the activists consider appropriate in the group context.

These speech norms, strongly embedded in the model of identification proposed by the Party to its adherents constitute mainly “front stage” speech, i.e. conversation held in public or openly in front of the whole group. By contrast, backstage conversations also exist (Eliashop & Lichterman 2003, p. 772). They were even dominant during the electoral meetings described in the previous chapter. While the students were collectively focusing on name lists, trying to figure out the partisan categorization of the university population, constant aside discussions were being held in the corridors, whispered between two or three members, generally supervisors of the meetings. This distinction between backstage and front stage instances exemplifies how the FPM conceives collectively its mode of functioning: the front stage shows the image of a united group, working without clear hierarchy and privileging cooperation to reach a common objective, and a backstage controlled by the senior members of the organization. The repressed speeches about sectarian issues or Machiavellian politics, opposed to the public ideal of activism presented by the group, may very well resurface “backstage”.

The norms organizing storytelling generate silences. Elements or themes that are not included in the dominant identity narrative. One of the clearest examples within the FPM in general, and among the FPM student groups in particular, concerns the issue of gender. Although the Party officially advocates a strict equality between men and women, one has to note that the activists' groups are mostly constituted of men. Furthermore, the women generally have limited responsibilities. During my fieldwork, all the university or faculty coordinators were men, at a few exceptions: Caroline in the Institute of Political Science in Huvelin, Aida and Safa in the LU faculty of Documentation and Information (FID) in Fanar. The Institute of Political Science only gathers around seventy students, and the FID is in a large majority populated of women. Such a situation is not surprising considering the gender inequality in the Lebanese society as a whole. What was striking was the silence I observed on that issue. During interviews, including with women activists, gender was either ignored or dissimulated. The absence of this theme was such that the very collect of material about gender issues was difficult. I regularly asked about potential gender disparities, in particular with women activists who could have been confronted with discrimination. However, the absence of consideration for this theme systematically generated a rapid depletion of the discussion. My field itself closed down on that

question, leading me to focus on other thematics. If the absence as such is remarkable at would necessitates more analyzes, it proved difficult to study a ghost issue. One hypothetical explanation lies in the strength of alternative conceptions of social fragmentation: the divisions that “count” in the FPM identity narrative are partisan distinctions, especially with the Lebanese Forces in the factionalist interplay opposing the two rival movements anchored in the Lebanese Christian realm to Muslim political forces. The construction of identity relying on these articulated partisan and religious boundaries excludes or marginalizes other kinds of distinction such as economic inequalities or gender issues. The strength of the silence about gender would definitely deserve more developments.

In summary, the three dimensions of the group style operate all according to a similar pattern of identification between the group and its members, creating a sense of communality, and irreducible distinction from the out-group. Boundaries, bonds, and speech norms function together to portrait an idealistic cause and a model of virtuous activist to advocate it. FPM students I observed and met relied on idealized perceptions to assert their superiority over the other partisan segments to be found in the Lebanese society. They conceived their group as the incarnation of an affective community, unified by inter-personal bonds, shared memory of the past and expectations for the future clearly distinguished from those of the out-group, and offering a space of “entre-soi” symbolized by the character of the leader. The practices of socialization are accordingly self-referent, as already noted by Shawkat Ishtay in his study of the Kata'eb and Communist socialization in Lebanon (1997). The *raison d'être* of the group is assumed to be the representation of a specific human community in a fragmented social environment. Threatened by a public charge against what was denounced as a deviation of the group's ideals, the FPM group style demonstrated that his strength primarily derives from its communal nature.

### **C) “Responsibility compels”**

On April 8, 2010, one of the main Lebanese newspapers, *al-Nahâr*, published an article on the FPM reporting the existence of an internal document criticizing drifts in the management of the Party. The document, the article argued, was signed by four of the FPM top officials, including the former head of the organization and representative of Michel Aoun in Lebanon under the Syrian guardianship, Nadim Lteif, and the number two of the Party, General Abu Jamra. Two days later, another daily publication, *al-Diyâr*, repeated the information, presenting the content of the document and a copy of the signatures of the authors: Nadim Lteif, Issam Abu Jamra, Salim

Azar, and Yusef Khuri, all members of the executive committee of the FPM<sup>314</sup>. Addressed to Michel Aoun, the text noted malfunctions in the organizational life of the Party and called for the renewal of its internal democratic practices. It demanded the submission of the President to a vote of confidence, the completion of the institutionalization, and the reaffirmation of the principles and values of the Party.

In light of this development, I decided to meet with the head of the committee of political education, BH, to inquire about the nature and objectives of the document. As a member of the constitutive body and the executive committee of the Party, he probably had some information about this issue, all the more since I knew from our previous encounters that he had personally complained about the choices made by Michel Aoun after he failed to be designated as a FPM candidate for the 2009 Parliamentary elections. Our encounter occurred on April 17, one week after the national press echoed the existence of the internal strife. My suppositions were immediately confirmed: not only he supported the document, but he had participated in its redaction. My interlocutor confirmed that the opposition officially established after the designation of the members of the government on the previous year. Following Parliamentary elections, a government of National unity had been formed. Negotiations between the parties lasted for months before the composition of the new cabinet was announced on November 10, 2009. The FPM, with a parliamentary group strong of 28 MPs, was one of the main partners in the government. Entitled to nominate three ministers, Michel Aoun finally designated Gebran Bassil as minister of Energy, Charbel Nahhas as minister of the Telecommunication, and Fadi Abboud as minister of Tourism<sup>315</sup>. The choices of the president of the Party were almost immediately publicly questioned. The first nominee was Michel Aoun's son-in-law while the two others did not belong to the FPM. General Abu Jamra, himself deputy Prime Minister in the previous cabinet and expected to be designated again, was the first to criticize Aoun's decision, but his comments were strongly rejected by the leader himself<sup>316</sup>.

After several months of inconspicuous internal turmoil, the crisis thus took an abrupt step forward with the publication of the two articles in April 2010, only a few days before local elections. In the document as in the words of my interviewee, Michel Aoun was directly accused of mishandling the institutionalizing of the Party. BH informed me that the leader had suspended since August 18, 2007 the meetings of the

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<sup>314</sup> The article of *al-Diyâr* is available in the appendix.

<sup>315</sup> See *L'Orient le Jour*: November 10, 2009.

<sup>316</sup> See *L'Orient le Jour*: November 19, 2009.

executive committee of the FPM and blamed him for indefinitely postponing the internal elections planned in the statutes of the organization adopted in September 2005 but never implemented. All of a sudden, the failure of the establishing of the political education policy I witnessed among FPM student groups took another perspective. My host revealed to me that, in fact, the disposition according to which all members should have taken part in FPM actions and undergone the sessions of political education had in fact never been adopted. The internal law of procedure, promulgated on June 10, 2006, nine months after the legalization of the Party, did not make reference to it.<sup>317</sup> BH had refrained from telling me during our first encounters, probably not to undermine the achievements of his committee, but also to preserve the facade of unity within the group. In the spring 2010, he claimed that this change in the regulations had been made without any debate and certified that he had learned about the modification only after the publication of the internal rules of procedures. If the plans of political education as well as the Charter and the Code of Ethics that inspired them wore the mark of the field activists, it then seemed that their domination was not undisputed in the Party.

During our conversation, BH violently criticized the institutional locking as well as the transformation of the FPM into a family affair, targeting not only Michel Aoun, but also the “court” that existed around him in Paris, reviving the cleavage between field activists and “French” officials (Abirached 2012, p. 50):

*“Nous sommes dans une situation bloquée au niveau institutionnel. (...) Mais le pire n'est pas là. Le pire a été lors de la cooptation des candidats pour les élections législatives de 2009. Personnellement j'ai été victime d'une supercherie éhontée. Un déni de droit absolu, à peine masqué par une mascarade de sondage d'opinion à la con (sic). (...) Quand je parle, même mes adversaires m'écoutent. Donc je n'ai pas compris (...) comment il se peut que quelqu'un, un blanc-bec (sic), qui vient de rentrer de France et qui vit loin de la région peut l'emporter sur quelqu'un comme moi qui suis enraciné? (...) Je me suis dit que je n'allais pas réagir, ou plutôt que si, j'allais réagir mais que j'allais attendre le mouvement de pouvoir réagir pour les grands principes et non pas pour moi-même. (...) Quelques mois plus tard, arrive la formation du gouvernement. (...) Il [le général Aoun] nous sort une constellation de ministres qui pour nous n'ont été pas moins qu'une insulte (...). Au lieu de nommer des membres du CPL, [parmi lesquels] il y a plein de compétences, il y a des milliers et des gens qui ont milité et fait tellement de sacrifices, il vient nous sortir son gendre, encore une fois, plus deux autres (...) qui n'avaient rien à faire avec le Taysâr! C'était scandaleux!*

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<sup>317</sup> BH, interview with the author: April 17, 2010 [in French].

*(...) Mais le pire n'est pas là. Le pire est que le CPL est en train de se transformer en une espèce de société familiale. Regardez: le général vit à Rabieh. Sous prétexte de la sécurité, il fait de son lieu de résidence le quartier général de facto. C'est vrai qu'il y a un bureau central à Sin el-Fil, mais le quartier général, c'est chez lui. C'est sans équivoque. (...) Il a trois filles, dont une est divorcée (...) et puis les deux autres sont mariées. L'une à Gebran Bassil et l'autre à Roy Hachem. Gebran Bassil, c'est le ministre perpétuel. Roy Hachem est le PDG de l'OTV. La femme de Roy Hachem [donc la fille du général] est maintenant directrice du bureau du général. Son autre fille Claudine, celle qui est divorcée, il lui a payé la société Clémentine qui est la société de production de la publicité sur l'OTV. Son neveu, le fils de sa sœur, Alain Aoun, est député de Baabda (...). Et maintenant il prétend faire une réforme [interne], il confie cette réforme à son neveu, le fils de son frère, Na'im Aoun. Je ne dis pas que Na'im n'a pas de mérite, il est un combattant de la première heure, mais c'est honteux! (...) Jusqu'à maintenant, il y a le général Aoun et puis il n'y a rien. Mais il y a un organigramme qui prévoit deux vice-présidents: il n'y a pas de vice-président. Il prévoit un bureau politique. Il n'existe pas. Il prévoit un comité exécutif. On ne sait plus s'il existe ou pas. Il ne se réunit plus de toute façon depuis trois ans. Le conseil national n'a jamais existé, parce qu'il n'y a pas eu d'élections dans les régions.*

*(...) Je ne me suis pas battu pour devenir député ou ministre, mais je me suis battu pour créer et laisser à mes enfants et aux enfants des autres une institution, une référence, un certain nombre de règles respectables! L'éthique, l'Etat de droit, les traditions. De tout cela il n'y a plus rien. Il nous a bluffés cet homme! Et à la place de cette institution promise, que voit-on s'ériger? Une famille!"<sup>318</sup>*

He concluded by suggesting that Michel Aoun's decision to freeze political education could have been intentional, so as to encourage his own personal influence on the members. At the end of his talk, my host offered me a copy of the published document, entitled “responsibility compels”. The proclamation, although less explicit, took up the same themes: the institutional weakness of the Party and the personal power of the leader. Originally, the text was signed by four of the six members of the disciplinary council of the Party, which, according to the bylaws, should rule the Party in case of the impossibility of organizing internal elections. The document was first sent to Michel Aoun on March 11, 2010. But the leader did not react according to my interlocutor. Dated April 1, 2010, a new version of the text was then distributed to the members of the constitutive body before a leak occurred and the document was publicized in the national media.

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

After a short presentation (page one)<sup>319</sup>, the first part of the five-page document recounts the history of the movement, starting from the fight initiated by the military government against the militia order and insisting on the role of the popular uprising. As a party, the FPM is mentioned as the translation of the joint action of the Lebanese youth and the “exiled government” against Syrian occupation; it aspired to become a pioneering partisan experience, “different from the other parties, which collapsed because they adopted the path of personal power, of feudalism in their forms and corruption in their practices”. Then, the text recalls that the organization of internal elections within one year was stipulated at the time of the legalization of the Party. However, it continues, “that remained just ink on the paper” (page two). Afterward, the document denounces the reform of the internal law of procedures in June 2006 that reinforced the powers of the president and the postponing of internal elections under various pretexts. More sensitive issues are also raised, concerning the progressive concealment of fund management – a situation that was justified by the troubled circumstances reigning in the country (page three). The signatories of the document then urge for a return to legal procedures in the management of the Party, fearing that the FPM is “heading toward the repetition of the experience of the obsolete political class in falling into the trap of individual power and capture, and into the trap of family and political heritage”. The text accordingly exhorts the foundation of a real institution, “able to regenerate and continue”. “But, it continues, the prominent opponents have been neutralized” and “the people of the *Tayyâr* felt rage and indignation when General Michel Aoun chose two ministers for the Party from outside its ranks. (...) This decision was in violation of article 222 of the internal rule of procedures (...)”. The nomination of these two ministers is depicted as a “defiance of the FPM and its leading figures (...), a disregard for their qualifications, and a denial of their history and right (...)” in favor of “the family and some opportunists” (page four). The last page calls for the three moves mentioned by BH, i.e. the submission of the President to a vote of confidence, the completion of the institutionalization, and the reaffirmation of the principles and values of the Party.

The document thus denounces the failure of the institutionalization of the Party and the risk of monopolization of power in the hands of the leader. It urges for a return to the principles of democracy and secularism that guided the path of the FPM. This criticism has of course to be contextualized. Both general Issam Abu Jamra and BH experienced personal frustration from the choices made by Michel Aoun. Like BH, Issam Abu Jamra did not deny it:

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<sup>319</sup> The following extracts quoting from the document are my own translation from Arabic.

*“Moi, étant le numéro 2 du Parti, ayant été vice-Premier ministre, je m'attendais à être nommé ministre – et je trouvais ça tout à fait normal de l'être. J'ai été surpris qu'on choisisse des ministres en dehors du Parti, qui n'étaient même pas des sympathisants. Ça m'a fait un choc. En plus, il n'a pas nommé un Orthodoxe, Car vous savez que chez nous, les ministres sont choisis en fonction des religions. Malheureusement. Dans notre idéologie, nous voulons un état laïc. Mais tant que ça n'existe pas, on doit faire comme les autres. Je ne peux pas être laïc si les autres ne le sont pas. Alors ça a fait une histoire entre nous. Mais jusqu'à maintenant on n'arrivait pas à avoir de réponse. Alors on a fait le document et on l'a diffusé parce que les gens commençaient à se poser des questions. Le titre de notre document était: 'La responsabilité exige'. (...) On voulait réclamer l'application de nos principes, c'est tout. Aujourd'hui, on attend la réponse. (...) Il y a beaucoup d'exemples chez nous de partis monarchiques, mais nous voulons baser notre parti sur des principes: la laïcité, la démocratie, la liberté, la justice, la transparence, la communication avec les autres, etc. Alors on ne peut pas accepter que la décision soit prise par une seule personne ou à l'intérieur de sa famille. Ça ne marche pas comme ça chez nous.”<sup>320</sup>*

The arguments mobilized by Abu Jamra to criticize Michel Aoun's decisions appear to be in contradiction with the content of the document in the sense that, for example, he explicitly refers to the sectarian dimension of politics, which the text “Responsibility compels” rejects. Similarly, BH legitimated his Parliamentary aspirations by the local role of his family, one of the most important in his region of origins:

*“Moi, j'ai derrière moi quarante-cinq ans de présence dans cette région, je suis connu dans tous les villages, j'ai des étudiants qui sont passés par mes cours à l'université. Dans chaque village, j'en ai une dizaine ou une vingtaine. La plupart d'entre eux sont mariés et pour les plus anciens, leurs enfants sont devenus des électeurs. Et puis je proviens d'une très grande famille, [qui comptabilise] 800 électeurs, d'un village clé dans la région, un village très influent. Je vis au milieu des gens. Je suis dans la ville de Jbeil, je ne vis pas à Beyrouth. J'exerce des responsabilités: les gens viennent à moi, ils me demandent des services. Et j'essaie toujours, très sincèrement, de les satisfaire. J'ai la réputation d'essayer. (...) Alors que mon oncle à moi avait été député en 1960, c'est dire si nous sommes d'une famille politique.”<sup>321</sup>*

The arguments mentioned here might appear contradictory with the denunciation of family heritage and obsolete politics presented in the document, underlining the role

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<sup>320</sup> General Abu Jamra, interview with the author: April 29, 2010 [in French].

<sup>321</sup> BH, interview with the author: April 17, 2010 [in French].



undoubtedly played by the setback of personal ambition in the occurrence of the crisis. Nonetheless, many aspects pointed out in the text remain relevant, especially concerning the absence of internal elections and the non-respect of several other procedural rules in the functioning of the Party. From an institutional point of view, the FPM is seemingly a failure. The management of the organization strongly contradicts the aspiration and the model of governance constituting the identity narrative of the group. How can activists accept such a situation when they are themselves encouraged to interpret their position with reference to a completely different experience and a strict Code of Ethics? Yet, the protest did not meet the success anticipated by its promoters<sup>322</sup>. Most of the FPM members I met afterward did not adhere to the document. Sticking to the ideal of disinterestedness, they mostly blamed Issam Abu Jamra for having been embittered after a position of minister. Asked during our interviews if Michel Aoun was exercising too much individual power, the students generally disagreed:

*“[Les critiques] c'est naturel d'une certaine façon, car dès 1988, tous les gens qui se sont rassemblés autour de lui [Michel Aoun] ne l'ont pas fait de façon, disons, idéale. Il y a eu beaucoup de gens qui ont entouré le Général car ils pensaient qu'il pouvait les aider à accéder à des positions de pouvoir. Beaucoup de ces gens ont quitté le Parti parce qu'ils n'ont pas eu les positions au sein de l'Etat qu'ils espéraient, d'autres ont quitté pour des divergences de vues, et cela vaut aussi bien pour ceux qui sont entrés dans le Parti après 2005 que pour ceux qui sont venus avec lui en 1988. Donc le fait qu'une dizaine ou une quinzaine de noms, de personnalités, nous ont quitté, ce n'est pas démesuré et on pourrait plutôt se demander pourquoi ils ont quitté: est-ce pour des raisons personnelles, des raisons politiques ou autre chose? Si quelqu'un l'a fait pour des raisons légitimes, nous pourrions essayer de réparer ça. (...) jusqu'à présent, les raisons qui ont poussé certains à quitter ne sont pas assez légitimes pour faire tout ce bruit qui a été fait.”<sup>323</sup>*

*“D'abord, je ne connais personne qui est dans le CPL qui n'est pas convaincu par le Général. Nous sommes tous dans le CPL parce que nous sommes convaincus par lui. Ça, c'est de un. Ce n'est pas un parti qui a été créé et où il est venu ensuite, non. Lui a fondé le Parti. Si tu n'aimes pas, tu peux partir. C'est différent des autres partis, on*

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<sup>322</sup> One year after the publication of the document, BH started our discussion with an admission of failure: “j'ai pris acte de l'impossibilité de faire quoi que ce soit de l'intérieur pour réformer le Parti (...), quant à faire quelque chose de l'extérieur, c'est-à-dire la scission, il n'en a jamais été question pour moi, parce que me séparer de qui ? (...) J'entends toujours être aux côtés des militants (...) et quitter aurait été un signal négatif adressé aux masses que je suis moi-même responsable d'avoir attirées au sein du mouvement. (...) Il reste néanmoins que [notre] mauvaise gestion nous mène à la catastrophe.” BH, interview with the author: March 7, 2011 [in French].

<sup>323</sup> Virgil, interview with the author: October 23, 2010 [in French].

*n'oblige personne à rester. Donc je ne crois pas que personne ait un problème avec ça. Alors bien sûr, dans la façon de faire, c'est mieux d'avoir une bonne structure parce que chacun peut apporter ses forces. Lui, il est peut-être le plus fort dans le fait de prendre une décision, de convaincre les gens, plus que dans les choses très techniques, bien sûr que chacun à ses points forts et ses points faibles. Mais je ne crois pas que personne ait de problème avec le fait qu'il prenne tout le pouvoir. Sauf ceux qui veulent utiliser le CPL pour avoir un pouvoir pour eux. Comme le Général Abu Jamra. Abu Jamra, lui, il est devenu plus proche du Président de la République, Michel Sleiman. (...) Mais ceux qui ont vraiment des problèmes, et qui vraiment ont des critiques valables, personne d'entre eux n'est contre le Général. Ceux qui sont contre le Général, ils sont dans les autres partis!"<sup>324</sup>*

The last sentence pronounced by Nassim is particularly interesting: any criticism about the action of the General Michel Aoun is presented as a defection. The character of the leader embodies the line separating the in-group from the out-group. The arguments voiced by Abu Jamra and the other signatories are turned back against them. Interestingly, Issam Abu Jamra is the most mentioned of the opponents, precisely because he conflicted with Michel Aoun concerning his nomination. Internal dissension is thus more easily turned down in the name of the necessary purity of political activism. Significantly, the initiative is also criticized for its timing rather than for its content:

*"Ce document est venu au mauvais moment, un peu trop tard. C'était quelque chose dont on avait déjà parlé pendant 3 ans. C'est venu alors qu'on n'avait plus besoin de ça. Pour lui [Abu Jamra], tout est à cause des élections [de 2009]. C'est une question personnelle liée à sa non-nomination au gouvernement l'an dernier."<sup>325</sup>*

Criticism thus remained at the formal level, never addressing the issue of institutional failure directly. Yet, students are not ignoring the issue as such and regularly voiced their defiance vis-à-vis potential opportunists or distancing with the partisan ethics:

*"il doit y avoir du respect et des valeurs que moi je trouve que les autres gens n'ont pas: il y a deux semaines, on a été sur un plateau télévisé avec des militants du CPL et moi j'étais dans les coulisses. Les gens ont dit, mais, n'importe quoi, ils ont menti et tout...et quand ils sont sortis, ils nous ont dit: 'c'est bon, ça va, c'est de la politique, on peut mentir'. (...) Il faut comprendre que nous en tant que Libanais, nos ennemis sont, de un, les gens qui sont sectaires et clientélistes (...) et ces gens qui pensent que (...) au Liban, tout ce fait par: 'moi je connais X, je connais Y'. Il y a même des gens*

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<sup>324</sup> Nassim, interview with the author: December 2, 2010 [in French].

<sup>325</sup> Elza, interview with the author: April 14, 2010 [in French].

*au CPL à qui moi, j'ai dit: 'vous, vous êtes aussi mes ennemis, et vous, je ne veux pas de vous, parce que vous pensez aussi comme ça, vous êtes de cette race là et nous on veut changer cette race là (...)'.* Donc, il est important que nous, il n'y ait plus les petits arrangements (...) mais il y a un système qu'il faut respecter (...)."<sup>326</sup>

*"C'est vrai, il y a maintenant une certaine division entre le noyau et les nouveaux militants et surtout les nouveaux sympathisants. Quelle est la différence? La différence, c'est qu'on a créé ces idées, on y croit vraiment alors que les autres ils aiment ces idées, ils se rapprochent de ces idées, mais comme ils ne les comprennent pas très bien, ils ne savent pas comment les défendre...ils ont conscience que les autres ont tort, mais ils n'ont pas conscience à quel point ces idées qu'on a créé sont importantes. (...) Le Général est une personne que je connais de près, (...) je sais qu'il sait tout, il a conscience de ce qui se passe, il sait qu'il y a beaucoup de problèmes, mais il est vraiment intelligent...il sait comment prendre les choses en main mais d'une façon discrète et il sait comment orienter les choses de manière à avoir le bon résultat...il ne laisse pas faire les personnes qui sont en train de jouer rusé ou d'une manière moche prendre de l'importance, il les laisse jouer jusqu'à ce qu'ils tombent dans leur propre piège..."<sup>327</sup>*

The perception of deviance in the realization of the ideal of activism can be observed among militants like Paul and Alain who engaged at the time of the Syrian presence, respectively in 1999 and 2002. The transition from a semi-clandestine social movement to a political party necessarily causes deceptions and entails adaptations. However, while they are critical of any distancing from the ethics of activism, they did not react when the head of the Party of targeted. Whereas someone like Gebran Bassil is often negatively perceived by the students, as an exemplification of family politics – a sign that the students are not blind to such considerations – the figure of the leader remains globally beyond criticism, benefiting from a specific status as demonstrated in Paul's reference to his omniscience. Michel Aoun, in spite of his questionable behavior symbolizes the group and its objectives. The students massively chose “loyalty”, to use Hirschman classification (1970), because “voice” or “exit” would prove too costly for the definition of their self, strongly embedded in the partisan identity.

The paradoxical way the ideal of activism was mobilized to delegitimize the attempted internal reform of a party institutionally stillborn illustrates the very nature of the partisan relation. The FPM is envisaged as a group of attachment, a label that can be built on in interactions, and a sense of belonging closely connected with the perception of the self:

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<sup>326</sup> Alain, interview with the author: April 20, 2008 [in French].

<sup>327</sup> Paul, interview with the author: November 21, 2007 [in French].

*“Franchement, quitter le CPL non, je ne crois pas [que ce soit possible]. Parce que pour ça, je devrais changer ma façon de penser. Me connaissant, je suis une personne qui a pris ses décisions, alors non. Je ne changerai pas. Je quitterai le CPL quand le CPL lui changera ses idéaux. Alors c'est le CPL qui me quitterait et non pas moi qui quitterais le CPL. Ce ne serait plus le CPL, c'est lui qui aurait abandonné ses partisans.”<sup>328</sup>*

The Party operates as a sub-universe of the Lebanese society, whose social groups share the illusion of stability in time (Halbwachs 1997 [1950], p. 141). The leader appears as a symbol of this community unified by a shared interpretation of history as well as of the position of the FPM in the Lebanese political and social structures. The relation to the Party is thus primarily a relation of identification powered by the question of belonging. This understanding of the partisan relation reminds of the situation prevailing in the 1960s within the communist parties of many European countries, especially France and Italy, where “identity communism” remained powerful (Hastings 1991). Destalinization did not challenge the very existence of the socialist ideal and the shared sense of History (Lavabre 1994, p. 241) among the “communist people”, integrated into the sub-society organized by the Party, because their/its adhesion relied on a sense of fusion between their self and the class spirit they associated with the Party (ibid., p. 144). Its commitment was not political, but rather emerged from the perception of a specific social position – the working class in contrast with the bourgeoisie. Similarly, criticism about the deviations in Aoun's leadership does not compose a stabilized narrative that would integrate the history of the Party. Therefore, the autocratic tendencies of the General revealed in 2010 did not put into question the dominant narrative about the past of the organization.

The FPM seems to mirror the social and political system in which it is inserted, defined by intergroup fragmentation and personalization of power. As such, the Party incarnates a social position, fueling the sense of identification that sustains attachment to the organization. As long as the Party proves able to articulate its narrative identity with the experience of the people, mainly defined in reference to the Lebanese wars and the perception of antagonism between social groups, it will represent a space of identification. The way individuals construct their attachment to this space and how they evolve in interaction with their social environment is the theme of the next chapter.

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<sup>328</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: April 25, 2008 [in French].



## Chapter Four

# “Activist generations”

## Living out partisanship in a fragmented and changing world

*“Dans le premier volume de Parerga und Paralipomena, je relus que tous les événements qui peuvent arriver à un homme, depuis l'instant de sa naissance jusqu'à celui de sa mort, ont été préfixés par lui. Ainsi, toute négligence est délibérée, toute rencontre fortuite est un rendez-vous, toute humiliation une pénitence, toute échec une victoire mystérieuse, toute mort un suicide”*

Jorge Luis Borges (1967 [1962], p. 109)

The institutional construction of interpretative filters assimilates engagement with a form of secondary socialization. The new comer progressively learns and integrates intellectual and practical models of representation of the group identity, which he himself contributes to create through his participation. Becoming an activist supposes the insertion within a community organized along a specific group style composing bonds, boundaries, and norms. It entails the positioning into a complex sociability and relational networks defined by rituals and shared practices that sharply distinguish the collectivity from the out-group (Favier 2004, p. 399). This process of internalization and the consequent reproduction of the universe of signification of the partisan group raise essential questions. So as to understand the mechanisms sustaining the experience of partisanship, it is first necessary considering the individual dynamics of attachment and engagement, that is, studying the issues of the predispositions allowing the identification with the Party, of the effective entry in collective action, but also of the multiple different possible forms of adhesion between people, and their evolution in time (Fillieule & Mayer 2001, p. 21). Indeed, identification does not arise from a blank page, nor do all members adhere similarly, even in controlled organizations such as political parties (Lazar 2001, p. 174). It is thus indispensable to tackle the question of the encounter between the socialized individual and the organization (Grojean 2008, p. 553).

A second issue results from the perpetual interactions between a multiplicity of institutions in which the individuals have been inserted during their life. The FPM tries to impose an interpretative filter-of the reality, but it does not operate in a vacuum. Alternative definitions of such filters exist in other social constructions, affecting the

framing work of the Party. Michel de Certeau explains that while “the fundamental function of the institution is to make believe in an adequacy between the discourse and the reality in presenting its discourse as the law of reality (...), every institution relies on others in a network that constitutes the 'spiderweb of belief’”<sup>329</sup> (de Certeau 1983). In other words, the FPM has to rely on other social institutions in order to persuade its members to adopt its definition of the reality. The adhesion to the Party's universe of signification is only possible because this horizon is sustained at some point by other institutions, such as the families of the activists, their religious groups, or their schools and professional environments. How, simply put, does the embeddedness of the Party and its activists in multiple social institutions enable to understand attachment, its various forms and the manner it is lived out by the actors? How do the dispositions acquired during the socialization enable to understand the relation of the actors with the partisan institution (Fretel 2004)? While the Chapter Three analyzed the institutional devices and the standardized interplays producing the organizational construction of shared collective representations of the role of the activist, this chapter studies the individual relations to these interpretative frames, the trajectories they generate, and the influences from the wider social and economical environments that impact them.

March 16, 2009. When I sat with Doni in the yard of Huvelin campus for an interview, I already knew him for several months. A devoted member of a scout group, Doni was at that time the coordinator of the FPM in Huvelin, a university he joined in 2006. As such he supervised many of the activities I observed, especially the electoral meetings held during the previous autumn. Born in 1987, Doni really started his engagement in the university. However, he was already living in an atmosphere profoundly marked by the FPM cause. Indeed, he is the nephew of one of the most respected figures in the FPM, Hikmat Dib. An organizer in 1991 of a demonstration in support of Michel Aoun, then refugee in the French Embassy, former head of the student section of the semi-clandestine FPM between 1996 and 1997, and former member of the municipal council of his native city of Hadath, Hikmat Dib is above all known in the movement for his participation in a 2003 partial Parliamentary election in the Baabda-Aley region. It was the first time the FPM entered under its own name an electoral competition. Then aged 47, he faced a candidate supported by all the parties loyal to the Lebanese regime Henry Helu, son of the late Pierre Helu, whose

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<sup>329</sup> I translated the original formulation from French: “l'institution a fondamentalement pour fonction de faire croire à une adéquation du discours et du réel, en donnant son discours comme la loi du réel (...), chaque institution particulière s'appuie sur d'autres dans un réseaux qui constitue 'la toile d'araignée du croire’” (de Certeau 1983).

brutal death on a TV debate forced the organization of the election. The poll took place on September 14, 2003. Dib, an engineer who is also a founding member of the association for the Human rights and the right of the individual in Lebanon, officially obtained 25,500 votes against 27,500 for Henry Helu. In spite of the defeat, the score realized by their candidate raised a wave of euphoria among FPM supporters. Praised for his courage and pioneering role, Hikmat Dib was finally elected member of the Parliament in 2009. The presence of this famous relative logically played an important part in Doni's representation of his own itinerary alongside the FPM:

“J’étais à l’école en 2001 [en fait 2003] lorsque mon oncle, Hikmat Dib, a été le premier candidat du CPL dans les élections parlementaires...parce qu’avant, on ne participait pas aux élections : en 1992, 1996 et 2000 (...). Je me suis engagé dans ces élections pour deux raisons : d’une part, parce que je supportais beaucoup le CPL à l’époque de la présence syrienne. D’autre part, pour des raisons familiales, puisque mon oncle était le candidat. (...) J’admets que l’ambiance dans ma famille, qui était CPL, a beaucoup influé sur mon engagement. Et aussi, à l’époque de la présence syrienne, je n’avais le choix qu’entre les FL et le CPL, parce que c’était les deux partis qui luttent contre la Syrie. Et puisque ma famille est CPL, j’ai choisi le CPL...en fait, je n’ai pas choisi directement, c’était plus ou moins implicite. (...) A l’école [au collège Champville] même si la politique était officiellement interdite, on avait de nombreuses discussions entre camarades au sujet de tout ce qui se passait, de la situation. (...) Ces échanges ont été pour moi plutôt l’occasion de valider mon choix que j’avais plutôt pris de ma famille.”<sup>330</sup>

Doni's account seems to mirror the preconceptions of the acquisition of party identification. It starts with the determinant influence of the family, mark of the primary socialization, highlighted by the historical circumstances in which the individual lives, and reinforced in interactions with peer groups in the school environment. However, rather than the sequence of socialization, the story of his encounter with the FPM seems to translate the various cognitive spaces in which Doni situates his attachment to the Party: the intimacy of the family, the bonds created by the political cause – the struggle against the Syrian presence, and the boundaries emerging from social interactions. The presence of these cognitive spaces is the result of a socialization process that is recounted a posteriori from the perspective of the identification with the FPM. It is because Doni defines his self in reference with the Party today that he reads the story of his political socialization as such. Nonetheless, the multiple sites of socialization he mentions all played a part in his attachment to the

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<sup>330</sup> Doni, interview with the author: March 16, 2009 [in French].



Party, allowing him to integrate them into the narrative of his adhesion. How to understand the impact of the various spaces of socialization beyond the narrative reconstruction?

The study of political socialization, long dominated by the behaviorist school, originally highlighted the concept of party identification (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes 1960, p. 63) as “an effective, almost immutable, emotionally based orientation” (Niemi & Jennings 1991, p. 970). In the first place aiming at the analysis of electoral practices in the USA, these early approaches considered politics as “a learned behavior” (Hyman 1959, p. 18). They were designed to understand how individuals learn from institutions, underlining primarily the family transmission of political preferences (*ibid.*, p. 85), a transmission perceived as largely unconscious and acquired in the early stage of life. Rapidly however refinements were introduced to note the potential evolutions of the political preferences of the children. Not only conjunctural motives impact identification (Key 1966), but the children sensibility to the political environment is likely to generate changes from the party identification demonstrated by their parents (Franklin 1984). According to Franklin, if the preferences inherited from the family play the central part in the initial political trajectory of the individual, other institutions and agents take over during the following phases (*ibid.*). In other words, the predispositions acquired from the family are engaged in situated social interactions that transform them (Percheron 1993).

The assertion of the interactive nature of socialization entailed a shift in the focus of analysis: from the family only the attention moved toward the exploration of the spaces of exchanges between the sites of the primary and secondary socializations. Richard Merelman (1980) locates the external influences in what he named “polity”, the political society in which the actors are evolving. However, the concept remains abstract and thus does not allow decrypting the processes of interrelations between the family and the environment (Joignant 1997, p. 539). Annick Percheron later proposed the idea of “inherited milieu” (1982; 1994) to underline the importance in the patterns of political socialization of the interactions with the social surrounding in which the actors are situated. Individuals engage the predispositions they acquired in their primary socialization in relational settings they chose only partially. To define this milieu and thus better understand the mechanisms of the construction of political preferences Alfredo Joignant (1997, p. 544-546) proposes a triple distinction he draws from different works in the field of socialization studies. The polity, he argues, can be more accurately envisaged by distinguishing environment, context, and networks, three dimensions conceptualized as complementary levels of analysis.. Environment constitutes a spatially and politically structured territory, located in the context of most

of the American researches at the level of the “county”. Context, for its part, represents also a structured frame, but organized in the immediacy of social interactions, generally situated in the neighborhood of the actors in which the most influential relations in terms of political socialization are staged (Huckfeldt 1984; Huckfeldt & Sprague 1990). Contexts are mediated either directly through interpersonal interactions, or indirectly (Weatherford 1982). These frames are especially constructed in reference with experienced events allocated with political meaning (Sears & Valentino 1997). Such events may become the “matrix” of political attachments (Ihl 2002, p. 139). Taking these circumstances into account sustains the possibility of a sequential analysis allowing a better understanding of the evolution of the predispositions of the actors in the course of their lived experiences (*ibid.*, p. 142-143). Unlike contexts, which are frames imposed on the actors, networks are individually constructed and result from the succession of choices and decisions made by the actors. Their study hence offers the possibility to consider the interpersonal connections in which politicization is developing.

Without endorsing the conclusions of the research trends presented here, which remain essentially centered on the American society, it seems possible to advantageously adapt some of their insights. First of all, it is necessary to remind that the use of the notion of identification in this work differs from the classical notion of “party identification” (Franklin 1984; Inglehart 1977; Niemi & Jennings 1991)<sup>331</sup>. For me, identification refers to the process of construction, both cognitive and practical, of the interpretation of the self in reference with the partisan group. The FPM, I demonstrated in the previous chapter, filters the perception of reality to impose its definition of the situations experienced by its members. It aims the assimilation between its narrative identity and the reality. However, to succeed, the horizon sketched by the partisan narrative needs to find an echo in the social realities experienced by the actors. Doni's comments suggest how perceptions attached to a party narrative reflect horizons of signification existing with the family, discussed among friends, and articulated to lived social contexts – in the extract the presence of the Syrian army in Lebanon.

The interactions between the framing operation undertaken by the Party, the predispositions inherited from primary socialization, and the multiple experiences of the reality of the actors, impose a detailed analysis of the different levels and institutions participating to the formation of identification with the Party. My objective is to understand how the cognitive schemes echoing the FPM narrative are constructed

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<sup>331</sup> See the Framing Chapter of this work.

in time and how the plurality of the situations from which they emerge allows to consider the variety of the relations existing between the actors and the Party, the diversity of the imaginaries anchored in the group's universe of signification, as well as the multiplicity of the trajectories lived by the activists I encountered. In doing so, I seek to present the social complexity of partisanship in the FPM without depriving the analysis of its sociological significance (Mischi 2003, p. 92), that is, to do justice to the plurality of situations coexisting within the group without losing sight of the salient mechanisms allowing the understanding of the construction of the collective.

In this chapter, I intend to insist on the cognitive schemes in the organization of experience and the processing of information in interaction (Conover & Feldman 1984) within the complex “spider web”. These cognitive properties are actively integrated by the actors as demonstrated by the mode of internalization of the partisan universe of signification presented in Chapter Three – a sound example was provided by the individual search of historical material undertaken by the students mainly through the Internet. The acquisition of cognitive filters remains situated in the interplay between the various social spaces experienced by the actors both horizontally – the multiple spheres in which the actors are inscribed at the same time – and vertically – the sequential succession of experiences, starting from the primary socialization. Drawing on the analytical distinction between environment, context, and networks, I propose to depict these social spaces, considered as complementary dimensions that define imbricated cognitive territories in which identification with the FPM is encrusted. Interpersonal networks are envisaged first, as the closest spaces for the individual. They include the most influential forms of networks in the daily life of the Lebanese youth: the family, the neighborhood, and the peer groups, mainly considered from the perspective of school and university (1). Then, I turn toward the contexts, the intermediate level conceptualized here as interactional frames structured mainly by events of political significance, to focus primarily on the context of encounter with the Party. Indeed, contrary to the illusion of immutability of the group asserted by its identity narrative, the FPM evolved in time, due to the renewal of its members and the change in the political context in which it has been inscribed. My hypothesis is that the state of the Party at the moment of the entry of the individual strongly impacts the relation of the actor with the group, the ways partisanship is lived out, and the possible trajectories designed for the future. Hence, generations of activists arise, principally differentiated by the original context of the attachment (2). Finally, a wider space is envisaged, which includes the global social and economic environment in which the youth are inscribed. It is mainly characterized by a growing economic pressure coming from a worldwide evolution of the neoliberal labor market

and a tendency toward individualization of the actors in their social life, another tendency observed in the wider world. In Lebanon, my suggestion is that these global evolutions influence the mode of experience of partisanship, which tends to become a space of refuge crystallizing the sense of belonging of the actors (3). The general hypothesis organizing the demonstration is that the embeddedness of partisanship within these three spaces of socialization constructs party attachment as a triple heritage, placing the issue of memory at the center of the processes of identification.

To guide these developments, I refer to the sequence of analysis suggested by Agnès Favier in her study of student activism in prewar Lebanon (2004). According to her three steps have to be envisaged: how the individual finds him/herself in the situation to become an activist, how engagement transforms the predispositions previously acquired, and how the experience of partisanship determine the possible trajectories of the individual. These three questions are here tackled from a point of view that includes the narrative perspective structuring this work. Moreover, although this chapter often highlights the processes drawing on the heritage of early socialization and primary bonds, my intention is not to suggest their preeminence over the symbolic and spatial dynamics at work in the interactional settings I presented in Part One. Rather, turning the attention toward predispositions, attachments, and background contexts aims at complementing the study of interactions and at shedding light on some of the foundations working as anchoring devices for the actor in the flows of social encounters. In my views, both elements should be seen as two interrelated processes, each of which enables to better understand the other.

## **1. FAMILY, NEIGHBORHOOD, COMMUNITY: ORDERING PREDISPOSITIONS THROUGH SOCIALIZATION NETWORKS**

The central premise of this work is that engagement derives from identification, an interactive and sequential process starting from the *appropriation* a social identity and its *transformation* depending on personal experiences (Harré 1983). Engagement is therefore understood as a process of personalization of the group identity, realized upon the interrelations with significant others. Affective bonds thus play an active role. How then, does the integration within social networks, starting from the family, weight on the inscription of individuals in the universe of signification of a specific partisan group?

In Lebanon, assignments are powerful. Primary bonds, essentially the family-ties and the related communal affiliations, are the foundations of social inscription of the

individuals. Partisan identities articulate these categorizations so that they tend to become themselves assimilated with primary attachments that determine social interactions. Michel Aoun declared bluntly that every one in Lebanon has a political belonging since his or her birth<sup>332</sup>. Stories voiced by FPM students often support this claim. They either tend to naturalize their attachment or even to rigidify the perceptions of partisan affiliations. One former USJ activist I met in a street of Beirut a couple of years after our interview told me that he still felt as strongly attached to the FPM. However, he continued, he “*gave up activism because there is no point: someone supporting the Lebanese Forces will do it for ever, and so will someone affiliated with the Tayyâr. Engagement is not worth, because nothing is never going to change after all*”<sup>333</sup>. It seems that people are born *Tayyâr* or *Quwwât* rather than acquire these affiliations<sup>334</sup>. Such assertions in fact reveal the internalization of the group style and cognitive filters and their mobilization in the assignation of the self and of the others. They are the result of the socialization process, which enables to understand how the group's narrative identity captures the definition of the self.

Vygotsky (1978) states that children are raised into a world of public representations that they eventually internalize through communication to form the foundations of their individual representations. An interactional process, socialization depends on human networks in which the individuals are inserted. The experience of socialization of the young Lebanese is mainly organized around a triptych composed by the family, the local community, and the sectarian affiliation. To these dimensions, I add the importance of peer groups, whose influence during the school years is central in the construction and appropriation of identity references.

### **A) From families to family stories**

Analyzes of political socialization insist on the role of the family in the transmission of partisan affiliations. In Lebanon, this general observation is moreover coupled with the declared strength of political heritage, a key feature of the “Family Republic” (Kassir 1997). Obviously, a simple observation of the political preferences of the parents of the interviewed students corroborates this affirmation<sup>335</sup>. With a few exceptions<sup>336</sup>, all

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<sup>332</sup> Cited in *L'Orient le Jour*: April 28, 2009.

<sup>333</sup> Field notes: November 2010.

<sup>334</sup> Agnès Favier notes the same tendency among her interviewees (2004, p. 374).

<sup>335</sup> See in the appendix.

<sup>336</sup> The exceptions are Karam, whose parents strongly oppose partisanship, Fouad, whose mother supports the March 14 coalition, Sami and Justine, whose parents demonstrate no political preferences, Tayeb, whose parents are Arab nationalists, and Alain, whose father, a former Kata'eb, has always

the students display a profile of affiliation, i.e. the political choice of the children is the same than the choice of their two parents or of one of their parents provided the second one does not oppose this preference (Muxel 2001, p. 54). The absence of reliable quantitative data nevertheless impedes to assess the phenomenon. Besides, the diversity of the families and the variety of their relations to politics complicate the evaluation of the family influence. Social trajectories of the families as well as of the actors themselves are too intricate to provide any kind of explanation of engagement.

If the choice of the FPM almost always matches the preferences of the parents, it is not because engagement directly results from the influence of the family but rather because adhesion has to be understood as the outcome of a process of identification with the partisan group and its leader, in which primary socialization plays a prominent role. First contacts with the Party's universe of signification are often mediated by a member of the family, either nuclear or extended. These contacts are extremely variable and have to be considered in the more general Lebanese configuration, dominated by a high degree of politicization of the society. Three recurrent patterns of family mediation emerge from all the interviews:

*1) In highly politicized families*, several models of introduction to politics coexist. The first situation refers to the cases of prominent political families or the existence among the family members of an influential local figure, either a member of the Parliament, a municipal counselor, or a Mukhtar (an elected local officer in charge of registry, of the records of real estate transactions, etc.). Among the students I met, rare are those who belong to such families. In AUB, Assaf's (second-degree) cousin was elected to the Parliament in 2009. Although he comes from a prominent family of the Southern Suburb of Beirut<sup>337</sup>, his election was a consequence of his affiliation to the FPM. In USJ, Caroline's father is a municipal counselor in Jounieh and the uncle of her mother has been elected to the Parliament in 2005 and 2009 in the Keserwan as a non-affiliated member on the FPM lists. However, he does not belong to an ancient political family: a doctor, he created his local renown during the 1990s. Paul (USJ) is certainly the one whose family has the strongest political heritage; however his parents and himself opposed the orientation of the main figure of their extended family<sup>338</sup>. Similarly, several students belong to relatively important local families, but in most of the cases, to minor branches.

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expressed reserve toward Michel Aoun.

<sup>337</sup> See the next sub-section of this chapter.

<sup>338</sup> See the next section of this chapter.

The cases of parents or uncles formerly engaged in political movements represent a more frequent situation favoring an early politicization. In most of the cases, the parents were affiliated to “Christian forces” during their youth: the Kata'eb, the National Liberal Party, the *Tanzîm*, or the National Bloc. Some of them fought in the military branches of these organizations, mainly during the first phase of the Lebanese wars in 1975-1977. However, most of them turned toward Michel Aoun in 1988. Hence, the transition from more ancient political movements to what will become the FPM has already been achieved by the parents. Even though they were supporters of Michel Aoun and the FPM, they were in majority not actively engaged with the movement.

Finally, some students were raised in families of FPM activists, although the relatively recent creation of the FPM limits the number of “families of FPM activists”. Issam’s (AUB) parents were formerly engaged in the Kata'eb during their youth. They joined Michel Aoun's cause in 1988 and maintained their engagement throughout the 1990 decade. Older than most activists of that time, they nonetheless participated in several actions, like the selling of Lebanese fruits and vegetables to support national production and protest against the importation of Syrian goods. Issam consequently demonstrated a developed knowledge about this period, although he was born in 1990. However, he is the only case I met. More often, the early contacts with the FPM's universe of signification came not from the parents but from elder brothers, especially in families with important age differences among children. Alain for instance insisted on the importance of the actions of his ten-year-older brother in 1990 – especially after October 13 when, while in France, he participated in the taking of hostages in the Lebanese Embassy in Paris – in the formation of his political imaginary.

**2) In non-partisan families**, the image of Michel Aoun was generally positive. Many non-affiliated people living in the Christian regions, like it was the case of most of the parents of the students considered here, expressed sympathy for the government of Michel Aoun who promised to “bring the State back in”. Harassed by fifteen years of war and confronted to the militia order, many were those who placed their hopes in a return of the central State to end the chaos. In spite of his participation in the fighting, Aoun profited from his symbolic association with state institutions against partisan and militia forces. Moreover, Aoun's positive image has often persisted after 1990, because of his opposition to the Syrian presence, generally ill-accepted among the Christian populations. In the Republic of Taef, Michel Aoun failed to impose his hard-line stances, but nonetheless benefited from some sympathy, coming from his anti-system

position. The absence of political traditions in the family thus generally did not hinder later identification with the FPM.

3) *In military families*, a sense of corporatism seems to have promoted the sense of affiliation to Michel Aoun's movement. Four members of the FPM student group in AUB (Malek, Layla, Nassim, and Robert) are the children of high ranking officers in the Lebanese Army, mainly generals. This is also the case for two other students (Khalid and Safa). The impact of socialization in a military family includes four main dimensions.

First the values promoted in the Lebanese Army emphasize patriotism and the image of the Army as the guardian of national unity. Although the official patriotic rhetoric did not eradicate the issue of sectarianism in the Army, it has nonetheless granted the military the role of embodiment of the nation. The same narrative underlays the episode of Aoun's military government. Hence, connections between the military and FPM *ethos* exist. Second, most of the Christian officers had served during the war under the command of Michel Aoun head of the Army since 1984. Although around 600 officers were pushed to retirement within months after the fall of the military government (Khoury 1998, p. 220), the majority stayed in place. Nassim's father, for instance, was a close collaborator of General Edgar Maalouf, a member of Aoun's military government.

Besides, the new Lebanese authorities, under the supervision of the Syrians, promoted military corporatism through symbolic and material policies: "Alongside promoting an *esprit de corps* among army officers, corporate interests within the armed forces became a privileged bulwark shielding the new army from social fragmentation, factionalism, and political mobilization." (Picard 2012b) Corporatism could have favored the composition of a positive image of Michel Aoun among military family, although the Syrian tutelage prevented public support. Malek for example recounted to have grown up in the certainty that his father, a general, was opposing the Aounist movement in which he engaged from an early age. It was, according to him, only in 2005 that his father revealed to him that he actually remained a follower of Michel Aoun, and invited him to visit the General.

Third, affiliation to the Army has also nurtured hostility toward former militia forces, especially the LF against which the Lebanese military fought a bitter war. In the positioning game structuring social interactions, the existence of a sharp boundary separating the Army from the LF tends to promote bonds with the FPM identity narrative.



Finally, the networks binding military families tend to encourage inter-personal relations between children of Army officers, thus prompting collective views and behaviors. Layla, AUB student and daughter of a general, explained: “*Most of us have their parents in the Army, so we all know each other. We became friends and developed the same ideas.*”<sup>339</sup>

This brief panorama of the types of political socialization presents why identification and engagement with the FPM are generally not interpreted by the students as a rupture with their family. Family seems experienced as an identificatory landmark mobilized to position the self in the interactions hosted in an extremely politicized society. The importance of the family is prominent in the construction of political predispositions. However, confronted with the difficulty of an accurate analysis of the modalities through which familial influences operate, I propose to invert the natural order of the sequence and consider family heritage not as the starting point, but as a resource mobilized *a posteriori* to compose the narratives of engagement. In other words, I intend to shift the focus from family to family stories, so as to understand how family experiences are used in the reconstruction and the representation of the attachment to the group. A central reference in the FPM interpretative filter, the ethos of activism mostly considers family heritage negatively and tends to minor its role in the engagement stories. Many indications of this influence surfaced during the interviews, like the students explaining to have ignored or rediscovered *a posteriori* the political affiliation of their family. Despite this negative evaluation of family heritage in the dominant FPM identity narrative, family stories have constantly emerged during conversations. In which circumstances and for what purpose?

Without pretending to be exhaustive, three kinds of repertoires bind family stories and partisan identification. These repertoires are not exclusive. Most of the students combine them at different point of their narrations, in particular the first two. They participate to the construction, the appropriation and the publication of the bonds and boundaries that compose *groupness*, the sense of belonging to a distinctive community.

The first type of repertoire draws on *an assumed continuity*. An explicit example came from my encounter with Fouad, in May 2010. To the opening question about how he started, he immediately replied:

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<sup>339</sup> Layla, interview with the author: March 25, 2011 [in French]. The complete statement is reproduced in note 42.

*“First, my father was in the military, not with the Lebanese army but with the LF. He started in 1975 when the war started, he was with Bachir Gemayel. When I was around 14 years old, he always told me about Bachir and what they did during the war, what happened and everything. So I started to be interested.”<sup>340</sup>*

Fouad was born in 1990 in a Maronite family. His father originates from the Chouf. Today a FPM supporter, he previously joined the Lebanese Forces militia between 1975 and 1983. He notably participated in the battle of Zahleh in 1981, one of the highpoints in the Lebanese Forces war narrative. Fouad used to hear the stories about Bachir Gemayel and the fighting against the Palestinian organizations and the Syrian troops. After the assassination of Rafiq Hariri in 2005, the political upheaval urged him to *“look back at history, the end of the war and the conflict between General Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea. You can see that General Michel Aoun was, after the death of Bachir Gemayel, the only leader who fought the Syrians.”<sup>341</sup>* After his arrival in AUB, he rapidly became Vice-president of the Freedom Club. Two years later, he accessed to the Presidency, making him the responsible of the activities organized by the Party on the campus.

An interesting feature is the immediate assertion of his father's past as the source of his engagement, implicitly linking his adhesion to the FPM with the stories he heard about Bachir Gemayel. This connection also correlates the father's experience with the opposition to the Syrian presence. If Fouad's father fought the Syrians, especially in Zahleh, his original engagement was not against the troops of Damascus that were not involved in the combat against Christian militias during the first years of the war. The past of the family operates here to give an historical depth to the engagement of a young man. On the one hand, it builds at the same time the legitimacy of the FPM as a movement of resistance against the Syrian presence and, beyond, as a guardian of the Lebanese Christians. On the other, it positions the narrator in a symbolic line that allocates a historical signification to present-day activities. For Fouad, it works as a powerful anchoring device to locate his self in a society in which familial, sectarian, and partisan affiliations are prominent.

The second kind of repertoire refers to the construction of *a repulsive boundary*. Like the first type of repertoire, this mode of using family stories is frequent. The social marking it designs mainly involves the distinction with the Lebanese Forces, a group generally represented under the traits of its former militiamen. Among many

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<sup>340</sup> Interview with the author: May 24, 2010 [in English].

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

others, Justine used a past episode experienced by her family to assert this irrevocable boundary:

*“Je me rappelle juste de ma grand-mère qui pleure tout le temps. Je me rappelle des gens de ma famille (...), des histoires qu’ils me racontaient. Par exemple ma grand-mère me racontait que, comme elle avait une maison à Sin el-Fil, les Forces Libanaises sont venues et ont pris sa maison. Elle ne pouvait plus prendre ces propres affaires. (...) Chaque fois qu’elle venait, ils faisaient plein de problèmes, ils se moquaient d’elle bien qu’elle était une femme âgée. Une fois elle voulait récupérer son Evangile à la maison et elle l’a dit au mec des Forces Libanaises. (...) Alors il a pris l’Evangile, il l’a jeté par terre et l’a piétiné...je me souviens surtout de cette histoire parce que ma grand-mère, à chaque fois qu’elle la raconte, elle pleure. (...) Je me rappelle une autre histoire. Un de mes oncles, qui était jeune, environ treize ans (...) était au balcon. (...) Des miliciens sont venus, ils savaient que son frère aîné était dans l’armée, donc ils l’ont pris et l’ont emmené dans la rue. Ils lui ont mis le pistolet contre sa tête. Ils voulaient le tuer mais grâce à Dieu, un autre milicien des Forces Libanaises qui connaissait son frère avec qui il avait été à l’école est arrivé...il a discuté avec les mecs, (...) et mon oncle a pu remonter à la maison.”<sup>342</sup>*

A dedicated Christian originating from a Greek-Catholic family from Aley, Justine was born in 1985. During the conversation, she explained that the experience of her family with the Lebanese Forces played the central role in her choice. She said that when she entered university, she felt the necessity to engage to “*have a vision of [her] identity*”. A Christian, she “*had to*” consider the Christian parties and decided to support the FPM because “*naturally*” she “*couldn't be with Samir Geagea*”<sup>343</sup>. Justine was not very active outside university, but nonetheless expressed a strong sense of belonging.

The episodes recounted here insert Justine in a collective story which it expresses the rejection of the violence committed by the militia against the population. Through these narratives, she not only strongly asserts a rigidified separation from the LF, but she also normatively characterizes both factions. The scene of the Gospels delegitimizes the identity narrative of the Lebanese Forces, claiming their guardianship over the Lebanese Christians. Justine hence intends to reveal, through the mobilization of an emotional family experience, the hidden truth of the LF story. In this case, partisan engagement serves to materialize repulsion toward another social category.

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<sup>342</sup> Justine, interview with the author: October 24, 2007 [in French].

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

Recurrent alternative versions of the construction of a repulsive boundary involve the story of the assassination of a family member by the militia. Safa, another LU student, told that her uncle was murdered by LF militiamen alongside several other people accused of supporting the Army during the 1990 Elimination war, shot against the walls of the church in her village near Batroun<sup>344</sup>. Likewise, Patrick recounted the death of his grand-father, an official of the National Liberal Party, during the fighting with the Kata'eb in 1978, followed twelve years later by the killing of his maternal uncle, soldier in the Lebanese Army within the first days of the war against the LF<sup>345</sup>. In such conditions engagement could become a way of exorcizing a family trauma.

Finally, a last and less frequent set of family stories operates as a mean to *rebuild a lost link*. An atypical yet sound example was provided by Jawad, a student of the Lebanese University and Notre-Dame University. To start our interview, he stated:

*“Until the age of 15, I was neutral. I didn't care about politics (...). I am a Christian believer. I didn't care about what the religions do in Lebanon. At that time, my father was the head of the Fanar local committee of the FPM. (...) That was before 2005. When Hariri died, everyone started to get curious. (...) The only thing that attracted my attention is secularism in the FPM. Because I come from a Maronite family but my parents are separated. And my mother is alone. The churches in Lebanon, especially the Maronite church, make it very difficult for people to divorce. So I come from this background. I was hurt by the Maronite church. And my mother was hurt to. So I was very attached to the secular project.”<sup>346</sup>*

Born in 1990, Jawad first ignored the engagement of his father, a committed activist of the FPM, who was later designated as the coordinator of the movement in Fanar (Beirut northern outskirts), an important district because it hosts several faculties of the Lebanese University. In spite of his long lack of interest, Jawad rapidly became an active member of the FPM student group in the NDU, before joining the Lebanese University to study Political Science in addition to his original curriculum in Engineering. His devotion led him to participate in the School Committee, in charge of the formation dispensed by the FPM to high-school students. Coordinator of the Metn area in the Committee, he is in charge of the supervision of seventy-one schools, although he actually had contacts only in forty-two of these schools. His role is “*to teach the school students about the FPM: what happened during the war, how FPM*

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<sup>344</sup> Safa, interview with the author: December 14, 2010 [in Arabic].

<sup>345</sup> Patrick, interview with the author: December 5, 2010 [in French].

<sup>346</sup> Jawad, Interview with the author: March 31, 2011 [in English].

*started, who is General Michel Aoun, what he did before 1990 and between 1990 and 2005, what he did after he came back.*”<sup>347</sup>

The history of his family is here mobilized in a completely different perspective. His narrative stages the injustice imposed to his mother by the sectarian order that grants the management of the personal laws to religious devines. The Maronite law does not allow divorce, leaving Jawad's mother in the impossibility of re-marry and rebuild her life. Ironically, the denunciation of this injustice and the subsequent willingness to found new links free of confessional influences, at the same time at the level of the society and in his personal life, has pushed Jawad to endorse the partisan identity of his hated father, the cause of the misfortune of his family.

The horizon of the family is in itself a representation, rebuilt upon an intimate narrative memory. Overall, the multiple family trajectories merge in their shared modes of participation in the construction of *groupness*. Faced with the fragmentation of the social, the youth draw on family experiences to compose their interpretation of the reality and to anchor their position within the interaction it hosts. But these family stories only acquire signification *a posteriori*, when inscribed into a sequence that gives them their meaning (Dakhliya 1990, p. 36). Primary bonds are encrusted into stories the next generation perpetuates by integrating them into new storylines discovered in the encounter with the group. Each story composes its own horizon, which can only be understood in relation to a personal trajectory and sociological attributes. In turn, the family experiences provide foundations that enable the partisan orientation of the identity narrative to succeed (Lavabre 1994, p. 156). Students are indeed inserted into a-heritage, but a symbolic one.

The binding of this symbolic heritage with the concrete human and organizational structures of the Party is operated through the affective mediation of male family members, underlining the symbolic of filiation: fathers, elder brothers, and uncles stand out as the most common vectors toward the universe of signification of the group. Family hence constitutes the primary – yet not exclusive – network linking the individual to the collective identity of the Party. However, these bonds need to be activated in a larger perspective intimately related to the family: the neighborhood defined in Lebanon by two dimensions, local and communal.

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

## **B) Positioning in communal neighborhoods: being Muslim in the FPM**

Along with the family bonds, the inscription in a local territory and the sectarian affiliation compose the classical dimensions of attachment in the Lebanese society (Beydoun 1994; Khalaf 1987). The notion of *neighborhood*, understood at a cognitive and territorial level, enables to associate the three aspects: the family, nuclear and extended, represents the proximity network par excellence while neighborhoods designates spatial territories that are effectively or symbolically identified with communal groups. Together, family-ties, the networks resulting from the residence and the origin in a locality defined in terms of regional and sectarian characters, contribute to attach the actors to specific partisan narratives. Lebanese territories are, maybe more in Lebanon than in many other countries, hosting identity narratives and definitions of the social reality they incorporate. Consequently, growing-up in a particular neighborhood strongly affects the possibilities of identification with political forces as the regional implantation of most of the Lebanese parties illustrates. The logic of strongholds constructs localities into components of the partisan identities.

In order to study how the neighborhood impacts the socialization and creates the conditions of possibility of identification with the FPM I propose to concentrate on counter-examples. Drawing on my research experience among both Hezbollah and FPM students, I intend to examine the case of some of the Shia Muslim students engaged in the FPM to decrypt, *a contrario*, how the neighborhoods in which they were socialized positioned them in situation to identify with the FPM rather than with Hezbollah (or *Harakat Amal*), the party dominating politically their sectarian group. My objective is to demonstrate that the inscription into a cognitive and spatial neighborhood stands out as a more pivotal element than the sectarian affiliation *per se* to understand the conditions in which identification in a partisan group operates in the Lebanese society. For me, the embeddedness of the parties into social networks stages how attachment is encrusted into the society (Lenclud 1993, p. 6).

Surface indications of the centrality of neighborhood in the definition of identification were suggested to me by words heard from students who grew-up abroad, mainly in the milieus of the Lebanese diaspora, before coming back to Lebanon for school or university studies. Several of them confided that they were not aware of their sectarian affiliation before their return. They knew, they said, their religion, but not the specific sect to which they officially belonged. It is the interaction with their new Lebanese neighborhood which imposed them the necessity to define themselves in terms of sectarian categories: “*When I came back from Abidjan, I did*

*not know if I was Sunni or Shiite,*”<sup>348</sup> said Ahmad, who came to Lebanon only two years before to start his studies in USJ. Similarly, Anis, who spent his childhood in Brazil, explained he encountered sectarian divisions only at his arrival in Beirut’s suburb<sup>349</sup>.

Certainly, these claims are overdone, but they nevertheless account for the pressure for sectarian and political positioning generated by social interaction in the Lebanese settings. The idealization of harmony in the diaspora rather reveals the discomfort experienced when they discovered and had to face the categorization at work in their country of origin. Beyond these occurrences, the significance of neighborhood in the emergence of party identification was reinforced when I consider systematically the cases of the Muslim members of the FPM I encountered. They were Shiites. They represented only two individuals in the core sample. The specificity of their familial and personal trajectory fueled my reflection on neighborhood.

I met Tayeb first, on November 4, 2007. Tayeb engaged in the FPM in 2002, during his first year in the faculty of Economics in Huvelin. Born in the first half of the 1980s, he apparently exhibits the common attributes of many Shiite household. His father originates from the village of Shat, in the Beqaa valley, near the city of Baalbek, while his mother comes from South Lebanon. The family has lived in the Southern Suburb of Beirut, in Ghobeiri, for ten years. Previously, they dwelt in Ayn al-Mraysseh, a Beirut neighborhood situated at the seafront, near the American University of Beirut and the emblematic Hamra district in which the Syrian Social National Party, strongly implanted in the area, stands out as the most influential political force. His parents belong to the upper-middle class – his father is a Math teacher, his mother an archivist in the daily *al-Nahâr* – that constitute according to many studies one of the main components of Hezbollah's activist basis. The FPM and Michel Aoun were not, accordingly, part of the political horizon of the family:

*“Il y a dix ans, je ne connaissais pas Michel Aoun. Ce n'était pas dans mon entourage, pas dans ma vision politique, c'était pas une personne que je connaissais. Mais j'ai commencé à connaître Michel Aoun lors des élections du Metn [en 2002] et des événements du 7 août [2001]. C'est là que j'ai commencé à connaître Michel Aoun, ses idées et ses actes...et ce qui m'a aussi attiré, le fait que Michel Aoun, le 13 octobre [1990], a combattu les Syriens, alors que les autres n'ont rien fait (...).*

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<sup>348</sup> Ahmad, discussion with the author: October 31, 2008 [in French].

<sup>349</sup> See Chapter Two.

*J'étais petit à l'époque (...) et dans l'environnement d'un parti aux idées trop syriennes [the SSNP in Hamra]. Peut-être je connaissais le nom mais pas le mouvement.*"<sup>350</sup>

Contrary to many, his engagement is depicted as something all but natural. His neighborhood did not incline him to follow the FPM story. Tayeb apparently discovered the Party through media coverage of events like the massive wave of repression launched against the movement in the summer 2001 and the participation of the Aounists in the electoral campaign of Gabriel Murr against the “candidate of the regime”, his niece Myrna Murr, in the Metn partial election in 2002. His acquaintance with the universe of signification of the FPM came from an exposition to information communicated in media followed, after his arrival in US, by a direct contact with the collective dynamics of mobilization against the Syrian guardianship:

*“Ca a commencé avec les élections universitaires. Je travaillais avant tout pour un ami qui se présentait comme candidat indépendant. Le CPL est venu me parler et on a fait un petit lobby dans la classe où je travaillais: mon ami a pu se présenter deux ans de suite, soutenu par le CPL...ça a commencé comme ça, on a travaillé les deux premières années et après j'ai été candidat en troisième année. (...) Ce sont les élections qui m'ont rapproché du CPL.”*

The positioning imposed by electoral ritual after entering the university played a decisive role in his practical engagement. However, Tayeb rapidly participated in FPM activities outside the university, taking part in the demonstrations organized at that time against the Syrian presence in Lebanon, indicating that his adhesion rapidly went above the sole electoral context:

*“Il n'y avait pas de formation, c'était les débats entre amis, les trucs comme ça. C'était très fréquent, durant l'occupation, avec les autres actions comme les manifestations.*

*- Quelle a été ta première manifestation?*

*La manifestation de l'indépendance [22 novembre] en 2002. Je me rappelle des problèmes avec la police et l'armée. Et aussi le problème à Mathaf, la même année: il y a eu quinze ou vingt personnes de chez nous qui ont été frappées et battues par la police et deux personnes ont été arrêtées.”*

It is possible to infer how the “opportunity of socialization” (Ihl 2002, p. 138) to the FPM universe arose. The interpersonal relations Tayeb entered into in his university neighborhood articulated the preconceptions he forged through his

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<sup>350</sup> All the following quotations from Tayeb are taken from the same interview: November 4, 2007 [in French].



exposition to media, giving him the opportunity to concretely engage within the partisan community. In-group discussions as well as practical participation in demonstrations – then the main mode of expression of the group – played a pivotal part in the transition toward the discovery of the FPM definition of reality. The use of the term “occupation” to qualify the Syrian presence illustrates the integration of the cognitive filters in use within the movement. The opposition to the guardianship exercised by Damascus over Lebanon has been, according to him, the main vector of his progressive attachment to the FPM:

*“En fait, c’était le mouvement du CPL contre l’occupation syrienne qui m’a attiré. Depuis toujours je croyais que les Syriens occupaient le pays...et comme le CPL était le seul – en fait, pas le seul, il y avait les Forces Libanaises mais le seul qui se rapproche de mes idées – qui faisait face à cette occupation, j’étais intéressé par le CPL. (...) J’étais dans un lycée où tous mes amis étaient des partisans du Hezb al-Qawmî [SSNP], donc j’étais un peu différent d’eux (...). Et aussi il faut mentionner qu’il y avait les politiques de Rafiq Hariri qui nous tapaient sur les nerfs...les politiques et ce qu’il représentait à l’époque (...): l’occupation syrienne dans tous ses détails, dans toutes ses implications. Et du fait que mes parents appartenaient au courant de Kamal Chatila qui a été aussi renvoyé par les Syriens, donc j’avais l’ambiance contre les Syriens. (...) Le fait qu’il y avait une vraie résistance organisé par le CPL, ça m’a attiré (...).”*

It hence appears that Tayeb had elective predispositions to identify with the FPM cause. Indeed, his father has been an active member of a small political group, the Lebanese Popular Congress [*al-mu’tamar al-sha‘bî al-lubnânî*] of Kamal Chatila, also supported by his mother:

*“Mon père était partisan du Courant du Peuple Libanais de Kamal Chatila. Depuis toujours il était comme ça. Ma mère aussi...c’est ça l’ambiance politique à la maison, rien de spécial. (...) Kamal Chatila, c’était un homme politique sunnite qui était à Beyrouth lors de la guerre et qui a été exilé par les Syriens en 1979 je crois, puis de nouveau en 1983...il est resté en exil jusqu’en 2000 (...). Il a toujours été combattu par les Syriens, de tous les points de vue.”*

The “Congress” is a small Nasserist-inspired organization, advocating Arab nationalism. Officially founded in 1980, it opposed the pro-Syrian militias in Western Beirut after the Israeli withdrawal of 1982 – mainly Amal, the PSP, and the SSNP. This position forced Kamal Chatila, its president, to exile in France in 1984. It was not until the year 2000 that Kamal Chatila came back to Lebanon, where he adopted a political line more conciliatory with the Syrians before joining, in the post-2005 era,

the March 8 coalition. The belonging of Tayeb's parents to this political movement is also important to understand his adhesion to the FPM.

*“En fait, je me rappelle d'un seul truc politique...quand j'avais 13 ans, je ne comprenais pas la politique, mais mes amis m'avaient appris à dessiner le logo des Qawmiyah [“nationalists” partisans of the SSNP]. Quand je suis rentré à la maison et que je l'ai montré à mes parents, mon père m'a donné une petite gifle...je ne savais même pas pourquoi! J'ai compris que mes parents étaient contre les Syriens, dans leurs idées et leurs actes.”*

The strength of the conviction of his parents is doubled by a territorial disconnection with the heartland of the political territory of the main Shiite organizations, Amal and Hezbollah. Tayeb grew-up in a center Beirut district and frequented a school in which, as he recounted, the SSNP was the most influential party. The move of the family to the Southern Suburb did not change the situation: there Tayeb appears separated from his immediate neighborhood:

*“J'habite en Banlieue-Sud, quand il n'y avait pas encore l'accord entre le Hezbollah et le CPL, le CPL était mal vu. C'était l'époque de la 1559 et de la loi anti-Syrienne que Michel Aoun a soutenu aux Etats-Unis...*

*- C'était mal vu dans le quartier?*

*Dans le quartier oui, mais en fin de compte je ne suis pas trop connu: je pars le matin et je reviens le soir...personne ne me connaît. (...) En fait, à ce moment là, on ne pouvait rien faire [en tant que CPL]. Comme vous le savez, le Hezbollah tient bien ses partisans et tient bien ses quartiers et son espace donc je préférais ne pas me mêler des trucs politiques pour ne pas avoir de problème avec le Hezb. (...) Le fait de ne pas montrer son appartenance politique était mieux. (...) Ca a beaucoup changé avec l'accord, tout a changé. Tu es mieux accepté dans ton milieu, tu peux plus ou moins être marqué CPL sans aucun problème (...).”*

The exclusion from the space of neighborhood contrasts with the integration into multiple sociability networks observed among Hezbollah students. For example, Bouchra, whom I interviewed several times, and whose family presents some similarities with Tayeb's – her father is a Math teacher and was, for long, an adept of Arab nationalism – grew up in a West-Beqaa village politically divided between Amal and Hezbollah. Contrary to Tayeb, she was inserted into the local activities – mainly the scouts *al-Mahdi* – although her family did not have a strong political affiliation with Hezbollah. Consequently, when Bouchra moved to Beirut for her studies, she found a place in the foyer of an Islamic association related to Hezbollah before her parents bought an apartment in the Suburb. She later became volunteer in another

social welfare association related to the party: *Râbitat al-Nahda al-Ijtimâ'iyya* [Association of the social renaissance], whose offices are situated in Haret Hreik, a few meters away from the foyer in which she arrived. In parallel, she continued her political integration to Hezbollah<sup>351</sup>. Locality and political socialization are thus intimately connected. Integration within Hezbollah favors integration within the territories and networks of the Suburb, as the participation in social associations illustrates, concretely but also symbolically:

*“Je vivais dans une ambiance bien loin de la religion et je ne pensais pas aux idées politiques. J'étais dans une ambiance laïque (...). Ma famille, mon quartier, mes amis étaient proches [du Hezbollah], je vivais sur la route de l'aéroport [in the Southern Suburb] mais c'était comme un hôtel, je n'y étais jamais. Je passais tout mon temps avec des amis à Hamra ou Verdun. Je ne rentrais à la maison que pour dormir. (...) Et puis je me suis engagé dans ces idées [Hezbollah]. J'ai pris des cours...il y a beaucoup de choses que tu lis mais que tu ne comprends pas au début. Alors j'ai pris des cours. Je me suis inscrits à la Hawza [Shiite religious school] dans la Banlieue. (...) J'ai pris beaucoup de cours. (...) Ca ne se fait pas en une seconde, il faut une période d'intégration, mais ces idées sont devenues proches de moi.”<sup>352</sup>*

The physical integration in the *Dâhiyeh* mirrors, in Husayn's words his cognitive mobility toward Hezbollah. By contrast, the differentiation remains in Tayeb's case. A distinction from the neighborhood of the Suburb also reflected in the religious attitude of the family. Whereas the “*Hala Islamiyya*” [Islamic condition] imprints the Suburb (Deeb 2006), Tayeb defines his family and himself as:

*“Pas trop pratiquant. Ma mère est pratiquante, mon père pas trop. On n'est pas une famille très religieuse. Je n'ai pas une vision globale [de la religion]. Je connais un peu les habitudes mais je ne les pratique pas vraiment. C'est une religion ouverte, on n'est pas des fanatiques, on doit toujours accepter l'autre, ça a toujours été comme ça. Cette année j'ai fait le Ramadan, mais quinze jours seulement (...).”*

Finally, in the neighborhood of the university networks, dominated in USJ by political forces claiming their Christian dimension Tayeb's rapprochement with the FPM, a movement officially rejecting the sectarian cleavages, may have eased his position among USJ students:

*“Moi je suis musulman, mais pas pratiquant...je suis croyant au fond, mais pas pratiquant...du fait que j'ai été toujours dans une école catholique, donc ça ne m'a pas posé de problème. Mais il y a des gens qui ne m'ont pas accepté, quand ils su ma*

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<sup>351</sup> Bouchra, interview with the author: October 30, 2007 [in French].

<sup>352</sup> Husayn, interview with the author: February 26, 2005 [in French].

*religion (...): des gens choqués qui se sont éloignés de moi. En fin de compte, je m'en fous...ce n'est pas moi qui est choisi, c'est leur décision (...). Le fait d'être musulman et de gagner les élections en troisième année a fait pleurer des gens (...). Il y a des gens fanatiques, toujours...des gens qui n'acceptent pas l'autre (...). [Tu peux changer en étant actif] oui, si tu le fais dans un parti politique qui croit en l'inexistence des barrières confessionnelles...c'est ça l'importance du CPL (...)."*

The secular tag attached to the FPM conception of the Lebanese reality appears not only acceptable for a rather secular person like Tayeb, but it may also have facilitated his integration into his university neighborhood. The political struggle of the FPM for a secular Lebanon may have echoed the experience of rejection Tayeb underwent because of his sectarian affiliation in the USJ dominant atmosphere.

The case of Assaf, whom I met almost three years later in AUB, presented some interesting similarities with the situation of Tayeb. Assaf was born in 1990, and originates from the municipality of Chiyah, in the caza of Baabda, in the Southern Suburb of Beirut. Yet, he has always lived in Hamra, in the area of the AUB and was scholarized in the International College, an English speaking high-school situated near the AUB campus. His father is a surgeon in the American University Hospital, associated with the faculty of Medicine of the AUB, and his mother a teacher. Contrary to Tayeb however, Assaf's family was directly attached within the FPM, especially one of his cousin, an important official and long-standing activist in the Aounist movement:

*"To explain how I started at the beginning, I have to say that Michel Aoun's politics is part of my family. This is a bit strange because I come from a Shiite family, not a Christian family. Khamzi Kanj who is a member of my family, is my cousin. He is a very, very close friend of Michel Aoun. Khamzi Kanj, for the people who know about him, is from [the region of] Baabda and is very well-known (...). He ran for the elections there in 2005 and is one of the biggest personalities in the region. (...) When I was young I wasn't with Michel Aoun. Being a Shiite in Lebanon – because every sect as a special reference, you know, a Shiite will be with Hezbollah or Amal, a Sunni should follow the party of Hariri, most of the time I mean...so, when I was a kid, I was more thinking of Hezbollah."*<sup>353</sup>

Assaf relation to the FPM is described as clearly mediated by his family, and more particularly his cousin, Ramzi Kanj. Simultaneously, Assaf's acknowledgement of the awkwardness of the situation reveals the strength of the articulation between sectarian and partisan affiliations. His precision about having first felt proximity with Hezbollah

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<sup>353</sup> Assaf, interview with the autor: May 22, 2010 [in English]. All the following quotations from Assaf are taken from the same interview.

may also well result from a willingness to re-appropriate his engagement: by claiming he was first inclined to choose another party, Assaf somehow cuts the familial link with the FPM, a link that he consequently claims to have re-discovered afterwards, by himself – a position more acceptable according to the FPM model of activist, which rejects family heritage in politics. In any case, Assaf asserts, like Tayeb did, the unnatural dimension of his engagement. A last aspect has to be mentioned in his introduction: his attempt to affirm the local anchoring of his cousin, and consequently, of his family, in their region of Baabda, in the outskirts of Beirut. This takes all its meaning when the situation of his family is more deeply explored.

*“My parents were not politically engaged. (...) My family is mainly divided into two parts, Hezbollah and Aoun. The Aoun's part is bigger than the one of Hezbollah. If I had followed my parents, maybe I would have gone more with the Hezbollah part. But I followed what I believed. My grand-father for instance, he had a great relation with the Kata'eb, until now. He was a very good friend of the Gemayels. He is still supporting them now, but me (...) I follow what I believe is correct for Lebanon (...). My grand-father used to work in real-estate. Selling and buying land, things like that. He started with nothing and became one of the richest men in Lebanon. He doesn't care about money, that is why he doesn't have so much left...he gave a lot of money to people, and during the war many things were stolen (...). The Syrians stole many things. The day they left, they also take with them some stuffs [from our family house]. So, he used to buy land. He had an office, in Jdeydeh, next to the office of Amine Gemayel. They were neighbors. Amine Gemayel was an engineer at that time so he used to work with my grand-father, they talked and they became very close. And you know, during the war, we used to live in Gharbiyyeh [West Beirut] and he continued to go everyday [to visit his office] until it became too dangerous (...). You know, when you have close friends...yes, they were very close”.*

Assaf's first comment confirms his willingness to personalize his engagement by disconnecting it from his family heritage. However the main part of the account only corroborates the specificity of his family, an upper-class family whose position in Chiyah is far from being ordinary, as the establishment of close relations between his grand-father and the future President of the Republic, Amine Gemayel (1982-1988), demonstrates. Living in West Beirut, the family maintained a relation with the founding family of the Kata'eb, even after the election of Amine at the Presidency in 1982. The particular situation of Assaf's family is also established in the recalled episodes of the looting of the family's goods during the war, a first indication echoing the anti-Syrian stand of most of the family members. But the significance of Assaf's family heritage expands as the details of its origins unwrap:

*“My family is a Shiite family from Chiyah, in the region of Baabda. We are not from Jnûb [South], we are not from the Beqaa. So we are considered as part of Beirut. We are also considered as high-class. Many members of my family suffered from the people coming from the South and the Beqaa during the war. People stayed there in Dâhiyeh. The Suburb was very beautiful before. We had a lot of trees (...). So many suffered, many had their homes stolen, or new houses built next to theirs. You know the area with roads and trees became...you know before it was one of the most beautiful area in the region. So many suffered. This was one of the reasons that moved us away from [the mass]. They felt that they were not “habitués” at all that, it is new to us, we don't feel this is us. So they went more to the center [of the city]. And my cousin became friend with many members of the Aounists. They thought that this man is a great leader, even though he is Christian, in the war, my family didn't mind at all. And we had big parts of my family in Baabda protesting against Syria, during the last year before Michel Aoun went to France. And I am very proud of what they did. It was very brave. I am proud of my family.”*

The story Assaf voiced about his family is a story of distinction – and even conflict – with what he calls the “mass” of the Shiite populations from the South and the Beqaa pushed by the rural exodus toward the suburbs of Beirut, to populate what was then named the “Misery belt” of the Lebanese capital. The story of the Kanjs is intimately linked with the history of Beirut and with the social upsets that occurred in the eve of the 1975 war and were accelerated by the dynamics of the conflict. In a famous book entitled *From Village to Suburb. Order and Change in Greater Beirut*, Fuad Khuri (1975) presents this history. The author collected nineteen genealogies from different families, focusing on an extensive qualitative research conducted between 1968 and 1972 on two main categories: migrants who have settled in suburbs since around 1925 and natives who consider themselves as the original inhabitants of the area (p. 12). The study argues that the newcomers of the suburbs recomposed the communal ties existing in their regions of origins. Urbanization thus paradoxically reinforced the sectarian distinctions, inciting Khuri to conclude that “Ideologies that change with time constitute only the style of expression that people use to mobilize and organize more lasting community-based ties and relationships.” (p. 235)

The Kanjs consider themselves as original inhabitants of the area. Logically, they perceived the mass migration toward the region as an invasion. According to Khuri, the Kanj family actually belongs to the most ancient family of the Southern Suburb. They originate from a tribe coming from Yemen, via the Jabal Amil in Southern Lebanon (p. 27). The Kanj family, Khuri writes, is divided into three branches (*jubb*), descending from Kanj Hatum, a man established in the region of Ghobeiry, today the neighbor district of Chiyah, around 1840 after he bought land from the Shehab emirs

(p. 164). In the mid 1950s, the municipality of Chiyah was divided in two, giving birth to an independent municipal council in Ghobeiry, led by the Kanj family in 1964 with the support of migrant voters (p. 185-186). This short history of the family enables to understand the division existing between the Kanjs and the populations arriving from the South, in particular fleeing the fighting involving the Palestinians, the Israelis, the Lebanese Army and the various militias from the late 1960s, and illegally implanted into the area. The migrant populations, even more numerous after the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon, became the electoral basis of the Movement of the Disinherited of the Imam Musa Sadr and of its successor Amal, as well as Hezbollah. By contrast, the notable of the area, whose land properties were spoiled by the newcomers, maintained alternative political allegiances. The situation of Assaf's family further offers a striking parallel with the case of another Shiite notable originating from the same area, Lockman Slim, whose father was similarly a close friend of Amine Gemayel. Today, Slim, defining himself as a "Shiite dissident"<sup>354</sup> strongly opposes Hezbollah's control on the Southern Suburb. He founded and manages a renowned cultural center, "Le Hangar", hosting in particular a project focusing on the memory of the Lebanese wars<sup>355</sup>.

Like Tayeb, Assaf's account of his existence seems to emphasize the disconnection with his original milieu:

*"I grew up not really in a Christian area but in the Christian area of Hamra. (...) All my friends during these days used to live in Jounieh, in Rabieh, etc. I said the Christian area of Hamra because the old Hamra (...) was full of Christians. Still, there is a lot of Christians. You have something like five churches in Hamra street only, or even more than that. This indicates that you had a Christian population here in Hamra. And if you go to buildings in Hamra, especially old buildings, like the one I used to live (...) you will find a lot of Christians here. (...) All my neighbors were Christians, at least most of them (...). I also used to have FPM supporters in our building. And now I work with them. (...) I also used to go to the East part of Beirut. So, for example, our everyday shopping has always been done in Achrafiyeh. (...) You can say that I grew up with Christians. It was a very good thing because I met the Other even before I met my own part."*

The construction of an alternative neighborhood with Christians strongly emphasized here is also echoed in the references Assaf cited, for example Bachir Gemayel. His family further took refuge in Bikfaya, the heartland of the Gemayels

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<sup>354</sup> In the French newspaper *La Croix*: August 23, 2006.

<sup>355</sup> Lockman Slim's wife, Monika Borgman, realized in 2005 a famous movie about the massacres of Sabra and Chatila staging former militia men who personally participated in the killings: *Massaker*.

during the 2006 July war launched by Israel against Lebanon. Although presented as a choice, this separation from the territorial and political center of the Shiite community nevertheless surfaces as a constraint, which was eased after the signature of the document of understanding between the FPM and Hezbollah:

*“The agreement for me represents now something great. I see myself everywhere in that agreement, even more than I see myself in the Aoun's movement. This is the only paper in which I can say that all my ideas are present. For me, it would be very hard to see the day when this agreement will end. I hope I won't see that day. As I told you, I was at first against it, now I feel that this agreement represents me. (...) So I feel a very big relief. Now I have everything I could ask for in the agreement, I am not afraid, I also feel more reassured everywhere I go. I am happy because I have two sides, and they met. How great about that.”*

The relief expressed throughout the extract demonstrates the pressure produced by the cleavage with the spatial and cognitive neighborhood from which Assaf and his family originate. As a Shiite from the Southern Suburb, it is, in spite of all the alternative experiences he had, impossible to define his self without reference to Hezbollah, showing *a contrario* the central part played by the inscription into a political, spatial, and communal neighborhood.

If it is impossible to draw general conclusions from these two cases, they nonetheless tend to indicate by contrast the domination of political horizons over spatial and symbolic territories. The stories of Assaf and Tayeb show how the possibility of identification with the FPM arises from networks built in milieus *a priori* disconnected from the movement, thus revealing *a contrario* the outlines of the political socialization in Lebanon. Such interpretation seems corroborated by the situations of the other few Shiites I encountered among FPM activists beyond the core sample: none of them had an ordinary trajectory. Rather, they either belonged to military families – one whose father had served under Michel Aoun's orders – or, especially in the USJ, came from diaspora milieus implanted in French-speaking countries in West Africa – mostly Ivory Coast and Senegal – and had been educated in French schools, opening a bridge with the FPM universe of signification largely inspired by ideals highlighted by the western conception of politics.

### **C) School and peer groups**

Family and neighborhood do not exhaust the understanding of engagement. After all, only a minority of those sharing these affiliations concretely engage in collective action, and those who do so manifest variable forms of participation. Contingencies of encounters play a determinant part in the first steps in political action, only possible at



suitable moments of the life course. A time of emancipation from the family and of arrival in public spaces surrounded by political forces, adolescence represents a particularly favorable period. This general observation leads to consider the role of peer groups and of school in the trajectories of identification with the FPM.

Throughout my conversations with students, school did not surface as central in the reconstruction of the motives of attachment. The experience of the school years was most often mentioned to underline contrasts with the university world, presented as a plural world mediating the encounter with alterity. The narrations about school, on the contrary, generally emphasize sectarian homogeneity: “*Moi, j'avais passé quinze ans dans une école à 100% chrétienne où il n'y avait aucun musulman. Je pensais que les musulmans avaient trois yeux et les druzes n'avaient pas d'oreille ou n'importe quoi d'autre!*”<sup>356</sup> humorously asserted Karam, who joined AUB after spending all his childhood in Jamhour, an elite Catholic school. While the entry in university spaces arises for the majority of the students considered in this work as a key moment in their trajectories, marking a clear inflection in their life course, school is rarely cited in the narrative reconstruction of the activists' motives and, more globally, biographies. Beyond the social diversity of universities, the openness of their political competition, and the rupture university represents with the family life, one possible reason may reside in the fact that the main deciding factor in the choice of a school for the individuals of my sample, apart from geographical element, is social-class: only the most modest families for instance send their children to the public schools. Yet, as already explained, social-class differences do not belong to the FPM interpretation of reality, which rather insists on partisan fragmentation. Thus, the students I met most of the time experienced school as a continuation of their immediate neighborhoods, familial and local, characterized in terms of sectarian belonging by an overwhelming dominance of Christians.

This image of school emerging from the accounts of the FPM youth tends to confirm the dominant perception associating schools in Lebanon to a constituent in the communal surrounding of the individuals, reinforcing the fragmentation between Lebanese. This assertion mainly relies on the structure of education that privileges private and communal establishments<sup>357</sup> (Favier 2004, p. 356) as well as on the highly symbolic debate about the absence of a unified history program for the Lebanese children (Gilbert-Sleiman 2010). Accordingly, Theodore Hanf asserts that school does not represent a strong alternative space of socialization (cited in Messara 1983, p.

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<sup>356</sup> Karam, interview with the author: May 15, 2010 [in English].

<sup>357</sup> See Chapter One.

124). In other words, even in cases the values carried within the school environment contradict the other instances of socialization, they remain inefficient to change the predispositions of the actors. On the contrary, if school tends to mirror the inclinations acquired in the rest of the society, it plays an important role in strengthening these tendencies.

At the exception of Tayeb, a Muslim raised in an Arab nationalist family who studied in a Christian school mainly populated with children coming from SSNP – Syrian nationalists – horizons, rare were the students who experienced school as a rupture, or with the sense of dissonance described by Agnès Favier a propos the Leftist and Kata'eb activists of the 1960s and 1970s (Favier 2004, p. 357-358). The social proximity between the students in the Christian schools frequented by most of the FPM youth in terms of religious belonging, social-class, and local implantation, tends to neutralize the school experience. More surprisingly, few of the interviewed activists mentioned a teacher as a source of inspiration for them, while family members and fellow students were almost systematically evoked. This may suggest that school only prolongs already acquired political predispositions. But it may also come from the fact that FPM does not value knowledge as such in its definition of the ideal member: teachers cannot in these conditions embody a role-model, contrary to a party like the Lebanese Communist Party, in which intellectual cognition stands out and most of the activists I met mentioned a school or university teacher as a inspirational influence.

When school experience is more detailed, it is generally to describe the influence of inter-personal networks existing in these institutions. To discuss their impact in the school environment and suggest a modest contribution to the debate about the mechanisms of framing of interpretative filters and to the processes of identification, I propose to envisage two cases in which school was represented as an important step in the acquisition of pro-FPM convictions. The first portrait focuses on Nader, a Lebanese University student already introduced in Chapter One, while the second presents Emile, an USJ student whose family heritage is more detailed later in this work, within Chapter Six.

Nader was born in 1987. His family originates from the city of Qalaa, in the region of Baabda, but has lived in Jdeydeh, Metn, in the Northern outskirts of Greater Beirut. Nader's parents are of modest origin: his father is an employee in the Middle-East Airlines while his mother helps in a family-owned small business. After receiving his primary education in a Catholic school, Nader joined the public high-school in his neighborhood of Jdeydeh. There, he joined the Lebanese Forces, like his father did in his youth around 1975 before supporting Michel Aoun in the late 1980s:

*“Quand j'étais petit, deux ou trois ans, pendant la guerre, tous mes parents m'ont dit que j'aimais Michel Aoun. Ils m'ont dit que j'avais à la porte de ma chambre les photos de lui, et que j'aimais le klaxon<sup>358</sup> Michel Aoun: quand j'étais triste et que j'en entendais le son, j'allais mieux.*

*- Ta famille aimait aussi le Général ?*

*Oui, mon père, ma mère, et mon frère. (...) Aujourd'hui mon père se rend à des réunions du Parti avec le groupe de notre quartier. (...) Mais avant la guerre, celle de 1988, mon père était avec les FL. Il y était, du temps de Bachir Gemayel, comme un employé dans le FL. (...) Quand Bachir Gemayel est mort, mon père a quitté les FL. (...) Mais avant l'université, j'étais aussi avec les FL.*

*- Et pourquoi tu as changé ?*

*D'abord à cause de Samir Geagea...il a été libéré et ses idées ne m'intéressaient pas trop, sa politique non plus. Je n'aime pas ses alliés, comme Hariri, Joumblatt (...). Les FL travaillent selon une propagande qui n'est pas, comment dire, juste [sah]. Ils mentent [bîkazbû]! Moi, j'étais avec eux à l'école, je sais qu'ils mentent. [He switches to English] They talk to people who don't know history so they can give them a fake idea about history...but me, I love history, I like to know about everything, so they cannot make me believe what they want. Their propaganda is based on a fake truth (...).*

*- Why did you join them at first?*

*Because in my school, there was only one political view, the one of the Lebanese Forces. There was no other party, like Tayyâr or something else. So in the school, they give us protection, if we are with them. If not, they are going to fight you or do something bad. For that I was with them.*

*- What do they do to people who are not with them?*

*They do many fights, they beat them, they make them problems. They give you protection if you are with them. And the director was with them too...for that I was with them. (...) Now, it is different. I am freer. The faculty is different from school. There is more liberty, there is more rules, for that we can express our views. We have more freedom in the university and for that, I am with Tayyâr and not with them. (...) First I met the LF at the university, and after one month I met people from the Tayyâr. (...) At first, during the first year, I was a delegate for the LF.*

*- So why did you become delegate for the LF if you didn't like it?*

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<sup>358</sup> A car-horn sound used by the supporters of the General that reproduces the name "Aoun" in Morse.

*Because they knew my background from the school, so they considered me as a LF member as I was in the school and for that they asked me to be a delegate. Because they know I am working well...I work hard [in politics]. Because I did all the manifestations with them before March 14, 2005, not one but all of them, I was always there, against the Syrians [The last sentence was in Arabic: mich wâhdeh, kenet dâ'imân mawjûd...wa kelhon ded Sûriyyâ 'abel 14 Âzâr].*

*- You remember the occasions of the demonstrations?*

*Yes, the first one was for the Lebanese independence [Îstiqâlâ]. There was the Lebanese Army and it was my first and last time that I confronted with the Lebanese Army...and maybe it was because (...) I was carrying a LF flag. And I didn't know about the war between the LF and the Army. (...) After that time, I asked my dad and he told me everything. And I watched some documentaries and films about that war between the Army and the LF. And especially, the LF had given us films about that war. And when I watched these films, I asked my father and he told me everything about it, so I knew that they were telling lies and for that I am not with them. They make propaganda.”<sup>359</sup>*

In Nader's school experience, what mattered most were the inter-personal networks as well as the power relations they imposed on the school territory, rather than the school as such. The fact that he studied in a public school played a role in that story as the state of decomposition of public education leaves space for partisan influences much more than in private schools. School participated in his political trajectory because it articulated territorial and partisan power relations, moreover echoing a past experience of his father. However, after this episode, his entrance to university triggered another inflection in the dynamics of identification he followed. All happened as if Nader, after the digression of high-school, “came back” to his family current partisan position. It would be possible to consider that Nader's switch toward the *Tayyâr* was due to the entry into a new territory structured by different human networks and distinct power relations. However, it is noteworthy to precise that in the faculty he joined, the Lebanese Forces were also heavily dominant. His evolution cannot consequently be assimilated to a dynamics patterned by power relations exclusively. Although Nader describes his entrance to the faculty as a relief, the acts of revenge he had to undergo from LF supporters indicate the maintenance of a relative social pressure toward the LF in the faculty, confirmed by the description he made of the “dictatorship” of Samir Geagea's party in his faculty<sup>360</sup>. Probably, the combination

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<sup>359</sup> Nader, interview with the author: December 4, 2010 [in French, English, and Arabic].

<sup>360</sup> See Chapter One.

between a lesser social pressure, the encounter with new inter-personal networks connected to the FPM, and the situation of his family, clearly supporting Michel Aoun's movement, enables to understand Nader's trajectory. This particular case seems to question a dominant thesis in the study of political socialization highlighting life-span changes (Langton 1984, p. 461-481): the individuals successively enter different social networks and contexts, successive experiences tending to transform the impact of what was previously learned and internalized.

Rather striking is the complete reversion asserted by Nader: the LF universe of signification, in which he was apparently inserted – as his participation in LF demonstrations testified – is now totally rejected and despised as “*false truth*” and “*propaganda*”. It typifies the irreconcilability between the two interpretations – *Quwwât* and *Tayyâr* – of the Lebanese reality; being attached to one supposes refusing integrally the other. Furthermore, it exemplifies the process of cognitive mobility entailed by the immersion within a partisan group. Nader experienced two successive and contradictory phases of political socialization, first within the LF and then within the FPM. The transformation of his cognitive frames during the second phase operated as an “*alternation*” (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 178): the complete reorganization of his understanding of social reality. “The old reality, as well as the collectivities and the significant others that previously mediated it to the individual, must be reinterpreted within the legitimating apparatus of the new reality. This reinterpretation brings about a rupture in the biography of the individual (...)” (ibid., p. 179). In Nader’s case, the reinterpretation of the LF’s reality from the point of view of the FPM conception of history led to its rejection as “*false truth*”.

Different is the experience of Emile, a FPM activist in Huvelin (USJ), born in 1988. His family, originating from Zahleh in Eastern Lebanon, belongs to the middle-class. His father is a trader in home appliances, who engaged to fight the Palestinians and the Syrian troops within the Lebanese Forces during his youth in Zahleh, and his mother does not work. Emile was educated in one of the most famous establishment in the country, the high-school of Notre-Dame de Jamhour, a Jesuit elite institution. Jamhour is one of the rare school mentioned by its former students as a source of awaking of their political consciousness, mainly because of the existence of a debate club named after a former president of Republic Charles Helu (1964-1970) and organized by Najji Khouri, president of the association of Jamhour alumni, known for his initiative favoring dialogue between religions and considered close of the Aounist movement because of his participation in Aoun's coordination unit, the BCCN, in 1989:

*“Entre amis, nous avons un club à l'école qui s'appelait le club Charles Helu. C'était un club pour discuter de la politique. (...) C'est là que la plupart des jeunes se sont formés et ont déclaré leur appartenance aux patriotes du Liban...parce que c'est Courant patriotique Libre, c'est pour cela que je dis patriote. (...) Il arrivait parfois que nous étions soixante ou soixante-dix élèves. Parce que ce club était autorisé par l'école qui l'avait organisé. (...) Le président du club, c'était M. Naji Khouri. Il décidait des sujets dont on allait parler dans les réunions. Il nous parlait beaucoup, (...) il disait toujours qu'il fallait que les Musulmans et les Chrétiens soient ensemble, qu'il ne devait plus y avoir de problèmes sur cette question. (...) Il organisait aussi des dîners, des tournois de Basket et toutes sortes de divertissements entre les étudiants de notre école, N.D. de Jamhour – donc il n'y avait que des chrétiens parce que dans ma division de 160 élèves, il n'y avait que trois musulmans qui en plus étaient comme nous, parlaient comme nous, vivaient comme nous, buvaient de l'alcool...bref des musulmans qui vivaient en milieu chrétien, comme les chrétiens – et d'autres écoles. (...) Il faut dire aussi qu'avec ce club, nous avons rendu visite à M. Joumblatt. A cette époque, il était un allié des Syriens. Nous avons aussi rencontré M. Franjeh qui était aussi avec les Syriens. Et on voulait organiser une discussion par téléphone avec le Général Aoun, mais on n'a pas pu, l'école ne nous a pas laissés le faire (...). Ça m'a aidé à former mon point de vue politique. Ça m'a aidé à poursuivre mon chemin dans la politique, ça m'a aidé à choisir quel parti prendre. Ça m'a aussi aidé à savoir l'histoire du passé proche du Liban et de chaque politicien au Liban.”*

Surely, the personality of the supervisor of the club, Naji Khouri, very involved in initiatives encouraging inter-religious dialogue, has deeply influenced the content of the activities proposed to the students. The president of Jamhour alumni was for instance behind the recognition in 2010 of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, celebrated by both Lebanese Christians and Muslims, as a national public holiday<sup>361</sup>. Interestingly, the celebration of Annunciation was already highlighted under Aoun's government in the year 1989, to emphasize the concord between religions<sup>362</sup>. At the time of the Syrian presence in Lebanon, the message conveyed by the club paralleled the Aounism public discourse centered on Human rights safeguard and enhancement of the Lebanese democracy. Yet if this experience in such a club certainly contributed to Emile's political socialization, it was most probably a role of activation and reinforcement of predispositions and inclinations acquired in direct interactions and emphasized by the specific context of the mid 2000s:

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<sup>361</sup> See the French newspaper *La Croix*: March 25, 2010. Online: [http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Actualite/L-Annonciation-rassemble-desormais-chretiens-et-musulmans-libanais-NG\\_-2010-03-25-548967](http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Actualite/L-Annonciation-rassemble-desormais-chretiens-et-musulmans-libanais-NG_-2010-03-25-548967) [May 2013]

<sup>362</sup> Carole, interview with the author: April 21, 2010 [in French].

*“En 2005, à la mort de M. Rafiq Hariri, moi, j'étais en 1ère à l'école. Ça nous a poussés à descendre dans les manifestations, à n'avoir plus peur, surtout que la plupart des politiciens étaient ensemble. Ces manifestations ont regroupé des partis libanais qu'il n'avait jamais été possible de rapprocher. On peut dire aussi que même l'administration des écoles nous a aidés à ce moment là. Par exemple, ils ont suspendu les cours pour quelques jours, pour qu'on puisse descendre aux manifestations. Les manifestations étaient l'après-midi, alors on faisait cours jusqu'à midi pour aller ensuite à la manifestation. Je me rappelle parfaitement aussi, c'était le 7 mars, on a fait un groupe de l'école et on a dormi en bas, au centre ville. Il y avait des tentes et beaucoup de gens. Nous avons juste dormi dans la rue (...).*

*-A l'époque, tu étais déjà avec le CPL?*

*Ce n'est pas exactement ça. Avant la mort de Hariri, bien sûr je préfèrai le CPL sur les FL. Je suis chrétien, alors je ne peux choisir qu'entre le CPL et les FL. Mais avant, il y avait l'opposition chrétienne. (...) Alors vraiment, à cette époque j'espérais une union chrétienne entre les FL et le CPL. Mais en 2005, les élections législatives ont poussé le peuple chrétien du Liban à deux choix: soit être avec le CPL, soit être avec les FL. Alors là, bien sûr, (...) je voulais être avec le CPL.*

*Il faut dire que quand j'avais douze ans, à l'école, je recevais des magazines du CPL, des discours de Michel Aoun...en classe, c'était interdit, mais on se les échangeait dans les toilettes. Il y avait parfois des informations que tel jour à telle heure il y avait une manifestation, à l'USJ par exemple, mais on ne pouvait pas y aller parce qu'on était trop jeunes et on avait peur.*

*-Comment recevais-tu ces magazines?*

*Par le biais des étudiants des universités. Parce que j'avais des amis, comme J.A. [a former USJ student and member of the FPM Student Affairs], qui est du CPL, qui venait nous voir chaque vendredi à Jamhour, parce que c'était un ancien de l'école. Comme c'était un ancien élève de Jamhour, il pouvait rentrer. Donc il venait et il nous parlait. Nous n'étions que quinze ou vingt personnes pour l'écouter. Ce n'est rien parce qu'il y a plus de mille élèves (...). Moi, j'étais convaincu parce que mon père était dans la milice des FL, en 1976 je crois, à Zahleh, contre les Syriens. Donc je voyais à la TV le soir, j'entendais à chaque fois mon père insulter les politiciens ou, quand on voyait Michel Aoun, dire que c'est le genre d'homme que l'on veut. C'est resté dans ma tête: qu'un camp était mal et que l'autre était bien. Ça m'a marqué quand j'étais petit. Et puis à l'école, comme je l'ai dit, il y avait J.A., il était un bon ami à moi. Un jour, il m'a parlé et toujours il m'expliquait quel était le problème au Liban.”*

Like in Nader's case, human networks have played a strong part in the affirmation of partisan identification during the school years. The Jesuit education dispensed in Jamhour does not present any heavy contradiction with the principles of the FPM, which, although calling for a secular State, remains marked by the Christian background of most of its members. As such, school did not generate a situation of dissonance or a shock that could punctuate the narration of the motives of attachment. In the students' stories, it were thus mainly the personal relations built at school, as well as the events that occurred during the school years, which underline the influence of the attendance of educational establishment. In Emile's case, it was primarily the events of the Beirut Spring that played the role of catalyst of political inclinations inherited from the family. The summarizing of the political alternative for Lebanese Christians between Lebanese Forces and the FPM represents already a sign of adhesion to either of the two partisan universes since both are essentially defined in opposition to each other with the exception of the rest of the potential Christian – or secular – political forces.

But, according to his story, Emile's political socialization had already started at school for around five years, through the mediation of a FPM activist, former student of Jamhour and a recognized figure in the Aounist student movement, J.A.'s friendship and his insertion into a peer group braving the strict interdiction of political activism emanating from the school administration gave Emile access to a secret world with its own references, all the more attractive that it corresponded to the private political discourse, structured around the refusal of the Syrian presence, held in a large part of the Christian society, starting from Emile's own home. His account simply reproduces the affective preferences and moral predispositions – one good side against a bad one – activated by his encounter with the FPM activists' networks. The synergy between the primary socialization and the secondary internalized after the encounter with the movement is all the more efficient since both rely on affective bonds strictly separating the group for the outsiders along moral boundaries. The centrality of familial and affective ties is revealed by the fact that participation in the club Charles Helu, in spite of its importance, did not structure longstanding friendships, which remained largely determined by partisan attachment:

*“-Tu continues de voir les gens qui étaient avec toi?*

*C'est compliqué. Nous sommes maintenant séparés entre différentes universités et il y a les amis qui ont voyagé. Mais je vois toujours mes amis du CPL parce que je peux les voir quand on a des réunions du CPL, alors que les autres pas vraiment. J'ai un ami qui était du CPL mais, je ne sais pas ce qui s'est passé, quand il est venu à l'université, il est devenu des FL. Il était candidat cette année contre nous aux*



*élections, appuyé par les FL contre le CPL. Dans le débat des délégués, il a parlé d'une façon très inacceptable envers le CPL (...).*

*-Et vous n'êtes plus amis?*

*Non, plus du tout! Parce que lui, ses parents étaient des FL depuis longtemps. Par contre, tous ses amis étaient du CPL. Il était influencé par nous. Mais il a passé tout l'été avec ses parents et il est devenu FL. Je ne sais pas pourquoi, quel était le problème. Il peut changer, pas de problème, mais qu'il ne parle pas du CPL de cette façon parce qu'il sait comment fonctionne le CPL et Michel Aoun, et tous les sacrifices qu'ils ont fait, pour l'intérêt du Liban et non pas pour des intérêts personnels."*

Friendship and inter-personal networks are primarily structured by partisan sociability. Such homophily should however not be overestimated. Students assert in the interviews and effectively maintain in everyday interaction relations with unaffiliated individuals or even with political rivals. It is precisely through these relations that the sense of belonging arises. However, the immersion into the activities of the group logically tends to concretely increase the time spent within the boundaries of the partisan cluster and thus increase the level of endogenous sociability. According to Emile's last statement, the intergroup relations are governed by the assertion of a FPM moral superiority characteristic of the universe of signification elaborated in the movement's group style. He further hints at the familial dimension of the LF attachment, constructed into an implied opposition with the FPM ties, tacitly interpreted as an individual conscious and rational choice. This representation apparently contradicts Emile's acknowledgment of his own family heritage previously uttered but has to be understood in the frame of the construction of oppositeness between the two rival movements.

School is thus mainly mentioned as a space in which inter-personal networks open access to the concrete participation in partisan universe and activities, which supposes the role of mediators initiating the individual to the FPM culture. In most of the cases I encountered, family members generally allow access to the universe of signification of the Party, building dispositions to engagement whereas the actual first steps into activism are often mediated by friends, especially at the arrival in university territories where the partisan networks enable the capture of potential members. Although school experiences are characterized in the students' stories by the interdiction of political activities, limiting the role of the educational establishments in the staging of the actors' careers, the presence of older activists playing the role of "spiritual fathers" – or, more precisely, of "big brothers" – in specific schools. A notable recurrent case could be noticed in the Mont-la-Salle high-school in which Tony Orian, a hero of the

FPM identity narrative<sup>363</sup>, served as a supervisor and inspired successive cohorts of activists. So recounted Jacques, born in 1984 and engaged before 2005, and Jawad, six years younger and active in the post-Syrian era:

*“Il y avait une personne qui s'appelle Tony Orian, il était surveillant dans mon école...c'est un des héros des manifestations! C'est un homme...fou! [rires]. A chaque manifestation, ils l'emmenaient en prison. C'est lui qui nous a motivés. Il nous donnait des discours du Général et des chansons...tu sais, j'étais jeune, j'étais en 3<sup>ème</sup> [around 15 years old] ça nous motivait et en 1<sup>ère</sup> [around 17], j'ai participé à la première manifestation. Puis, c'est quand je suis rentré à l'université où il y avait des élections que je suis rentré dans l'organisation du CPL (...).”<sup>364</sup>*

*“I remember the supervisor in my school, Tony Orian. He was supervisor in my school and he used to talk to us about freedom and democracy and things like that. And when he was arrested, he demanded to read a statement saying that he is going to be on hunger strike. This is what I remember. Because Tony is the closest person I knew (...). There weren't that many to be arrested and he is one of the few I know very well. He was like a teacher to me. So I remember him. (...) I remember that he got arrested several times. Sometimes in school, he disappeared for a few days and came back with a broken arm or something like that. So we were used to that. He used to disappeared for one week or two sometimes. We were thinking that he was probably in jail.”<sup>365</sup>*

The first contacts with the Party understood as a human network and a concrete organization are thus encouraged by personal acquaintances allocating the affective dimension that sustains the sense of communality perceived within the group. Such intermediacy of the entry in partisan activism is mainly asserted in the university settings. At this point, vertical mediation to the Party such as the one depicted in Emile's account gives way to a more horizontal connection with the group: access to the movement and its activities is no more inspired by a “big brother” but made possible by classmates, often mentioned as the direct cause of participation to the first political activities – student elections and/or group meetings:

*“J'avais des amis dans le même courant et puis quand je suis rentrée à l'université, je me suis intéressée au club, le Freedom club, et à ses activités. Ce n'était pas vraiment politique (...). Quand je suis arrivée à l'AUB, je connaissais Nassim, le président du Freedom club, parce que c'était un ami. La plupart d'entre nous ont leurs parents dans l'armée, alors nous nous connaissons tous. Nous avons développé*

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<sup>363</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>364</sup> Jacques, interview with the author: November 3, 2007 [in French].

<sup>365</sup> Jawad, interview with the author: March 31, 2011 [in English].

*une amitié et les mêmes idées. C'est le point commun qui nous lie ensemble et ce point va nous permettre de nous projeter vers de nouvelles choses.*"<sup>366</sup>

*"Tout d'abord, j'ai commencé comme un étudiant ordinaire, qui n'avait pas beaucoup d'activité avec eux [les Aounistes], mais qui les soutenait, en votant [dans les élections universitaires]. Ensuite, je suis devenu ami avec toutes les personnes du Parti. (...) Mes camarades, mes amis dans le Parti, ont commencé à m'encourager à participer avec eux (...). (...) Cela m'a convaincu que je devais m'impliquer dans les activités du Parti. En première année j'ai commencé à participer (...) et en deuxième année je suis devenu le représentant du Tayyar dans l'université."*<sup>367</sup>

*"Au début, quand j'ai quitté mon école pour aller à l'université, j'étais le seul qui venait de cette école à cette université, donc je ne connaissais personne. C'était une époque où à l'université, la politique n'était pas encore trop dynamisée comme c'est le cas aujourd'hui. (...) Malheureusement on s'était habitué à la présence syrienne au Liban. (...) Mais après quelque temps à la faculté, je me suis rendu compte avec un ami que vous avez aussi rencontré [Farid]...il était membre du CPL mais lui était bien impliqué dans la politique dès son entrée à l'université. Il avait commencé à faire un groupe avec d'autres personnes dont je me souviens, Jacques par exemple, qui voulaient travailler pour le CPL lors des élections [universitaires]...alors en fait, ma connaissance avec Farid m'a permis ensuite de rentrer dans la politique à l'université et à m'impliquer encore plus au CPL."*<sup>368</sup>

Engagement emerges as an activation of predispositions largely inspired by affective inter-personal bonds, an aspect already highlighted by Agnès Favier in her study of student activism in the eve of the Lebanese civil wars (2004, p. 366). The affective connection with the group doubles the emotional predispositions toward a partisan identification generally mediated by the family, strengthening the sense of adhesion to a community of attachment. However, this concrete beginning in the activities of the group always occurs in determined contexts that strongly impact the signification attached to and the forms of engagement. It is, indeed, not the same thing to adhere to a semi-clandestine organization to protest against the Syrian military presence in Lebanon or to join one of the major political parties in a country in which political competition had been stirred by the 2005 events and the subsequent endless crisis.

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<sup>366</sup> Layla, interview with the author: March 25, 2011 [in French].

<sup>367</sup> Kamal, interview with the author: December 6, 2010 [in French].

<sup>368</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: November 14, 2007 [in French].

## 2. BECOMING AN ACTIVIST: THE CONTEXTS OF ENTRY

In order to proceed with the analysis of socialization and personal interpretation of engagement, it is necessary to study the individual understanding of activism. Although the starting point of engagement in collective action can be dated, it results from a multiplicity of prior conditions. Constructed throughout interrelations with significant others, identification operates progressively. Predispositions, inclinations, and encounters only acquire meaning *a posteriori*, when integrated into the narration of the encounter between the individual and the group. The successive steps toward attachment are then re-ordered, put in a sequence representing narratively the processes of politicization and the construction of *groupness*, the sense of belonging to the Party. Such sequenced story is composed according to the knowledge attached to specific events re-interpreted as decisive in the activation of identification. If the activists generally link their engagement with particular events, the reconstructed nature of the motives impedes the determination of the initial conditions of their actions. The mention of one or several key events in the story of their trajectory already results from an interpretation of their meaning from the perspective of the end result: adhesion and integration within the group's universe of signification. Engagement stories thus acquire the shape of linear plots, logically leading to an inevitable end. On the contrary, the diversity of the students' primary socialization and the role played by social networks indicate that the first steps into the movement seem often determined by contingencies of inter-personal encounters and the existence of a multiplicity of events that together create opportunities to experiment concretely collective action, to insert within the sociability of the group, and hence internalize its interpretative filter. It ensures that isolating a "founding moment" in adhesion would be illusory.

Despite their reconstructed nature, the more accessible starting point is still located in the narrations elaborated by the students on their own trajectory. Instead of considering these stories as factual accounts only, it proves more heuristic to see them as manifestation of a cognitive system, which consists primarily in the history of the encounter of the individual with the group. It follows that the knowledge about the group and the interpretation of adhesion are deeply impacted by the context in which the actor concretely met the group. Activists' trajectories have to be situated in the transformations of the arenas of mobilization. In other words, joining a semi-clandestine groupuscule confined to university spaces is not the same thing that adhering to one of the most influential political parties in the country. The experience and thus the knowledge of the group depend on the configurations of engagement: what is the political situation? How is the group structured? How does it evolve?

These questions sketch “contexts of entry” (Favier 2004, p. 367) that necessarily impact the way attachment to the FPM is lived out.

To analyze the connections between personal internalization and interpretation of partisanship and contexts, I propose to focus on successive cohorts of activists in Huvelin. Although not separated by an important difference of age, the cases I intend to explore are nonetheless divided by the configuration of their engagement: the first cohort I met adhered to a movement suffering from repression, while the second joined during the transitional phase and the third after the legalization of the FPM. The cases introduced here do not represent for me ideal-types of the successive cohorts. They remain individual cases and have to be treated as such. However, their position in the FPM's history provides essential insights to understand the construction of their identification with the group, and thus their trajectory in the movement. In order to underline cohort effects, the narrative reconstruction of their engagement is punctually complemented by evocation of other cases belonging to the same wave of adhesion.

### **A) Paul: Pride and Prejudice**

Paul, born in the early 1980s, joined the FPM in 1999, when he entered USJ. He comes from a minor branch of an influential Greek-Orthodox family from the caza of Metn, his grand-father being the cousin of the dominant figure in the family, a former minister and powerful politician. The story of his adhesion is a story about pride and suffering, strongly influenced by a desire of recognition. The narration he gave of his trajectory bears on the activism-centered interpretation of the FPM identity<sup>369</sup>.

*“Je suis arrivé à l’université en 1999. Je venais d’un environnement complètement chrétien, je ne savais rien en ce qui concerne les Musulmans et je n’étais pas trop politisé. En fait, nous sommes une famille politique, très connue (...). Mais je n’étais pas très intéressé par la politique, jusqu’à ce que j’arrive à l’université où je me suis trouvé dans un environnement plutôt mixte: Musulmans et Chrétiens ensemble. Là, on commence à entendre plus parler politique: pourquoi on ne se réunit pas, pourquoi on laisse la Syrie tout diriger au Liban sans rien dire. En fait, d’abord, je ne pensais qu’à une seule chose, que les Chrétiens étaient mal traités et que les leaders chrétiens étaient introuvables, sans penser qui sont ces leaders ou lequel est le meilleur. Mais peu à peu, j’ai commencé à connaître l’autre partie du Liban, c’est-à-dire les Musulmans, qui, pour la majeure partie, ne supportaient pas non plus la situation actuelle, ils étaient tout à fait contre la Syrie mais ils avaient peur de dire la vérité (...). J’ai donc mis à l’écart l’idée que ce sont uniquement les Chrétiens qui pensent comme ça. (...) Et quand j’ai commencé à travailler en politique, c’était (...)”*

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<sup>369</sup> All the following quotations come from the same interview: November 21, 2007 [in French].

*sans être militant au CPL. Mais, pendant la première année à l'université surtout, j'ai essayé de suivre les informations et de connaître l'histoire parce que c'est très important de savoir ce qui s'est passé avant, parce que les militants du CPL ne répétaient qu'une seule chose: 'vous êtes jeunes, que connaissez-vous de l'histoire, de l'époque où Michel Aoun était le Premier ministre? (...) Et quand je suis retourné vers le passé, je n'ai retrouvé qu'une seule vérité: que tout le monde avait quelque chose de faux dans son passé, sauf le Général Michel Aoun. (...) Lors de la première réunion à laquelle j'ai participé au CPL, j'ai entendu Ramzi Kanj, un Chiite, qui soutient le Général. Il était en train de parler contre la Syrie. Je me suis dit que celui-là, il ne va pas rentrer chez lui! Alors j'ai vu (...) qu'il y a des personnes qui veulent vraiment libérer le Liban, que tu n'es pas seul...donc quand tu milites, tu milites avec férocité."*

The story of politicization is originally elaborated from two parallel tracks: the inter-religious encounter on the one hand, and the immersion within the university milieu, presented as highly politicized. The first development confirms the importance of relative positioning in the process of identification. The presence of otherness sustains a need for localization of the self in public space that encourages politicization and the use of partisan label to identify. The second track followed by Paul's account suggests a political effervescence in the USJ, assuming the centrality of university spaces in the contestation of the Syrian presence in Lebanon. In 1999, the souvenir of the student movement of December 1997 that practically broke the legal prohibition of demonstration was probably accentuating the strength of youth mobilization in the public arena. The definition of politics mobilized here hence already results from a conception that links genuine political action with protestation against the Syrian tutelage. Put more simply, politics only became interesting when it acquired the form of collective action against "the occupation". Both aspects organizing the story combine in the discovery of the anti-Syrian stand of a number of Muslim students, which suggests the existence of political preconceptions. The surprise expressed in the narrative underlines the sectarian bedrock in political perceptions. The discovery of politics appears mediated by the encounter with FPM activists, the main characters of the extract. Meeting them apparently provoked a process of cognitive mobility – the immersion into history – and learning of new practices – reading the newspapers. The horizon of the FPM activists, with their references to Aoun's government and their protest actions, informs Paul's construction of the situation as a confrontation between regimes of truth. A predominant duality subsequently arises that would structure all his narrative: the courage of the activists and the cowardice of the rest.

*"Il y avait un petit groupe, de, je pense, maximum dix personnes, qui formait le groupe du CPL à l'USJ. Pendant cette période, tout le monde avait peur, donc*

*personne n'osait dire qu'il est aouniste ou qu'il est pro CPL. Une fois, j'ai été à la réunion de ce groupe et ils étaient tous étonnés comme je suis de la famille M. Il y a quelques-uns qui ont eu peur que je sois un informateur ou un espion. Alors la première chose qu'ils m'ont demandée, c'est pourquoi je suis au sein de ce groupe. Alors j'ai dit ce que je pensais et que je croyais que le CPL est un groupe où je peux développer et enrichir mes idées, que j'étais contre l'occupation syrienne. (...) Après quelques mois, j'ai fait une bonne impression, car j'étais un militant très actif, je n'avais pas peur parce que j'avais une totale confiance dans ces idées et je voulais vraiment faire quelque chose, faire une différence. Du coup, j'ai accédé tout de suite à un poste: je suis devenu le président du groupe du CPL à l'USJ. En plus, l'USJ était l'université où il y a le plus d'actions du CPL. (...) C'était une université qu'on disait d'opposition, c'était connu. Et à chaque fois qu'on faisait une manifestation, on sortait de l'USJ. Donc c'était une très grande responsabilité, et j'étais jeune...j'avais 19 ou 20 ans. Ce que tu dois savoir, c'est qu'au sein du CPL, puisque Michel Aoun était à l'extérieur, la plupart des cadres étaient des cadres jeunes et on n'avait pas toujours de contacts avec eux, parce que c'était très dangereux...donc on devait tout de suite devenir des cadres nous-mêmes (...). Et il faut savoir que la popularité de Michel Aoun était très grande mais qu'en même temps les gens ne pouvaient pas parler...tu devais parler pour eux. Tu parlais et tu entendais les applaudissements, mais (...) dans les confrontations avec les FSI, tu étais seul."*

The necessity of secrecy and suspicion first hampered Paul's concrete entrance in the group. Since Simmel's study (1906), it is commonly accepted that secrecy, while officially implemented to protect the group from its surrounding, primarily participates in the construction of tied bonds and attachment in the internal economy of the group. Facing the repression creates a high degree of solidarity, up to a consciousness of fusion, as noted in the evocation of the August 2001 arrests by Elza, an activist belonging to the same cohort:

*Je me souviens de toutes les manifestations, toutes les arrestations. Le plus dur c'était le 7 août 2001. Pour moi, c'était une condamnation à mort, vraiment. (...) J'ai quitté la maison, on a fait des petits groupes...nous on s'est réfugiés dans un couvent, près de Harissa, pour deux semaines (...). On a travaillé depuis le couvent pour organiser les manif et après deux semaines, nos camarades ont été libérés. (...) Je suis passée à l'université (...) et puis j'ai contacté des camarades (...). On s'est rencontrés à Harissa, alors ils m'ont dit: 'si tu continues avec nous, tu ne retournes pas chez toi!'. Alors que je n'avais aucune de mes affaires, pas d'habits [rires]. J'ai continué avec eux, j'ai contacté mes parents, sans leur dire où je suis, j'ai dit: 'quelque part au Liban, je ne peux pas vous dire où'. (...) Tu sais, quand tu es militant dans un groupe, tu sens que si ton camarade souffre, tu ressens la même souffrance (...). Si par exemple j'étais frappée, je ne sentais pas que j'étais frappée,*

*mais si mon camarade près de moi était frappé, je sentais les coups! C'est inexplicable pour moi, mais vraiment je sentais les coups que recevaient mes camarades (...). Pendant les manifs, pendant ces situations critiques, tu sens que le groupe fusionne, et c'est une seule personne qui émerge.”<sup>370</sup>*

In Paul's statement however, it could have another purpose: it enabled him to establish his legitimacy as a member. In spite of an initial suspicion, he was able to gain the trust of his fellows thanks to his dedication to the cause and his conformation to the role model of the activist. The frame of the story of his insertion within the group constructs a universe directed by merit and commitment rather than acquaintance or status. The feeling of superiority, characteristic of the perceptions of the social surrounding among clandestine activists, seems to have been nurtured by the absence of the leader and of organizational structures.

*“Quand j’entendais les autres partis à cette période, on pouvait croire qu’ils étaient en train de militer contre la Syrie, mais si tu écoutais ce qu’ils disaient, par exemple les Forces Libanaises, chaque fois qu’ils descendaient dans la rue: 'Barra! Barra [dehors]!'. En fait, ils voulaient simplement que leur chef sorte de prison (...). Ce que j’ai aimé le plus au CPL est que malgré toutes les difficultés, on a eu le courage de continuer, on n’a jamais eu de limites. (...) Donc je me souviens, on descendait dans la rue, malgré la peur, parce qu’on savait que peut-être on ne va rentrer à la maison, parce que c’était la grande peur: passer la nuit chez les services de renseignements (...).”*

The denunciation of the self-interested cause of the Lebanese Forces aims at demonstrating his assumptions about the distinctiveness of the FPM among the Christian political forces opposing the Syrian presence. Though, the argument introduced to do so seems unscrupulous at best, nay dishonest. The slogan “*Barra [Out]*” refers evidently to the Syrians rather than to Samir Geagea. It was regularly heard during anti-Syrian protests, either held by FPM or LF supporters. The intended result is to stage the Aounist movement as the sole legitimate force against the tutelage, by virtue of the purity of its commitment and the courage of its activists, who allegedly braved their worst fears to defend their cause on a regular basis.

*“Moi, j’ai milité depuis l’année 1999-2000. Je descendais dans toutes les manifestations, chaque fois que le CPL était dans la rue. J’ai été pris par les [FSI] une fois en 2003, lorsque Colin Powell était venu au Liban et qu’on demandait la réalisation de la résolution 1559 des Nation Unies qui demande le retrait de toutes les forces étrangères du Liban. Ils m’ont pris en prison pour cinq jours et j’ai été*

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<sup>370</sup> Elza, interview with the author: November 10, 2007 [in French].



*jugé, accusé d'avoir battu un policier. (...) Je ne le connaissais pas. Il est venu un soir à la caserne et ils lui ont dit: 'lui, il s'appelle Paul, il faut que tu te souviennes de son visage parce que tu vas dire qu'il t'a frappé'. En plus, ils m'ont fait signer un papier, comme à tous les autres militants: ils te font signer une feuille (...), tu n'as aucune idée de ce que c'est et même si tu leur dis que tu ne veux pas signer, ils te disent que tu es obligé de signer, sinon tu vas être frappé. (...) J'ai été jugé au tribunal. J'ai fait une déclaration et le policier a dit autre chose et finalement ils m'ont laissé partir, après cinq jours de prison. Moi je suis un fils unique et je vis chez mes parents alors ils ont bien sûr eu peur, surtout qu'ici au Liban, celui qui n'a pas de pistons ne peut rien faire. Justement, nous, nous étions seuls parce que notre famille était avec la Syrie...donc j'étais complètement isolé. Mes parents m'ont dit que je devais arrêter, mais ce n'était pas le cas. Vraiment, si tu connaissais tous les militants du CPL de cette période, tu saurais qu'on avait beaucoup de courage. Un courage dont maintenant je me demande d'où je l'ai trouvé. Et je pense aux autres militants qui ont été battus plusieurs fois, qui ont été en prison plusieurs fois...j'ai les images en tête, c'est affreux, vraiment c'est affreux. (...) Il faut dire que quand j'étais en prison, les autres étudiants ont fait un sit-in à l'université et ils ont jeté un grenade à l'intérieur de l'université afin de disperser le sit-in! Donc c'est là que j'ai compris à quel point ils tentaient de limiter cette révolution..."*

The reconstructed nature of the account surfaces with the evocation of the 1559 UN resolution that was only to be adopted the following year. The story of police brutality and unfair repression fully participates in the identity narrative of the FPM as a semi-clandestine movement. The experiment of imprisonment and trial fully positions Paul in the heart of the master narrative of the movement. The scenes of the arrest and the trial at the same time induce the confirmation of the rightness of the cause and emphasize the braveness of the activists, ready to face falsified justice. The precisions that he was the only son of his parents and that all activists had to sign a paper when arrested could serve the purpose of clearing the self of the possible guilt to have publicly accepted to limit his engagement and to have actually signed the paper, which could be seen as breaches in the ideal narrative. They further enable to maintain the cohesion of the group in front of a tense situation in which the reaction of the members was unpredictable. Marc, arrested during the demonstration held in August 9, 2001, recounted a comparable situation:

*"Ils nous ont mis dans un couloir, parce que nous étions assez nombreux. Je me rappelle que nous devons rester dans une position particulière, en chien de fusil. Rester dans cette position provoque un malaise assez rapide, ça coupe la circulation dans les jambes. Quand on étendait les jambes pour se soulager, ils nous frappaient avec leurs matraques sur les jambes. Ils nous prenaient ensuite un à un pour un interrogatoire. On entendait les cris sortir des bureaux d'interrogatoire, donc on*

*imaginait qu'ils étaient en train de battre nos camarades. Finalement, ça été mon tour. Il y avait des questions réponses, il fallait répondre tout de suite, sinon ils te frappaient. Ils frappaient avec des chaînes sur la tête. Le troisième jour, ils m'ont fait rentrer dans un bureau, avec un café. Ils m'ont dit de m'asseoir. Et ils te présentent un papier à signer. On ne savait jamais si celui qui était passé avant toi avait accepté. Comme on passait un par un, on ne savait pas ce que celui d'avant avait raconté ou si celui d'après allait accepter. Alors à un moment donné, je ne savais plus si je devais faire confiance à ces gens à l'avenir (...)."<sup>371</sup>*

Cohesion among activists of the first cohort precisely appears as the second central theme in the passage. It is underlined by representing their isolation in front of the external social world, their solidarity, and their common position facing the repression. The reference to photos of past abuses committed against former activists confirms the existence of an internal cognitive space within the group, composed with a pantheon of heroic figures serving as models. Despite the description of as a shared experience, the reality of imprisonment deeply evolved in time. Whereas the people arrested in the first half of the 1990 decade were regularly subjected to brutal treatments, the conditions of detention improved at the turning of the century. For those who lived the end of the semi-clandestine period, the sacrifice appears euphemised in comparison with the model of the “glorious predecessors”, as Elza once remembered: “*It was a little laughable actually...when I was arrested, I had in my memory the image of an activist, Lina, who was tortured in 1995. But in the year 2000, it was almost nothing. Nobody hit me and I stayed only for a couple of days.*”<sup>372</sup> In spite of the relative improvement, secrecy remains important in Paul’s story:

*“C’est bizarre mais chaque fois qu’on faisait des réunions, c’était vraiment comme si on fait quelque chose d’impossible, parce qu’il y avait des forces de renseignement partout, même parmi nous. On venait à pied, pas avec nos voitures. On se réunissait en cachette, on disait qu’on se réunirait à tel endroit à telle heure alors qu’en fait c’était ailleurs (...). Moi, quand je rencontrais les Forces Libanaises, je leur demandais de descendre dans la rue avec le drapeau libanais, ils me disaient que le drapeau des Forces Libanaises était meilleur! Quand je demandais aux militants de Joumblatt: 'pourquoi vous vous taisiez et ne disiez rien à la Syrie alors que maintenant vous dites que c’est eux qui ont tué Kamal Joumblatt?'. Ça fait trente ans, est-ce que quelqu’un peut se taire trente ans? Mais où est l’honnêteté, où est*

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<sup>371</sup> Marc, interview with the author: May 3, 2008 [in French].

<sup>372</sup> Elza, interview with the author: April 24, 2008. The original statement was in French: “C’était un peu comique en fait...quand j’ai été arrêtée, dans ma mémoire, j’avais l’image d’une militante, Lina, qui avait été torturée en 1995. Mais en 2000 ce n’était presque rien. Personne ne m’a frappée et je ne suis restée que deux jours.”

*l'honneur [sharaf]? (...) Tu vois, ils disent qu'ils ne pouvaient rien faire et maintenant (...) ils disent que le CPL est devenu syrien! Mais on était les seuls à descendre dans la rue pour dire non aux Syriens...moi, je souffre jusqu'à maintenant de mon dos parce qu'ils m'ont frappé plusieurs fois, mais qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait eux? Walid Joumblatt a fait la guerre avec la Syrie contre Michel Aoun, contre les Chrétiens si on veut...il a fait la guerre contre Amal, donc contre les Chiites...il a fait la guerre contre les Forces Libanaises, donc encore contre les Chrétiens, plusieurs fois. Samir Geagea aussi, contre Joumblatt, contre Michel Aoun...mais aucun n'a fait la guerre contre la Syrie. La seule guerre qui a été faite contre la Syrie et dont tout le monde se souvient, c'est la guerre du 14 mars 1989 quand le Général a déclaré la guerre pour libérer le Liban. Et ils étaient tous contre lui. La même chose est en train de se reproduire aujourd'hui. Pourquoi? Pour la simple raison qu'ils ne veulent pas un Liban fort..."*

The first lines of the extract illustrate the cohesive effect of secrecy. Clandestine meetings define a space of interaction exclusively turned toward the in-group, paradoxically justified by the possibility of external infiltration. The specific atmosphere created in this configuration induces determinate practices that enlarge the importance of the in-group activities. The implementation of secrecy and the subsequent practices resulting from it create a self-sustaining system organized along a logical sequence articulating the imagined strength of the movement, the perceived justice of its cause, and the endured repression of the authorities: surveillance from the security services implies that the movement represents a real threat for the regime, a threat that confirms the legitimacy of its demands and the impact of its actions. The activists are hence evolving in a fantasized and stimulating universe.

Paul's stories continually double the construction of bonds with the display of boundaries. The affirmation of the cohesion and legitimacy of the group supposes the rejection of the other partisan forces. He states both his own and his group's supremacy by symbolically presenting for the second time the Lebanese Forces as more concerned about their own existence than by the fate of the nation. By linking the LF with their flag, Paul refers implicitly to the political project of the statelet advocated – and de facto implemented – by Samir Geagea's militia during the 1980s. Similarly, the PSP is delegitimized by the time elapsed between the assassination of its founder, Kamal Joumblatt, in 1977, and the public accusation made in 2005 by his son Walid Joumblatt against the Syrian regime to have had ordered the murder. The choice of the LF and the PSP is not arbitrary, as both movements expressed their opposition to the Syrian presence, although to different degrees. The LF, in particular, were rivals in the field of anti-Syrian politics. The repertoire mobilized here relies on the rhetoric of honor, according to which the FPM claims a position of primacy. Interestingly, the

moral superiority of the movement is related to the wartime actions of its leader, Michel Aoun, which connect the activist master narrative, built in the 1990s, with the preceding phase of the history of the Party, symbolized by what is asserted as a key event – the launching of the Liberation war – and incarnated by its leader.

*“J’avais six ou sept ans [en 1989], donc je me souviens seulement que mes parents pleuraient quand le Général a quitté Baabda et je me souviens très bien qu’on était plus que frustrés quand on a vu les soldats de l’armée libanaise emprisonnés, les militaires tués d’une balle dans la tête en 1990 quand les Syriens ont quitté Baabda. Et donc, j’ai passé après ça plusieurs années à me dire que c’est illogique ce qui s’est passé, mais qu’on ne pouvait rien y faire. Et je n’étais pas trop impliqué dans la politique (...). Jusqu’en 1997, où pour la première fois Michel Aoun était en direct à la MTV. Quand j’ai entendu cet homme que j’avais presque oublié (...), c’était comme si tu étais en train de lire dans ce qui est le plus logique au monde...il a parlé de tout ce qui est logique, de tout ce que doit être le Liban et j’ai réalisé de plus en plus que si je ne faisais rien, je serais un traître, je n’aurais pas la conscience tranquille. Et c’était très difficile pour moi (...) de prendre l’initiative de lutter car mon père était (...) un employé de l’Etat. Et je me souviens très bien qu’à Noël 2003, pour la première fois depuis vingt ans mon père avait eu un bonus au travail, ce n’était presque rien, 500 000LL [250 Euros], et il a été obligé par les FSI de payer (...) cette somme exacte pour me faire sortir de prison (...). Tu vois jusqu’à quel point ils étaient en train de nous surveiller...”*

The memory of October 13 is introduced as a motive of engagement. The event acquires its meaning when situated in the sequence of a unique history of the Aounist movement: the illogical becomes logical after the words of Michel Aoun, pronounced during a TV interview, allocate signification to a distant and emotional memory. The affective root of attachment inherited from the family surfaces *a posteriori*, when Paul is old enough to construct a chain of meaning, which compels to engage. “Memory is always remembrance of knowledge previously acquired.” (Echebarria Echabe & Gonzalez Castro 1998, p. 104) The participation to collective action is an alternative between justice and betrayal. The decision thus imposed itself, as part of a destiny, despite the difficulties once again reasserted. The multiple contradictions between the date of his political awaking, first situated at the time of his entrance in university, and here linked to a childhood memory and a 1997 striking TV appearance, simply confirm the impossibility of isolating a founding moment in attachment and the necessity to understand it as a continuous process.

*“Je ne suis plus militant comme j’étais avant, parce que tu sais, il y a maintenant un grand nombre et donc ils n’ont plus besoin de tous ces efforts qu’on faisait avant, maintenant chacun fait de petites choses et puis voilà. Je suis plus en train de*

*travailler à la préparation d'émissions (...) sur la chaîne télé du CPL, l'OTV. Par exemple, j'ai préparé trois documentaires jusqu'à maintenant: sur le 13 Octobre, sur Dany Chamoun et récemment, il y a deux jours, sur la présidence de la République. Tous sont diffusés à l'OTV et la présentatrice était ma sœur. Je prépare toujours le début et la fin des reportages, ce qu'elle doit dire et aussi toutes ses questions aux politiciens. (...) Je suis toujours en contact avec tous les anciens militants et les militants pour qui j'ai été en fait comme un parent, ça fait toujours plaisir de pouvoir les voir. Et je suis toujours les élections de l'USJ. Cette année était la première année où je n'étais plus très concerné alors qu'avant je préparais les discussions avec les candidats et les représentants [du CPL à l'université]. En fait, j'essaie de m'éloigner un peu, parce que j'ai mon travail (...).*

The continuation of Paul's trajectory raises the question of the FPM transition from activism to politics. The new situation of the 2000s obviously generated a void for him, all the more since he did not officially integrate the structure of the organization. The inscription of the next cohort of activists in a genealogical line constructs the supremacy of his own generation, presented as the models for their heirs. Contrary to the ideal in which he was socialized as an activist, the family network seems to have played a role in his political reconversion. Paul's sister is a famous journalist working for OTV, which offered him the opportunity to keep in touch with the movement and to continue to contribute to its cause. The last sentence suggesting that his work led him to step aside could be an attempt to transform a suffered situation of relative disenchantment into a voluntary choice.

*“Les grands moments...en fait, tous les jours que j'ai vécus au CPL en train de lutter, c'étaient des grands moments, parce que chaque fois j'étais en danger, chaque fois j'avais peur d'être en prison. Il y avait toujours quelqu'un qui me suivait, j'avais toujours quelqu'un des renseignements devant ma maison. J'avais toujours ma mère en train de pleurer quand je rentrais à la maison très tard ou quand elle essayait de m'appeler et qu'elle n'arrivait pas à me joindre. Je crois que le début du changement c'était en 2003, quand vraiment on a commencé à apparaître d'une manière publique. En 2002 on a participé aux élections avec Gabriel Murr et en 2003 avec Hikmat Dib...et c'est là que j'ai commencé à penser que vraiment, on fait quelque chose de puissant pour le futur. (...) C'est à partir de là je crois...on a fait beaucoup d'efforts et on a marqué la nouvelle période au Liban.”*

Consequently, Paul expresses an almost nostalgic perception of his activist years. The new phase in the history of the FPM proved incapable of providing similar emotions. In comparison with the excitement and stimulation arousing from protest actions, secrecy, and confrontation with a clearly identifiable enemy, the post-2005 situation of the activists appears lame. The last part of the extract interestingly situates

the beginning of the new era before the official transformation of the FPM into a political party, and even before the 2005 events. Two main explanations of such an interpretation seem plausible. Internally, changing the point of inflection in the FPM history enables to establish a sharper distinction between the nucleus of field activists and the rest of the members. Externally, it emphasizes the role of the FPM in the changes that occurred in the Lebanese political scene. If the starting point of the “revolution” was 2003, only the FPM activists have contributed to it, while many other segments of the population participated in the 2005 events. Both aspects thus imply a greater appreciation of the superiority of the activists.

*“Il faut que je te dise, le 14 février, je ne suis pas allé aux funérailles de Rafiq Hariri (...). Et j'étais contre le fait que les militants du CPL y participent. (...) Parce que moi, je refuse qu'on utilise le sang d'un martyr...comme s'il y avait un martyr plus important que les autres (...). C'est seulement Hariri qui compte? Et le peuple? Et tout ce dont nous avons souffert? Moi, je ne voulais pas descendre pour Hariri, si je voulais descendre, c'était pour le Liban. (...) Moi, j'ai travaillé jour et nuit pour réussir à l'université et j'étais avec Michel Aoun. Je me faisais frapper, j'ai été en prison...qu'est-ce que j'ai gagné? (...) Moi, je ne peux même pas me présenter à un poste public, parce que je n'ai pas de pistons, je ne fais pas partie du clan 14 février.”*

The context in which the departure of the Syrian troops and the end of the clandestine status of the FPM occurred seems to have somehow spoiled the longstanding work of the activists. In Paul's words, the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the following massive rallies around the anti-Syrian cause have impeded the recognition of their merits. Denouncing the March 14 political gathering as “the February 14 clan” implies a double delegitimization: first, it does not represent the whole popular movement that forced the Syrian departure, as the FPM activists, then excluded from the coalition, played a central part; second, identifying March 14 members with a clan denies their national stature to send them back to a limited political identity. Paul here demands recognition of his role in the political changes that occurred in the country.

*“La simple cause qui est la libération du Liban. Et seulement ça...parce qu'on savait qu'à partir de la libération du Liban, on pouvait tout faire ensuite...on pouvait tout réaliser. (...) On avait cette conviction. (...) Quand parfois je suis seul, je me demande si ce que j'ai fait est bien, si je n'aurais pas dû prendre du temps pour autre chose: faire de l'argent peut-être ou prendre soin de ma famille. Mais quand je réfléchis très bien, je pense que si je vivais la même période de nouveau, je lutterais beaucoup plus...j'ai appris que le plus important pour l'homme, c'est son honneur, vraiment c'est son honneur...peut-être ça paraît bizarre que quelqu'un en 2007 parle comme*

*ça, avec toute la technologie, la globalisation, les intérêts personnels, les intérêts économiques et tout ça...mais j'ai appris ça, car c'est ce que j'ai vécu.*

*-Que représente le CPL pour toi?*

*Le CPL, c'est une partie de moi au niveau personnel...une partie de moi parce que je suis un des co-fondateurs du CPL si on peut dire. C'est un mouvement du peuple (...) et je pense que si le Liban doit exister, le CPL doit être aux côtés du Liban. (...) C'est vrai, il y a maintenant une certaine division entre le noyau dur et les nouveaux militants, surtout les nouveaux sympathisants. Quelle est la différence? La différence c'est qu'on a créé ces idées (...) alors que les autres aiment ces idées, ils se rapprochent de ces idées, mais comme ils ne les comprennent pas très bien, ils ne savent pas comment les défendre (...). Comme s'ils étaient dans notre camp seulement pour faire face aux autres..."*

Accordingly, a sense of pride dominates his evaluation of his own trajectory. Paul narratively positions the central meaning of life in honor. This rhetoric ensures the maintenance of his supremacy over the rest of the population and especially of the adherents of other partisan forces. Logically, the strength of his commitment has encouraged a deep identification of his self with the group, itself strongly connected with the representation of the whole nation. However, the group as perceived by Paul does not include the entire FPM supporters. His activist ethos prevents the assimilation of the new comers to their predecessors. The correspondence of the narration of his own trajectory with the master story centered on activists' heroism in use within the FPM incites him to claim authorship for the ideals of the movement. It is the parallelism between his reconstructed experience of the group and the model promoted by the Party that supports this claim. Paul's trajectory appears as an incarnation of the dominant interpretation of activism promoted by the FPM.

## **B) Maroun: the unbearable heaviness of being an heir**

Born in 1986, Maroun entered USJ five years after Paul, in 2004. Before, he already took part in a demonstration protesting against the closure of the MTV channel in the autumn 2002. However, it was his arrival in USJ that enabled him to join the activists' networks and engage into collective action on a regular basis. His political socialization is marked, according to him, primarily by the “*context of the Syrian occupation*”, but also rests on the past of his own family. The proximity of his engagement with the March 14 events seems to constitute the organizing element of

his story: engaged in a protest movement, he did not have the time to live out his ideal of activism<sup>373</sup>.

*“Moi je n’ai que 21 ans en fait, alors mon apport à la cause du CPL est très négligeable. Parce que ceux qui militent ont commencé à militer depuis 1969 avec l’invasion des milices palestiniennes, (...) puis les Syriens sont intervenus ici au Liban, jusqu’en 1990. On peut considérer que les militants se sont transformés en une façon que l’on peut qualifier de ‘civile’. (...) Si vous voulez, les militants qui ont payé du sang, payé de leur vie, c’est entre 1969 et 1990, et tous les autres ont lutté de façon civile...étape à laquelle j’ai participé, mais de façon très modeste. Si je me permets de parler des manifestations et des militants, je veux dire que le crédit ne me revient pas. (...) En fait, je n’ai que 21 ans, j’ai commencé à m’impliquer de façon déterminante seulement au début 2004, quand j’étais en première année à l’USJ. Sinon, avant ça, je n’ai participé qu’une seule fois, en 2002, lors de la fermeture de la MTV, la Murr TV, après les élections partielles du Metn entre Mme Myrna Murr et M. Gabriel Murr. Le ministre de l’intérieur de l’époque avait fermé la MTV pour plusieurs raisons qui n’étaient pas du tout valables, donc on avait participé à une grande manifestation, avec d’autres partis de l’opposition (...). J’étais encore au lycée (...). Je ne connaissais personne, c’est venu comme ça: on a vu à la télé qu’il y avait une grande manifestation à côté de la MTV, et j’y suis allé...c’est venu de façon spontanée (...) avec des amis et mon frère (...).*

*-Pourquoi avais-tu voulu participer?*

*On portait atteinte à la liberté de la presse, aux médias, alors quand on attaque la liberté de la presse, c’est très grave pour la démocratie, la liberté est piétinée...”*

Immediately, Maroun story appears as the counter-type of the master narrative voiced by Paul. While the latter could claim successfully his position of interpreter of the model of the FPM identity, Maroun has internalized his subordinated place in the movement. Although he expressed the same values —freedom of expression, participation in the group demonstrations – and located himself in the same political space – the opposition to the “invasion” – his late arrival prevented him to identify with the interpretative ideal. The fact that he joined the group while it was still dominantly a protest movement explains the strength of the identity injunctions integrated by Maroun. Conscious that the transformation of the FPM into a legal political party only one year after his effective entrance in the group does not allow him to fully appropriate the narrative identity of the collective, Maroun exposes this consciousness to affirm his legitimate status of FPM member. Indeed, the

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<sup>373</sup> All the following quotations come from the same interview: November 6, 2007 [in French].



acknowledgment of his subordinated position paradoxically testifies to his full adhesion to the group's values.

Furthermore, Maroun situates the experience of the FPM as a whole into a longer historical sequence, associating *Aounism* with the “refusal front” incarnated by the Lebanese movements which opposed the Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon legalized by the Cairo Agreement of November 1969. By doing so, Maroun clearly positions the FPM into the realm of the Christian nationalist political stands. The mobilization of a longer history might also mitigate his lack of legitimacy: adopting such perspective somehow devaluates the experience of the FPM activists during the 1990s, whose civil protest did not expose them to martyrdom, the highest demonstration of commitment. Although this attenuates even more his own participation, it loosens the direct symbolic pressure exercised by his companions from the preceding cohort.

*“En fait, depuis 1990, je me souviens un peu, très vaguement. (...) Je savais que depuis que j'étais né, le Liban avait de tous temps été occupé (...) par les forces syriennes. Tout mon entourage en fait, même si je connaissais aussi des gens qui étaient avec les Syriens, s'opposait à l'ingérence...à l'occupation...il faut insister sur le mot 'occupation'. Donc ils s'opposaient à l'occupation syrienne de 1990 à 2005. La vérité de l'occupation a été donnée par la résistance de 1990 et les martyrs du 13 octobre 1990: sans eux, le statut d'occupant n'aurait pas été attribué à la présence des forces syriennes au Liban. Puisque, comme vous le savez, beaucoup de Libanais et beaucoup de partis libanais avaient appuyé l'occupation et lui avaient donné une justification. (...) Cette légitimité a été cassée grâce aux martyrs du 13 octobre 1990, qui ont gardé la flamme allumée de 1990 à 2005 et qui ont permis aux Libanais de dire non, les Syriens ne sont pas légitimes au Liban, cette présence est une occupation (...).”*

The adoption of the vocabulary of the group represents the adhesion to its definition of the reality. The interpretative filter mobilized to describe the Syrian tutelage as an occupation is rooted in the memory of October 13, at the same time termination of the Aoun attempted reform and beginning of the era of the Syrian domination. From the group internal focal point, the rejection of the Syrian presence justifies its labeling as an occupation. The remembered event has been transformed into a myth, through a process of implicit commemoration in which “the most important aspect (...) is not that the event is remembered as it was, but the emotional significance attached to this memory.” (Echeberria Echabe&Gonzalez Castro 1998, p. 96). Here, the memory of the event founds the interpretation of the 1990-2005 struggle waged by the movement, i.e. the FPM regime of truth. On the contrary, the Lebanese factions that endorsed the Syrian presence are assimilated to falsifiers of the reality.

*“J’ai un parent qui est un colonel dans l’armée libanaise, il a été pris le 13 octobre 1990 dans les geôles syriennes. Il a été relâché un an et demi plus tard, avec une piqûre dans la main et il est mort six mois après au Liban...il a eu le temps de revoir sa famille et il est mort empoisonné. (...) Mes parents (...) n’étaient pas engagés directement, mais mon père était juge à la commission de contrôle des banques et il était chargé du dossier de la banque Al-Mashrek, (...) une affaire de mauvais contrôle, de falsification et de vol...parce que cette banque finançait des partis, des milices de l’époque, parmi lesquelles les Forces Libanaises, le parti Amal et plusieurs autres courants. En fait, il y a eu plusieurs incidents, parce que mon père appartenait à une équipe qui était chargée de dissoudre cette banque, de rendre leurs dépôts aux épargnants et de fermer cette banque. (...) On leur a lancé une roquette à l’époque...lorsqu’il y a eu le clash entre l’Armée libanaise et les Forces Libanaises. Parce que les Forces Libanaises étaient impliquées dans cette affaire et cette équipe travaillait un peu si vous voulez pour condamner ça. Donc ils ont envoyé un missile sur l’immeuble de la commission de contrôle à Dawra, mais il n’y a pas eu de mort parce que tout simplement, ils n’étaient pas encore arrivés. Bien sûr, c’est un incident très négligeable dans tout ce qui s’est passé. Mais c’était un devoir pour les gens qui le faisaient comme pour les gens de l’Armée libanaise. Mais si vous voulez, la résistance à laquelle on doit tout est la résistance de l’Armée libanaise et des civils qu’on appelait à l’époque 'les supports de l’armée' [Ânsâr al-Jaîsh], des (...) engagés auprès de l’armée, qui l’aidaient (...) pour combattre les Syriens, les Palestiniens et leurs alliés à l’intérieur du pays et qui ont payé [de] beaucoup de martyrs.”*

This passage of Maroun’s interview establishes a parallelism between the individual experience of his family and the collective memory of the group. As the group suffered the loss of the Army soldiers who fought to defend Aoun's power, Maroun's family lost one of its members, himself an officer in the Army and a participant in the battle of October 13. The death of his uncle fully inscribes Maroun in the history of the struggle against the Syrian regime, depicted in its ugliness. The second facet of the fight engaged by Michel Aoun in 1989 is also present in the experience of Maroun's family. The role of his father in the trial of the financial malpractices symbolically echoes the struggle for the establishment of the State against the corrupt and violent rule of the militias. Yet, the assertion of the representativeness of his family is immediately counter-balanced by the reaffirmation of the superiority of Martyrdom as the most valuable form of dedication to the cause. The glorification of the Army and the *Ânsâr* volunteers stresses the primacy of the 1989-1990 period in the history of the FPM over the second phase dominated by civil protests.

*“J’ai grandi un peu, entre guillemets, ‘dans l’innocence’. J’entendais tout le temps la misère que subissait le peuple, je voyais et je sentais les problèmes, ce qui se passait avec les gens: la dette publique par exemple, le vol et tout ce qui se passait.*

*-Où entendais-tu ces choses?*

*En fait, à l’école, (...) on n’en parlait jamais...c’était plutôt avec mes deux grands frères, avec mes amis et avec mon père. Mon père en parlait souvent, il discutait avec des amis, de la situation, de ce qui se passait, de l’avenir du Liban...il y avait toujours la crainte du peuple d’être annexé à la Syrie, d’être une province syrienne...on entendait tout le temps ça. (...) [Aoun] était la figure de l’opposition, la figure de la liberté du Liban et la figure de l’avenir du Liban. C’était un héros pour les gens...à mon avis, il mérite ce titre parce qu’il a été le seul à soutenir le peuple libanais. Parfois, quand j’entends les gens dirent que le peuple libanais s’est mis aux côtés du général Aoun, en fait, à mon avis, c’est exactement l’inverse: ce ne sont pas les gens qui se sont mis aux côtés du Général Aoun, (...) c’est le Général Aoun qui est venu tout seul se mettre à ses côtés (...).”*

The important role of family discussions in the process of identification implies a mediated relationship with the context. As such, they function as a tool to relate and transform the reality: the conception of the Syrian threat transmitted in the family and re-interpreted in the frame of the partisan group orientates the definition of the reality as it is perceived. The centrality of language in the construction of meaning and experience attests the process of internalization of the universe of signification of the group: language, originally a tool to engage the world progressively internalizes itself (Vygotsky 1978, p. 56) to become the instrument of definition and contact not only with the society but also with the self. Dominant narrations within a milieu – which constitute organized forms of language – elaborate conventional meaning progressively internalized by the actors, who mobilize them in order to position their self in the social world through the designation of bonds and boundaries. Symbols, like the figure of the hero, represent manifestations of these bonds and boundaries.

*“-Quelles ont été tes premières activités?*

*Je vous l’ai déjà dit, je vous le répète: mon apport est très négligeable. Je fais partie de l’équipe universitaire, (...) je participais souvent aux manifestations, surtout à l’époque des Syriens. Cette question devrait être posée surtout aux anciens du CPL dans les universités, ceux qui sont plus âgés que moi de cinq ans. Vous auriez eu une histoire plus passionnante. Ils ont subi l’oppression des services de renseignements et même de l’Armée, des forces de sécurité intérieures...ce sont eux qui pourraient vous donner de grandes histoires, je ne peux pas en parler...je ne peux pas parler*

*d'une chose que je n'ai pas vécue....c'est plus par conviction que je me sens de plus en plus impliqué...*

*-Une conviction qui repose sur quoi?*

*En fait, la laïcité est une base dans ce parti...mais la conviction pour laquelle je me sens de plus en plus impliqué dans ce parti, c'est surtout son histoire: (...) ces quinze années qui sont passées, pour tout ce qui s'est passé pendant ce temps (...) Et je pense notamment que c'est un grand courage qui a amené le CPL à conclure un document d'entente avec le Hezbollah, surtout si vous savez l'endroit où le document a été signé: dans l'église Mar Mikhaïl, c'était sur la ligne de démarcation où il y avait des enlèvements et des assassinats sur critères religieux. Et c'est là que le CPL a décidé d'inviter le Hezbollah pour signer un document (...) qui stipule le respect de la société civile, des droits de l'Etat et de toutes (...) les valeurs occidentales, toutes ces valeurs sont très importantes pour les Libanais (...). Je crois qu'après ce document, le Liban va être immunisé pour l'avenir, exactement comme Charles de Gaulle a fait en France en 1945 et comme Nelson Mandela a fait en Afrique du Sud. C'est exactement de la même façon que ces deux grands hommes de l'histoire ont immunisé leur pays...c'est ce que fait Michel Aoun, on immunise le pays pour les cinquante ans à venir, pour les cent ans à venir (...)."*

Again, the lack of legitimacy organizes Maroun's description of his activities. The suggestion that interviewing elder members would generate better stories illustrates the conception of what engagement within the FPM was about. The hierarchy in the experiences depends on the similarities with the master narrative defining the model of interpretation of the activists' ethos. The centrality of experience and the expression of respect for the predecessors, characteristic of the FPM group style, determine the presentation of the self publicized by Maroun in the research encounter. Schematically, it could be argued that Maroun constructs his self from an inaccessible model. He lives out his partisanship according to an experience he did not live. Interestingly, his definition of his attachment as a conviction rather than an experience strangely echoes Paul's affirmation of authorship of the FPM ideals. It indicates that both of them internalized the same interpretative filter but while one – Paul – could claim the status of incarnation of the model, the other has to acknowledge his lack of legitimacy to publicly endorse his identification with the group.

The “more interesting stories” includes the many narratives about glorious acts accomplished during demonstrations, staging inspired activists as the heroes of the tales. One perfect example was the “marvelous” story of a brave deed recounted by Khalid, a close friend of Maroun. The scene is supposed to take place in 1997, in a FPM gathering in front of the United Nation offices in down-town Beirut, and stages Ziad Abbas, today a high-ranking FPM official, as the hero:

*“Je veux te raconter une chose, parce que c’est vraiment drôle. Il y a une personne qui s’appelle Ziad Abbas. Dans une première manifestation partie de l’AUB, en 1997, pour faire passer une pétition à l’ONU, ils avaient trouvé la route bloquée [par les forces de sécurité]. Alors, on ne pouvait plus arriver au bureau de l’ONU. Donc ce type, Ziad Abbas (...) a vu un livreur de Pizza-Hut passer. Il l’a arrêté, payé et il lui a dit, donne-moi ta mobylette et ton habit. Il s’est déguisé et il a pris la pétition, l’a mise dans le sac où l’on range les pizzas. Il est arrivé devant l’armée et a dit: 'je fais passer une commande de pizza à l’ONU'. Il est passé et leur a donné le papier!”<sup>374</sup>*

However, such model of behavior proves a heavy burden for young activists. Jacques, active in USJ at the same time than Maroun although he joined the movement some years before, experienced this difficulty to conform to the dominant heroic narrative. At the occasion of the August 2001 demonstrations, he committed what remains for him an infamous act:

*J’étais là-bas moi, sur le terrain, lors de la deuxième manifestation du 9 août. Mais quand j’ai vu ce qui se passait, je me suis réfugié dans une poubelle. Quand je suis rentré à la maison, je suis resté toute la journée dans ma chambre à pleurer parce que deux de mes amis proches ont été arrêtés. J’étais descendu seul, sans le dire à personne. Quand j’ai vu ce qui se passait, j’ai reculé et je me suis caché. (...) J’étais jeune, c’est resté dans mon cœur jusqu’à maintenant. En plus, mes camarades continuent de temps en temps de se moquer de moi avec ça, ils n’appellent 'Jabbân' [lâche].”<sup>375</sup>*

Jacques's story discloses the strength of the prescriptive expectations governing the publication of the personal interpretation of group identity. His narrative does not follow the natural storyline dictated by the FPM activists' group style. Instead of a heroic tale, Jacques recounts the story of an escape. His inability to fulfill the model of the activist prevailing at that time generated the jibe of his comrades. The rest of the group called him *jabbân*, coward. Even if the insult sounded more like a joke, Jacques personally endorsed the responsibility of his failure to cope with the role he wanted to interpret. Still, in the moment of the interview, it was possible to feel the embarrassment of the young man who did not follow the proper honorable behavior. He tried to justify himself by pointing out that he was still immature at the time of the incident. Later in the conversation, he also acknowledged that he would have preferred to go to jail. He finished the story by recalling his father came to comfort him as he was crying in his room. The paternal figure is important for Jacques as his status of

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<sup>374</sup> Khalid, interview with the author: November 3, 2007 [in French].

<sup>375</sup> Jacques, interview with the author: April 30, 2008 [in French]. Jacques's portrait is detailed in Chapter Five.

companion of the General may give him the necessary credit in the symbolic economy of the group to absolve the failure of his son.

The conviction underlined by Maroun mainly relies on history, which illustrates the past orientation of the FPM identity narrative, despite the often heard claim that the FPM is turned toward the future while the Lebanese Forces' members, on the contrary, live in the past<sup>376</sup>. The example of the agreement with Hezbollah, signed on the former demarcation line, is supposed to testify the willingness of the FPM to turn the page of the past conflicts. It rather localizes the FPM in a sectarian political field in which the Party has become the representative of the Christian populations while the Hezbollah is considered as the political incarnation of the Shiites. Secularism as it is asserted in Maroun's interview refers to a vision of coexistence between confessional groups rather than to neutralization of the religions in the public arena. Maroun also uses collective memory of the wartime to think about and express his perception of the Lebanese fragmented society. The mobilization of comparisons helps the construction of the agreement as a landmark in history, Charles de Gaulle and Mandela being, as already noted in the previous chapter, recurrent references among FPM members.

*“-Combien de temps consacres-tu à ton engagement?”*

*En fait, ce n'est pas régulier, c'est selon les besoins. Je suis à la disposition de ce parti, de ce courant libre, honnête, laïque...je suis à la disposition de ses grands activistes qui ont payé les pots cassés, la facture la plus chère et c'est la moindre des choses que je peux donner. Je n'ai aucun crédit à prendre, tout le crédit est à eux (...).”*

Maroun's legitimacy comes from his adhesion to a universe that asserts his own subordination. He did not personally experience imprisonment and did not participate long enough to incarnate the figure of the activist by himself. On the basis of this repeated rhetoric, it is possible to understand how identification is negotiated in a conversation between the individual and his social surrounding, here materialized in the dominant narrative identity. Maroun's partisan biography and sense of *groupness* are socially negotiated (Gergen & Gergen 1983) in reference with the rules that define the ways interpretation of adhesion to the FPM is framed. In front of these rules,

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<sup>376</sup> See, for example, Paul, interview with the author: November 21, 2007 [in French]: “dès qu'il y a un événement, ils sont tout de suite vêtus des vêtements de la milice...ils ont toujours ce complexe du passé, ils ne peuvent pas oublier le passé et regarder vers le futur”. Or Jim, interview with the author: March 17, 2009 [in French]: “ils vivent encore dans les années 1970, l'opposition Chrétiens/Musulmans...jusqu'à présent ils utilisent des termes des années 1970 comme Est / Ouest [Beirut]. On est en 2009, *khalas*, on a plus le droit de dire ça.”

Maroun adopts the only position that enables him to support the narrative to which he adheres, although it does not offer him a dominant place.

*“J’ai beaucoup appris dans le militantisme (...). Je pense beaucoup, je lis un peu. Je pense à ce que les grands hommes d’Etat de l’Histoire ont fait. Je vois qu’il y a par exemple différents points de vue, différentes façons d’opérer parmi les hommes d’Etat. Il y a Nelson Mandela, Charles de Gaulle, il y a beaucoup d’hommes d’Etat qui ont travaillé pour un but, pour un objectif de façon différente. J’ai été convaincu le plus par la façon d’agir de Charles De Gaulle: le général de Gaulle et le Président De Gaulle. Également par le Président Mandela (...). Le président Mandela est vraiment quelqu’un de grand. Il a su dépasser sa haine, juste parce qu’il sait que ce qu’il fait aujourd’hui, ce n’est pas quelque chose de personnel, c’est pour un peuple en éternelle continuité, en éternel renouvellement. C’est un héritage qui passe de pères en fils...”*

*-Il y a des livres qui t’ont marqués?*

*En fait, je lis beaucoup de livres sur la guerre du Liban, ça m’intéresse vraiment beaucoup. Il y a un livre de M. Salvatore Lombardo, un journaliste français qui est très proche du général Aoun. Je lis beaucoup ses livres, chaque fois qu’il en publie un, je le lis. (...) de même l’écrivain Daniel Rondeau, qui est aussi un proche du général Aoun et qui est très ami avec M. Lombardo...leurs livres m’intéressent beaucoup. J’aime beaucoup ces deux journalistes qui, à mon avis, reflètent exactement ce qui se passe et ce qui s’est passé au Liban.”*

The cited books are closely linked with the construction of the group's identity narrative. The assertion that these books describe exactly the past and present situation of the country confirms the relationship that exists between individual perceptions and social identity. The assimilation of the FPM perspective on history with “the” reality sustains the possibility of antagonistic reconstruction of the past in the Lebanese context dominated by strong intergroup conflict, fueling what Deyanov (1992) called “the war of symbolic interpretations”. Yet, what matters more for the analysis of the personal experience of contextual socialization within the group is the construction of a filiation within activism. Maroun compares the internalization of cognitive structures and practices with a heritage, passed from one generation to another. In this line, he positions himself as an heir – the one who learns rather than the one who teaches. The examples of de Gaulle and Mandela are not only interesting because of their recurrent evocation, which indicates the construction of a shared space of identification, but also because they are presented as “President” of their respective countries, implying implicitly a comparable presidential destiny for Michel Aoun. It also suggests that Maroun conceives politics as the institutional construction of a State, rather than the

revolution repeatedly mentioned by Paul: his later adhesion emphasized his sensibility to the contemporary position of the Party, now fully integrated to a system it previously aimed at revolutionizing.

*“Tout ce qui nous unit est que l'on veut tous la même chose et que l'on croit tous très profondément à ce que l'on veut. Je peux vous assurer que (...) ce que vous faites tend vers la vérité, tend vers le correct, quand, en ne voulant rien, vous donnez tout. Et si vous voyez ce que le CPL fait, vous voyez que la plupart des activistes donnent tout sans rien vouloir, sans rien prendre. Et c'est comme ça que l'on comprend qu'ils croient en ce qu'ils veulent et ils savent que ce qu'ils veulent n'est pas une imposture...en fin de compte, c'est l'avenir du Liban.”*

Maroun grounds attachment to the FPM in a common definition of the future. Henri Tajfel (1982, p. 505) stated that the perception of a shared destiny constitutes the basis for identification, even though the beliefs and motives among group members differ. Maroun's own interpretation of partisanship is constructed from a point of view that differs from Paul's. Yet, his consciousness of a community of destiny enables the perpetuation and prolongation of the social knowledge in use within the group. What about the youth who did not experience the age of clandestine activism?

### **C) Karl: Enlightened elitism**

Karl comes from an upper-class family established in Furn el-Hayek, a neighborhood in the Beirut Christian district of Achrafiyeh. He was born in 1987, only one year after Maroun. However, he joined the FPM in the wake of the 2005 events and consequently entered a very different group, less dominated by the ethos of activism. The context of his engagement, marked by the construction of the FPM organization, highlighted the enterprising character of the young man, who seems to have found in the Party a space of development of his personal aspirations for an elite society.

*“J'ai commencé en 2005, quand le Général est revenu (...). Le truc c'est qu'avec ma famille, je ne connaissais pas du tout Aoun. (...) J'ai plutôt grandi sur les valeurs du Bloc National de Raymond Eddeh. J'ai toujours été laïc, on pensait au Liban, des choses comme ça, très simples. (...) En fait, le BN est un parti de cadres. Mais dans ma famille, il y avait tout de même un ancien député, l'oncle de ma mère. Et le père de ma mère était ami avec Raymond Eddeh. Mais mes parents n'étaient pas cadres dans le parti. Le parti avait juste un bureau de cadres mais pas vraiment de militants. (...) Et j'ai été, c'est vrai, élevé aussi dans la haine des Kata'eb, les Phalangistes, et du courant (...) de la droite chrétienne très fanatique qui a mon avis nous a menés à tous les problèmes et à la guerre civile.*



*(...) Donc ils ne m'avaient jamais parlé du Général Aoun. Je ne le connaissais pas du tout en fait. En 2005, j'ai été attiré par son discours, refusant tout le monde. J'ai réalisé que c'était un homme révolutionnaire et que c'était le seul qui vraiment pouvait faire ce qu'il veut. (...) Tu sais avec le 14 mars et tous les changements politiques, je m'étais mis en tête que l'on allait oublier le passé et que nous allions construire un nouveau pays avec tout le monde. Et puis en particulier j'aimais le Général, parce que c'était vraiment la figure du 14 mars, le vrai mec [sic.] qui était contre la Syrie. Tout le monde le respectait lors du 14 mars. Puis il est venu et (...) ils ont voulu le limiter, ne lui offrir que quelques députés. Mais lui a refusé ça. Je me suis dit: 'enfin un mec qui refuse tout, ça fait du bien'. Ça faisait longtemps que j'attendais cela. Cet esprit révolutionnaire (...). Donc voilà, ça m'a attiré. Pendant les élections, il n'y avait rien à faire alors j'ai juste donné un coup de main dans mon village, au Kesrwan, et puis voilà. A la fac, je suis devenu actif en première année. Je me suis présenté au poste de délégué."*

Karl's presentation of his own engagement is constructed primarily around a central context designed by the 2005 events. Unlike Paul and Maroun, Karl only joined the FPM after his legalization, following the return of Michel Aoun. The attachment of his family to the National Bloc and the values of secularism constitutes the second basis that sustains his engagement story. Identification could not operate was it not for a set of foundations and cognitive spaces, on which it rests and in which it develops. Here, Karl's interest for Michel Aoun and the FPM finds a compatible ground in his primary socialization and early political education, which emphasized secularism and rejected the "Christian right" incarnated by the Kata'eb and by extension the Lebanese Forces. The rupture between the Phalangists and the National Bloc occurred in 1969. At that time, the National Bloc was part of the Tripartite Alliance, also known as the Helf [*al-Hilf al-Thulâthî*], along with the Kata'eb and the National Liberal Party. Raymond Eddeh eventually left the alliance over dissensions about the Cairo Agreement.

The March 14 event and more generally the period of the "Beirut Spring" comes out as the basis of Karl's political universe. Michel Aoun is singled out as the embodiment of the revolt. The character of the FPM leader exhibits two main features: his anti-Syrian stance and his rejection of the Lebanese political order. In Karl's view, the man who came back represented at the same time the successful struggle against the Syrian presence and the promise to reform – even revolutionize – a political order depicted as a field of reciprocal compromises. A first occasion to commit himself appeared during the summer 2005 before entrance in the USJ offered him the opportunity to durably join the FPM student group. No doubt that the electoral success of the FPM in Kesrwan encouraged Karl to continue in the path of engagement.

*"J'étais à l'école à Jamhour. (...) Il n'y avait pas trop de discussion politique. En 2004 la politique a fait une entrée en force. En fait, nous avions un club, le club Charles Helu. C'était un club de discussion politique et ça nous a vraiment formés. En fait, quand tu y penses, c'est la manière dont on acquiert des valeurs. C'était avec Naji Khoury, il est aujourd'hui cadre au CPL. C'est lui qui avait fondé le club. Je me rappelle même qu'une fois, il avait défendu ouvertement le Général Aoun. Parce qu'il y avait un imbécile, un Kata'eb, qui défendait les Syriens – on était en 2004, les Syriens étaient encore là. Il attaquait le Général et Naji qui avait toujours été trop impartial, cette fois-là il est intervenu. Il a dit: 'L'époque de Aoun, c'était génial, au moins l'Armée était aimée par le peuple, les gens aidaient l'Armée'.*

*-Pourquoi avais-tu voulu rejoindre ce club?*

*En fait à l'école, j'étais délégué...alors j'ai pensé qu'il fallait me préparer pour la fac. A l'université, il faut travailler dans la politique et moi, j'aime ça. Donc voilà. (...) J'ai été délégué de classe depuis la classe de Troisième jusqu'en Terminale. En première année à la fac, je n'ai pas réussi à être élu avec le CPL. Je connaissais déjà quelqu'un de plus âgé que moi, de mon école, qui s'appelait J.A. Tu le connais? Il est fort. Maintenant il travaille en France. Donc voilà, ils font une réunion pour les étudiants de première année qui arrivent et voilà, je me suis présenté (...) parce qu'on se connaissait tous très bien avec les jeunes du CPL. (...) On devait être une quarantaine rien qu'en première année. Sur deux cents étudiants! Quand tu commences avec une telle base, c'est génial. Tu te sens fort. (...) Maintenant je suis responsable du CPL pour le campus de Huvelin."*

Like Emile, whose case was introduced in the previous section, Karl adhered to the club Charles Helu during his studies in Jamhour. Similarly, the personality of his animator played a pivotal role in the political education of the young man. Beside the club, which significance has been already presented, two elements deserve attention. First, the insistence on the historical context. 2004 saw the beginning of the political crisis that would lead to the March 14 movement. It is in this specific configuration that Karl's political consciousness emerged. Second, Karl seems to have had a plan in mind. This good student had always been a class representative since he was fourteen. After he joined the faculty of Economics in Huvelin, he immediately ran for elections, using the personal network he had built at school to get in touch with the FPM group. Without suggesting that he joined the FPM as a means to ensure his election in student polls, there is in him this desire to stand out. Karl undoubtedly found in the Party a space in which he could develop his inclination.

*"Le problème c'est que les étudiants sont censé être l'élite de la population libanais mais en fait, c'est la catastrophe. Moi, je pensais que tout le monde était comme moi. Mais il y a des gens qui parlent de manière très extrême. Tu vois de tout: des*

*gens très religieux musulmans, des gens fanatiques chrétiens, des gens qui s'en foutent de leur pays et de tout, les neutres vraiment jusqu'au bout. Et voilà. Ce n'est pas sympa de se confronter à tellement de choses comme ça. Parce que ça me révolte en fait. Comment des gens peuvent en arriver à penser comme ça? Tu as envie de leur dire: 'Mais réalisez !' (...) Le débat manque d'idée. Moi, ça m'intéresse de parler. Dans la politique au Liban, tu as deux grands blocs mais ils discutent de quoi? Ce n'est que du bavardage politique. Ils ne parlent pas de choses importantes mais seulement de géopolitique: qui des USA ou de l'Iran doit intervenir dans notre pays! C'est fou! Et ils oublient le plus important à mon avis, l'économie. Et c'est la faute du peuple je pense. C'est la faute du peuple parce qu'il n'exige pas que leurs discussions soient de meilleur calibre. Parce qu'en fin de compte, qu'est-ce qui est important pour toi? De vivre mieux et que ton parti te fasse vivre mieux. Si chacun au sein du peuple pense à son intérêt personnel, on peut à mon avis arriver à un intérêt collectif. Mais il faut penser à son vrai intérêt personnel, à long terme. Pas à court terme, pas juste avant les élections prendre 200\$."*

The representations of the university space and of the student population confirm the impression of elitism perceived in the last extract. However, unlike Paul, whose sense of superiority derived from his identification with the traits of the ethics of activism, Karl seems to have developed his inclination toward elitism from his representation of selfhood. Originally from an upper-class family, long established in the heart of Beirut, culturally dominant (his mother is a teacher), and economically prosperous, Karl has further been educated in the elite institution of Jamhour. In his exposé of the situation, he immediately adopts a commanding position, which relies at the same time on ideological moderation, pragmatism, and a top-down perspective that characterize expert discourse.

*"Le mouvement du 14 mars, c'était mes premières manifestations. Dès que Rafiq Hariri est mort, j'ai participé aux manifestations. Je descendais manifester, mettre des bougies et tout ça. Parce qu'on sentait que c'était là, que c'était proche, qu'il fallait faire quelque chose. Chaque lundi, il y avait une manifestation. Et puis il y a eu la grande manifestation du Hezbollah [le 8 mars] qui a conduit à la manifestation du 14 mars. (...) J'étais en Terminale. Je ratais mes cours le lundi pour aller manifester. (...) Nous étions une dizaine [de l'école à le faire]. Les plus motivés...il y a en avait qui avaient peur. Leurs parents leur disaient de ne pas y aller. Mais nous, nous étions trop révolutionnaires. On s'en moquait de ce que nos parents disaient, le pays comptait plus.*

*-Comment te sentais-tu de participer à ce mouvement?*

*C'était génial. C'était la fierté. Enfin on a la chance de construire un vrai pays. Ça m'embêtait: tu vas à la montagne et tu as un barrage syrien. En plus il ose te poser*

*des questions l'enfoiré! Quelqu'un d'autre est présent dans ton pays et fait la loi. Tu vois? Et dans la politique tu vois qu'il contrôle tout. Le pire est qu'il y a des gens à l'intérieur pour les aider, et à l'époque c'était genre la majorité du peuple qui votait pour ces gens. Tu sentais que tu ne pouvais arriver nulle part. Et puis d'un coup, tout le peuple est devenu contre la Syrie (...). J'étais plutôt à me dire: 'allez, on leur pardonne'. Et puis Michel Aoun est venu et ils l'ont embêté. On s'est dit: 'mais les mecs, mince, c'est lui qui mérite le plus!'. On a réalisé que la politique pour eux n'était qu'un jeu: leur seul but était d'arriver à se maintenir au pouvoir et que leurs enfants continuent à être au pouvoir.”*

The social dynamics of the weeks separating the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the massive demonstration held on Beirut's Martyrs' Square were favorable for the development of social representations highlighting political and partisan identities. The enthusiasm that seized the crowd, especially the youth, gave the feeling to participate in the making of history. This fostered a sense of powerfulness, a belief in the capacity of the individuals to change the destiny of their country. Discursively, a link was asserted with the exasperation and the revolt born from the Syrian presence, symbolized by the check-points, but it is rather the insistence on the possibility to build a new country that captures the attention. It suggests that Karl has adhered to a Party advocating a program of institutional reform rather than to a social movement. The revolutionary phase is limited in his story to the weeks of February and March 2005 and disconnected from the FPM as such. He sees Aoun as the symbol of the popular movement but no mention is made of the work of the activists. In fact, Karl personalizes and publicizes a narrative identity of the FPM that has not been conventionalized yet. His interpretation of the FPM identity, underlining elitism and political pragmatism, has not been accepted, stabilized, and standardized among group members. However, his comment “*let's forgive them*” might indicate the existence of an earlier identification of the FPM.

*“En fait, j'ai un frère qui travaille en France qui était revenu avec le Général, dans l'avion. Lui il est RPL-CPL à Paris. Il nous a encouragés à descendre accueillir le Général. Moi, j'y suis allé avec ma mère et ma soeur. (...) Mon frère est plus âgé que moi de douze ans. Alors lui bien sûr, il ne pouvait pas travailler en politique avec le CPL à son époque, c'était un suicide. Donc quand il est parti en France, il a rencontré le Général. Le mec l'a intéressé et voilà, il est entré au RPL. A mon avis, c'est cette élite qui a provoqué la situation de 2005. C'est cette élite qui a conseillé le Général comme il fallait. Avant qu'il revienne de France. Parce qu'il est revenu de manière hyper héroïque. (...) En fait, pendant l'occupation syrienne, mon frère était Ahrâr, donc avec Dory Chamoun, parce qu'il avait peur d'être CPL car à l'époque on les battait. Et j'avais un autre de mes frères avec le Bloc National. Il est d'ailleurs*

*toujours avec le Bloc National, donc contre le CPL. Il dit que c'est un parti de masse qui ne va arriver aux idées dont il parle aujourd'hui (...). Parfois, il a raison, je le dis objectivement. (...) Lui, il insiste sur la qualité des personnes qui sont dans chaque parti. Pour lui, c'est très important. Pour nous tous en fait. Et sur la qualité des discours. Et c'est vrai qu'au CPL, parfois on dérape. On se met à crier ou autre. Des fois, on manque d'intelligence. A mon avis, c'est parce que les gens qui entourent le Général ne sont pas très bien.*

*-Qu'est-ce qui te déplaît?*

*On a souvent un discours chrétien, et ça m'embête. Un discours chrétien à tout bout de champ, ce n'est pas bon. OK, les Chrétiens se sentent en danger, ils vont disparaître [sic.]. Bien sûr, on ne le veut pas, on veut que tous soient égaux dans le pays et puis ensuite, une fois que le peuple est prêt, tu vas vers la laïcité. Mais ça doit s'arrêter là. Tu ne dois pas parler tout le temps de ça. Matin, midi et soir il parle comme ça, ça crée des idées dans la tête des gens. Et puis on n'a pas vraiment une politique économique, pas une vision économique pour le pays. Pour ça, il faut des gens de qualité. Moi, je suis donc plutôt de ce courant dans le CPL. Parce que moi, je trouve que le CPL est le meilleur parti qui existe au Liban, donc il faut travailler au sein du CPL. D'autant que tu es libre. Tu peux créer ton propre discours et ensuite à toi de le faire arriver au sein du CPL. C'est mon programme pour cette année au niveau de Huvelin."*

The evocation of Karl's brothers gives elements to understand better his encounter with the movement. His elder brother, twelve years his senior, joined the RPL after he left for France to work. Hence, Karl has certainly had more information about the FPM and Michel Aoun that he first acknowledged. Yet, the partisan nomadism of his brother sharply differentiates him from the FPM activists of his generation. The fact that Karl explains the impossibility for his brother to engage in the FPM under the Syrian tutelage does not fit with the canons of the narrative identity of the group. His brother rather seems to embody the portrait of the "elite" based in France that would constitute the entourage of the General after his return, which is accused of opportunism and despised by the field activists. By stating that the "heroic come back" of the General was programmed from France, Karl clearly takes side in this conflict in favor of the fringe incarnated by his first brother. Karl's second brother, member of the National Bloc, a party that has become almost insignificant in the contemporary political arena, shares the same elitism. The denunciation of the "Christian drift" of the FPM originates in the secularism professed by Karl, but also in his will to transform the Party into an organization of experts, directed by "people of quality" and concentrating on economic issues. A program that is not limited to the national level:

*“Il faut (...) un projet pour sortir un peu de la masse populaire et pouvoir créer un parti de cadres, et surtout un véritable parti, parce que le CPL est un courant, pas encore un parti, pas une institution. Il faut une institution. Parce que les choses bloquent s'il n'y a pas une bonne personne qui est responsable [du CPL] à Huvelin. Moi, ce que je veux, c'est créer un système avec lequel peu importe la personne. J'essaie de créer un système qui puisse continuer à fonctionner au fil des années et faire évoluer la pensée, et que ça reste, même si tu as un mec pas forcément bien. Parce que tu peux avoir un mec bien, qui arrive à faire bouger les choses et à gagner toute la fac une année, mais si ensuite viens une personne moins bien, on peut perdre à nouveau. (...) J'ai fait toute une étude sur ça et je l'applique maintenant. (...) Par exemple, on a système de SMS pour la circulation de l'information. On a toute une hiérarchie qui fonctionne déjà, avec des postes comme responsables de faculté, des comités et des sous-comités de travail, au niveau de tout le campus. Chaque projet a sa personne et son comité. (...) En plus, en parallèle, on aurait une formation continue qui serait le travail d'un comité de relations, sur les valeurs auxquelles nous croyons. Et surtout, ce que l'on veut faire en fait c'est créer un système qui puisse se développer, qu'on puisse faire des choses. Un système qui puisse te donner et surtout à qui toi tu puisses donner. Un système qui soit en constante évolution. Tu vois ce que je veux dire? Si tu mises sur le capital humain, tu peux arriver à quelque chose. Moi, je m'appuie beaucoup sur les principes économiques dans ma vie, y compris dans la politique, et ça m'aide.*

*(...) Les responsables étudiants du CPL, comme Alain, ils regardent ça avec intérêt et je mise là-dessus. J'espère qu'ils vont faire ça dans toutes les universités. Imagines un peu, avec ce que je suis en train de faire, je sens que je sers à quelque chose et qu'en fin de compte je sers à mon pays parce qu'à travers le CPL j'aide mon pays (...) Moi, (...) je pense avant de faire. Je veux me faire remarquer. Je ne veux pas rentrer dans le bavardage politique inutile. Je veux un résultat. Donc je me suis mis à penser quels sont les problèmes et quelles sont les solutions. J'ai fait une étude et j'ai présenté les résultats, aux responsables étudiants du CPL. Quand j'étais en première année, ils ont ignoré cette étude. Un type m'avait dit alors: 't'as raison, fais-nous une étude sur ça'. Mais il ne croyait pas que j'allais le faire, il disait ça juste pour se débarrasser de moi. Donc j'ai fait une étude et je suis retourné le voir. Je lui ai présentée. Il m'a dit: 'ton étude est bien au niveau micro-économique, mais il manque l'aspect macro-économique'. Et c'est tout ce que j'ai entendu à propos de ça. Et puis, quand Alain est venu, il m'a dit: 'J'ai appris que toi tu avais fait une étude, est-ce que je pourrais la voir?'. Je lui ai donné. Il a été très intéressé et donc il m'a proposé d'être le responsable du CPL à Huvelin. Personne n'a eu de problème à l'université et voilà, c'est comme ça que ça s'est passé.”*

Karl created a brand new plan of organization for the FPM group in Huvelin<sup>377</sup>. Institutionalization is the key word of his program. His aim is to ensure the functioning of the group independently of the person in charge, i.e. the construction of a rationalized mode of organization directed by technicians and experts. His plan relies on the establishment of three committees: a social committee concerned with the organization of sociability events in the university; a committee of relations, in charge of the socialization of the members, designed along the same model than the FPM original plan of political education, with a dimension focusing on knowledge and another one on behavioral training; and a committee in charge of the financial management. The second part of the passage illustrates his aspirations for recognition – also surfacing in his repeated requests for my approbation during our conversations – and a quite naive vanity. His project fitted well with the new situation of the FPM, also in search for institutionalization at the national level. The goodwill demonstrated by Alain in the Party's Committee of Student Affairs enabled Karl to be designated coordinator of the group in Huvelin, with the specific task to implement his plan. Context and interpersonal network thus combined to encourage Karl in his engagement.

*“En tant que député, représentant du peuple, tu devrais être la crème du peuple. Ça devrait être des gens compétents dans leur domaine. Un économiste, un avocat, des gens comme ça. (...) Il n'y a pas ça, même au sein du CPL. Il y en a quelques-uns, des jeunes. Les jeunes, c'est la solution. Parce que les jeunes sont éduqués. Plus que leurs parents en fait. Alors voilà, on veut des jeunes, mais des jeunes propres (...). Des jeunes avec les mêmes mentalités, ça ne sert à rien parce qu'ils vont rentrer dans la même spirale. (...) Il faut des jeunes qui innovent, qui imposent leurs idées à eux, et non pas qui suivent.”*

Karl has the ambition to deeply change the Lebanese society, to transform the mentalities that according to him cause the misfortune of the country. He displays a strong respect for university achievements and professional status, which further appeared as I asked him about the influential encounters he made during his life:

*“Il y a l'ex-ministre George Corm. C'est un économiste, avec une éducation de malade, il était à Harvard le mec et tout. Il a fait son doctorat. Je pense qu'il était aussi à la Sorbonne. Moi, je suis très influencé par ses articles. Le mec est dévoué pour le Liban. Il t'explique comment la situation a évolué vers le pire et quelles sont les réformes nécessaires. Il a son plan d'action prêt. Pourquoi pas un mec comme ça au pouvoir? Il va faire bouger les choses. D'ailleurs, quand il est venu au pouvoir en*

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<sup>377</sup> The project he designed is available in the appendix.

*1998, dans le seul gouvernement qui n'était pas Hariri, il a arrêté la politique du taux d'intérêt qui était en train de tuer le pays. (...) Donc il faut des réformes parce que là, on voit comment un type a établi une politique en privilégiant son intérêt personnel. Il a enfoncé la population et créé une dette énorme. Donc voilà, tu as besoin de l'autre culture. S'il ne travaille pas bien, tu peux le virer, mais une fois que tu as ce genre de débat au Liban ça pourra marcher."*

During one of our next meetings, Karl even called explicitly for the constitution of a government of experts and technocrats, detached from political belonging:

*"Il faudrait un président et des ministres apolitiques mais qui sachent vraiment travailler pour donner une stabilité au Liban. L'économie va se développer et les investissements vont venir. Alors les gens vont se détacher de la politique, parce que naturellement, le Libanais sait vivre avec l'autre!"<sup>378</sup>*

For Karl, political engagement appears as a way to express his aristocratic penchant, nurtured by the economic theory he learned during his university studies.

*"-Qu'est-ce que le CPL représente pour toi?"*

*Le CPL, c'est une solution.*

*-Et le point commun entre ses membres?"*

*Ça me fait de la peine de dire ça, mais le point commun, c'est Michel Aoun."*

Unsurprisingly, Karl represents the FPM as a tool that could solve the problems of the country. Deprived of the activist ethos he did not personally experience, his interpretation of the sense of belonging to the group is mediated by the figure of the leader, which acts as a symbol to ensure the coexistence between the multiple profiles within the Party.

*"[Pour l'avenir,] je souhaite partir...pour pouvoir revenir dans une meilleure situation. J'en ai un peu marre de vivre au Liban en fait. En fin de compte, tu veux vivre dans la dignité et tu ne peux pas le faire au Liban.*

*-Pourquoi?"*

*Parce qu'ils n'apprécient pas ton travail. Personne n'apprécie. Tu te mets à travailler, à te casser la tête, mais personne n'apprécie. Parce qu'en fin de compte un policier peut t'arrêter sans raison et t'embêter. Personne ne va te défendre. Quand tu es bien, personne ne te défend. Si tu n'acceptes pas les pistons, tu ne trouves rien. Les postes sont nuls au Liban. Et toi, tu veux plus, tu es plus motivé que*

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<sup>378</sup> Karl, interview with the author: October 29, 2008 [in French].



*ça. Tu veux plus que ce que ton pays a à t'offrir. C'est le gros problème au Liban, c'est pour ça que la majeure partie des jeunes diplômés s'en vont."*

Karl strongly endorses the meritocracy advocated in the FPM. For him, hard-work is not recognized enough because of the corrupt nature of the Lebanese society. Later, he would himself experience this feeling. In the autumn 2008, almost six months after our last encounter, I met him again at the occasion of the university elections in Huvelin. Karl graduated the previous year and thus left the university. He nonetheless entered the campus to help his friends. Yet, his discourse on the Party was stamped with the seal of disappointment:

*"J'avais essayé d'institutionnaliser tout ça (...). Ils étaient censés le faire [mettre son projet en application] mais ils ne l'ont pas fait (...). J'ai travaillé pour rien (...), il n'y a pas de discipline au CPL, si c'était le Hezbollah, ça aurait marché! Au CPL, il n'y a pas d'engagement, il faut les convaincre (...)."379*

His ambitious project indeed remained a dead letter. A development that curiously echoes the failure of institutionalization at the national level. A strong organization structure hence appears unnecessary – or alien – to the functioning of the group. For Karl however, this non-accomplishment paved the way for a slow but certain disassociation with the group. When I met him during the spring 2009, Karl had entered a phase of personal questioning regarding not only his engagement in the FPM, but also his religious beliefs, and his certitude about the primacy of economics in human life. A convincing explanation for the timing of this crisis lays in Karl's lack of activity and inter-personal relations at that moment. He was then preparing an examination to enter a prestigious university in France and hence lived alone at home, severed from his university friends. Such isolation from the partisan networks generated a disorientation that underlines, *a contrario*, the importance of social interactions in the development and the maintenance of identification.

Karl's interpretation of FPM membership presented during our interview does not correspond to the dominant activism-oriented narrative. On the contrary, it seems more aligned with the expertise discourse associated with the more recent members of the Party, who often came from France within months of the return of Michel Aoun. Karl's fusion with the group appears much more limited than Paul's or Maroun's. Such impression arises mainly because his narrative is not aligned with the master narrative emanating from the FPM group style. At the time of our encounter, Karl was though very well integrated into the youth section of the Party. The gap between the two

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<sup>379</sup> Karl, interview with the author: October 23, 2008 [in French].

storylines originates in the shift separating field activists from “new” members, engaged during the “reformist” phase of the Party. An engineer and economist, high ranking official in an international administration implanted in Lebanon, whose profile perfectly matches the dispositions valued by Karl regretted that: “*We can only be companions of the Party, never more*”, because of the distrust toward those who, like him, came back from France<sup>380</sup>. According to this highly skilled individual, who participated in the redaction of the FPM economic program, field activists, generally coming from the middle-class, aspire to minister positions or parliamentary seats in reward for their struggle and suffer from the social differences with the high-ranking officials of his kind. This cleavage, central to understand the FPM's internal fractures, comes essentially from the difference in the context of engagement. The Party is not the same and hence does not host the same aspirations. However, the maintenance of the activism-oriented narrative in the group style and the transcendent reference to 1988-1990 continue for now to bridge the two eras.

The three portraits presented here did not intend to sketch ideal-types of activists. They rather aimed at demonstrating the influence of the contexts of encounter with the organization in the modalities and trajectories of identification. In spite of the claims that the group “staid the same”, a clear evolution of the social and political configurations suggests that the FPM Paul discovered in 1999 has nothing to do with the organization in which Karl tried to implement his project of institutionalization. If the notion of generation seems unable to provide a convincing sociological understanding of the mechanisms of adhesion as such at the macro level (Joignant 1997, p. 541-542), it remains that the conditions of entry deeply impact the personal trajectories (Jennings 1987). Political groups and social movements undergo transformations in time, due to the renewing of their members, a cohort effect that can generate tensions in the organizations (Katz & Mair 1994). In the case of the FPM, the cohabitation between individuals with distinctive experience of political action activates a potential line of internal fracture.

The circumstances in which the individual met the group are pivotal to understand the construction and transformations of personal identifications. Paul's engagement in the culmination of the protest movement explains his full endorsement of the narrative centered on the ethos of activism. The strong sense of solidarity imposed by the semi-clandestine conditions of action deeply imprinted his conception of selfhood as a part of a fusional entity. Consequently, Paul seemed ill-at-ease with the new situation of the Party in which collective actions are rare and man-to-man solidarity between

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<sup>380</sup> Dominique, interview with the author: April 25, 2010 [in French].

members has declined. Maroun's adhesion in the end of the era of activism sustained the internalization of a narrative identity he could not fulfill, because of the occurrence of the March 14 movement and its consequences for the FPM. Hence, he appeared somehow torn between past ideal and new perspectives for the future. Finally, Karl engaged in a Party already integrated into the political system. His aspiration for reforms deriving from his penchant for economics and social elitism found in the FPM a suitable space of development. However, the lack of personal gratification coupled with a separation from the group's networks weakened his sense of belonging. These variations are translated into the elaboration of specific narratives, each intending the representation of selfhood through the construction of membership: Paul constructs a dominant collective narrative in which his self and the group identity merge; Maroun voices a story upon which he cannot claim authorship, presenting his self as the heir of a collective ethos; Karl composes a story of singularization staging the group as a tool to transform the society. Wittgenstein stated that the narrative horizon of a human group and its field of action merge: narratives and actions operate in the same space and are contrived by the same boundaries (cited in Passy & Giugni 2005, p. 894). The transformation of the dominant identity narrative within the FPM reflects the evolution of the repertoire of action of the group, from a semi-clandestine protest movement to a well-integrated political Party.

It is not my intention to claim that the identification within the first cohort is deeper than in the last. It simply generates the construction of a slightly distinctive understanding of the group identity, a different interpretation of membership and attachment as people attach more signification to the events they personally lived (Schuman & Scott 1989). The legalization of the Party and its insertion within Lebanese politics undoubtedly constituted the turning point. The transformations of the Lebanese scene during the spring 2005 determined a durable inflection in the group's trajectory and divided the members between those who have a direct memory of the previous phase and more recent adherents. The fracture appears all the more acute since this gap overlaps generational distinction: those who are too young to have experienced the FPM as a social movement are also those with no direct memory of the war, and particularly of Aoun's government. Without drawing general conclusions about the profile of the two generations, which would be improper due to the great impact of personal orientations, a few features can still be highlighted from the limited scope of this work:

- First, the students who joined the movement before its legalization seem to have been more frequently engaged in other civil associations. Both the Aounist campaign for the

respect of the civil rights and the absence of a real organization until the end of the 1990s have strengthened the links between the FPM activists and the rising civil society that has emerged in Lebanon in the second half of the decade (Karam 2006). A particular association, SOLIDE, exemplifies this connection. SOLIDE defends the rights of the Lebanese held prisoners in neighboring countries, Syria and Israel. It mainly aims at elucidating the fate of the Lebanese arrested by the Syrian and Israeli troops. Many of the Lebanese detained in Syria were imprisoned in the aftermaths of October 13, explaining the direct link between SOLIDE and the Aounist movement. However, the later rapprochement of the FPM with the Syrian regime had loosened the connections existing with SOLIDE.

- The role of the university in the personal stories of adhesion has also evolved. University territories remain in all cases the spaces in which concrete engagement with the group starts, due to the strength of the partisan networks in the various universities. However, before the legalization of the Party, universities often hosted the first contacts with the movement as well as the first immersion into politics, while the public presence of the FPM after 2005 and the emphasis on political issues resulting from the “Beirut Spring” tend to limit the impact of university. In other words, university often remains the space of engagement but is not any more the space of politicization. Further, FPM student groups had a much greater impact when FPM was a social movement than after its transformation into a Party.

- The post-2005 cohort has been politicized in a context of lasting crisis. The cleavage between March 14 and March 8, the violence, symbolic but also physical – violent demonstrations, armed fighting in May 2008, street riots – of the confrontation between the two coalitions have not only positioned partisan identities at the center of the public arena (Mermier & Varin 2010, p. 19), they also generate the transmission of solidified and exclusive group identities. Times of crisis reframe the experience of the Other according to the imperatives of unity and confrontation (Martin 1994, p. 24). Alerity is perceived within a simplified grammar of representations (Favier 2004, p. 354).

Because they insist on immutable identities, the social representations – defined as the foundations of people's normative prescriptions and social categorization (Moscovici 1981; 1984) – produced in the context of crisis emphasize the importance of primary ties, conceptualized in Lebanon in reference to the triple inscription within the family, the local community, and the sectarian group. The bonds primary ties construct have been represented under the notion of “communal society (*mujtama' ahli*)”, defined in opposition to the “civil society (*mujtama' madani*)” (Beydoun 1984;

Chaoul 2003). Is the post-2005 cohort more inserted in communal ties? In fact, this dichotomic opposition between two conceptions of the Lebanese society appears un-adapted, all the more since it implicitly suggests a normative superiority of the civil society, “open” and “modern”, over “traditions”. Moreover it over-rules the phenomena of ongoing actualization of past structures into new forms and the continual reformulations produced in the complex interactions of past and present (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983).

In spite of its evolution, the FPM has been able to overall maintain cohesion. From the perspective of the portraits of Paul, Maroun, and Karl, two related elements have to be highlighted: the centrality of memory in the interpretation of identification with the group and the strength of the constructed boundaries, in particular with regard to the repulsive image of the Lebanese Forces.

### **3. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT: CRAFTING A FUTURE FROM THE PAST**

After considering the social networks opening access to the Party and the contexts of engagement, it came out that the dispositions fostering the potentiality of identification with a partisan group are of three kinds: the predispositions inherited from primary socialization, the emotional bonds constructed with the group, mediated by family and peers, and, finally, the configurations in which the encounter between the individual and the Party occurred. The FPM integrates within its horizon of signification actors who mobilized parts of their experience to actively – through a succession of choices and decisions – construct their attachment to the group. The personal interpretations of the position of FPM members depend on their individual trajectories, on the situations and events, but also on constraints and considerations imposed by the environment, beyond political aspects and the inter-partisan order. In spite of their influence and their tendency to articulate many dimensions of the human life within their respective universe, the political parties in Lebanon do not exhaust all facets of experience. They remain open institutions<sup>381</sup>, impacted by other domains of the social life. The Lebanese

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<sup>381</sup> Drawing on Goffman's concept of total institution (1961), Jeannine Verdès-Leroux (1981; 1983) proposed the idea of “open total institutions” she applied to the French Communist Party between 1944 and 1956, a notion mobilized by Agnès Favier to describe the insertion of the youth into political groups in prewar Lebanon (2004, p. 400). Despite his societal implantation, the FPM hardly matches such definition, in particular due to the absence of a concrete organizational framing for all the moments of the adherents' life (contrary to many other political groupings such as Amal and Hezbollah, the FPM does not, for example, organize its own children and youth movement for free-time activities, named “scouts” in Lebanon).

youth are evolving in different sub-social worlds, which may occasionally contradict each other, impose negotiations of meaning, and influence positioning in social settings. This raises the question of the relations between partisanship and the Lebanese youth everyday life, in particular outside universities. The rare recent studies that tackled the issue, either quantitatively (Kasparian 2009) or qualitatively (Mazaëff 2010; Volk 2001) pointed out the influence of the economic pressure on life trajectories as well as a related process of individualization of the daily practices. These constitute the two poles influencing mostly the ways attachment to a partisan group is lived out in contemporary Lebanon.

***Perception and experience of economic pressure: toward the necessity of individualization?***

*“We are all leaving this country. My brother is outside, my uncle is outside, in every family you have two or three people outside. I am an engineer now, I will officially graduate in June. If I want to find a job here, I won't find anything. The highest salary you can ever imagine is going to be 2000\$. If you can find something. 2,000\$! My phone, my car, some fuel, a house...nothing left! You have to go outside. I wouldn't like to go to France or Australia – I have some family there – or America, because I am afraid I won't come back here. That's why I prefer to go to Arab countries, because we cannot live there, with the regimes that are there. So we go there to work and we come back. (...)”<sup>382</sup>*

A couple of months later, Karam left Lebanon to start working in the United Arab Emirates. His description of the youth situation facing the Lebanese economy matches both the general perception voiced by his fellow students in our encounters and the factual data available on the issue of the youth position in the labor market and the emigration produced by Choghig Kasparian (2009) in a large scale quantitative study realized by the Saint-Joseph University among a population of around 10,000 young Lebanese aged 18-35 between 2001 and 2007. The conditions of the economic environment in the country generate a discourse of dissatisfaction especially among graduated youth. Counting for around 30% of the population living in Lebanon (ibid., volume 1, p. 65), the youth between 18 and 35 years old also amount for 80,2% of the unemployed people in the country, with a peak at 86,7% for Beirut residents (ibid., volume 1, p. 67). The younger the individuals the more they are likely to be unemployed – 23,8% of the 18-21 against only 6% of the 30-35 (ibid., volume 1, p. 100) – illustrating the difficulties to find a first paid activity. Thus the question of

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<sup>382</sup> Karam, interview with the author: May 15, 2010 [in English]. Karam's portrait is available in the last section of Chapter Two.

employment represents the main preoccupation of the youth, confronted to the weakness of their insertion into the labor market.

The lack of immediate perspectives denoted in Karam's interview is translated into the important part of young people willing to emigrate. On the 10,000 young people included in the Kasparian's study, 35% think of leaving the country to enhance their employment opportunities and an equal proportion to better their economic conditions (ibid., volume 2, p. 63). Between 1992 and 2007, around 500,000 Lebanese effectively left the country for good (ibid., volume 2, p. 7), 77% of them being aged between 18 and 35 at the moment of their departure (ibid., volume 2, p. 17). University graduates stand for almost half of the emigrating youth (ibid., volume 2, p. 27). This emigration appears contrived as *a priori*, the majority of the youth interrogated (ibid., volume 2, p. 63) wished not to leave Lebanon (48,9%) or intended to work abroad only for a few years (30,3%). If emigration is perceived as forced, most of the people who actually left the country were however already employed when they left (52,4%), indicating that it is rather the economic difficulties than the absence of employment as such that incited them to emigrate (ibid., volume 2, p. 31). As hinted in Karam's account, more than a third of young migrants moved to an Arab country (ibid., volume 2, p. 34). Interestingly, the fear expressed by Karam not to return once abroad seems grounded as only 18% of the people having settled in a foreign country expressed willingness to come back to Lebanon. (ibid., volume 2, p. 42)

The statistical panorama mirrors the perceptions expressed by the students I met during this study. These views about the necessity of emigration fuel a sense of precariousness, including for the young people coming from privileged social backgrounds like Karam and most of his fellow AUB students. The cost of the studies<sup>383</sup>, forcing many families to subscribe loans may explain this pressure felt even by the Lebanese upper-class youth echoing the difficulties observed in parallel among less privileged individuals such as the LU students included in this work or the youth living in the popular district of Ayn al-Rummaneh recently investigated by Chantal Mazaeff, who equally evokes a precariousness of the youth (2010, p. 115).

Further, the anticipation of a difficult future nurtures the facet of the FPM narrative underlining the trivialization of meritocracy in the society. The fact that family networks constitute the privileged access to employment (Kasparian 2009, volume 1, p. 83) and the relatively higher pressure suffered by young graduates reinforce the image of a paralyzed society, incapable of offering good life conditions to a well-educated new generation. The call for meritocracy and for a strong state may thus be

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<sup>383</sup> The cost of studying in AUB, USJ, and the LU are detailed in Chapter One.

understood in relation to the precarious future perceived by the youth. Joe, a third year student in the faculty of Sciences in the Lebanese University, depicted a very similar horizon. Son of a food-trader and a housewife, he does not belong to the same social category than Karam or other AUB students. However, the perspectives he envisaged do not differ. The same dissatisfaction, the same discourse of need appeared when our conversation turned toward his vision of his own future:

*"I might have to leave, I cannot stay here (...). Because if I found a job, I can get a maximum of 1000\$ or 1500\$ a month. You cannot do nothing except live a mediocre life. The majority of young people doesn't want a mediocre life. They want to do new things, good things. If (...) my kids or my wife would need something, I want to be able to provide it to them (...)."*<sup>384</sup>

Michael Gilson (1996) has brilliantly shown how economic evolutions in prewar Lebanon transformed experiences and life conditions of peasants of Akkar, in the Northern end of the country, and introduced the acknowledgment of "a need which was the antithesis of the central values in the rhetoric of status honour" (p. 267) that had until then structured the social world in which the actors were inscribed. This development, Gilson continues, "articulated a more individualized sense of identity and interest, one less subordinated to the cult of the status of honour of the descent group." (ibid.) As a consequence, other kinds of representations surfaced (ibid., p. 282) while the maintenance of some narrative forms aimed at preserving the codes of honor in use in this agrarian society against "the logic of market and the calculation of financial worth." (ibid., p. 280)

The recent trend attesting the raise of youth unemployment and emigration is far from representing the same upheaval of the social structures as did the introduction of mechanic agriculture and the development of salary wages in Akkar. Nonetheless, it constitutes a powerful constraint upon the trajectory of the youth. Moreover, the discourse of necessity it entails contradicts the theme of patriotism omnipresent in the FPM identity narrative. To conform to their interpretation, the most engaged individuals tend to assert the supremacy of their passion for the country over their personal need of better economic conditions. Yet, several of the devoted activists I encountered had to leave the country during the time span of my fieldwork, like Karam, while many others will certainly follow. Even for those who stay in Lebanon, the end of university and the beginning of working life mark an inflection in their engagement. Philippe for instance found a job in an international company established in Lebanon. He noted:

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<sup>384</sup> Joe, interview with the author: March 29, 2011 [in English].



*“Oui. Je suis moins engagé, car j'ai moins de temps. Avant, je participais à différents projets. Ce n'est plus le cas. Bien sûr, je continue de participer de temps en temps. Je prends des heures sur mon temps libre le soir pour aider. On prépare un statut pour les étudiants, et je participe à la préparation de ce texte. Donc je fais des choses comme ça, plus logistiques ou de préparation. Je suis moins sur le terrain.”<sup>385</sup>*

Beyond the necessity of employment and the economic pressure in the post-university environment, the situation of graduates also confirm the existence of privileged moments to engage in collective action during the life course of individuals (McAdam 1988). Although a more longitudinal study of the engagement career of the activists presented in this work would be necessary to appropriately discuss the impact of the economic environment on partisan identification, it is yet possible to suggest here that the modalities of socialization and in-group framing at work within the student section of the FPM seem compatible with these cycles in engagement. During their university years, the most active individuals acquire intellectual and practical knowledge able to filter their perception of reality and emphasize their identification with the group. Their attachment relies mainly on a sense of belonging that can be regularly re-activated afterward, during moments of crisis or in electoral situations. The Party thus benefits from a “reserve army of labor”, to paraphrase Marx's famous formula, whose loyalty is activated in case of need, but which does not require many investments in terms of activities in quiet times. To ground this hypothesis, it is possible to recall the fact that activists socialized during the era of active mobilizations against the Syrian presence accepted less easily the lack of activities proposed to the youth because it contradicted their ethos, whereas those who did not experience the times of intense activities have from the beginning constructed their engagement in a more traditional political movement.

Youth's perception of a difficult environment raises the question of possible strategic use of student activism as a way of social ascent in a blocked society (Favier 2004, p. 442). Some recent academic studies about youth partisanship in Lebanon have put forward this hypothesis according to which adhesion to political parties may serve to acquire security in a troubled environment, arguing that integration within a party is a means for the youth to create opportunities in a context of crisis (Mazaëff 2010, p. 165). The parties hold resources, both human and material, and provide an experience, which can be valued in other sectors of the society (Favier 2004, p. 442). Partisanship in that case can be understood as a mode of integration and securitization in a troubled environment. Yet, in light of the information collected during this study, such claim

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<sup>385</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: April 25, 2008 [in French].

has to be relativized. If some parties such as Amal strongly benefit from client networks within State administration (Harb 2005), it is less the case of the FPM, due to its status of outsider in the legal political field for years. Although its electoral success since 2005 granted the movement access to Parliamentary and ministerial positions, it does not enjoy influential presence in the various scales of the public sectors. It is rather the local leadership figures allied to the Party, such as Elias Skaff in Zahleh or Sleiman Franjeh in Zgharta, who serve this purpose in their respective strongholds. Besides, if the skills and networks acquired in student activism can undeniably serve to enhance employment opportunities, some companies on the contrary are reluctant to hire party members, fearing conflicts between workmates. Alain for example, employee in a Nordic company implanted in Lebanon, always insisted on the necessity for him to keep a low public profile in his partisan activities, so as not to expose himself to sanctions from his employers. Further, only a small minority of the student activists are integrated in the organization of the Party, in priority within the Committee of Student Affairs, whose members remain volunteers. The path to professional politics seems therefore long and hypothetical.

It does not mean that the students do not hope to benefit from their engagement to enhance their social position or embark on a political career. In our interviews, several expressed the wish to become Parliament Members in spite of the dominant rhetoric of disinterestedness in the FPM identity narrative. In my view, the fact that students' hopes of personal political success focus on a potential Parliamentary seat rather than on ministerial positions for example could originate in two different sources. First, the traditional perception of Parliament Members as local establishment, implying that their pursued objective may have more to do with social status enhancement in a closed socio-economic environment than with political ambitions *stricto sensu*. Second, many notorious FPM activists have become Members of the Lebanese Parliament since 2005, which may soften the contradiction between the injunction of disinterestedness asserted by the FPM group style and personal political ambitions. In other words, if people incarnating the ideal of the activist have reached a Parliamentary seat, it is thus legitimate for the student members to wish to do so. Yet, without neglecting the potential gains obtained in political action, "interest explains nothing" as noted by Gérard Lenclud in his study of clans in Corsica (1993, § 46). If attachment does materialize in transactions of some sort, these exchanges only constitute a consequence of the social bonds tied between group members and do not inform their essential nature.

Fundamentally, it seems possible to consider that the growing pressure exercised on the youth in the economic environment reinforces the tendency toward a more

individualized sense of identity and more self-centered practices. Although a systematic study would be required to properly assess such claim, the case of young migrants offers a good insight on the phenomenon: since 1992, the amount of money transferred by the migrants to their family in Lebanon decreased. Over the period between 1992 and 1996, only 37,4% of the young migrants did not send financial aid to their family, against 43,8% for the period between 1997 and 2001 and 55,9% between 2002 and 2007 (Kasparian 2009, volume 2, p. 39). This might indicate a synergy between growing economic pressure and individualization of perceptions and practices. In the already cited ethnographic work focusing on the youth in the Ayn al-Rummaneh neighborhood, Chantal Mazaëff similarly notes an evolution toward much more individualized socialization practices (2010, p. 281). According to Lucia Volk, the postwar Lebanese youth evolve in an environment marked by contradictory assignments: they have to negotiate between cognitive spaces articulating “traditional” perceptions of familial and gender roles with more “globalized” youth practices (2001, p. 70).

Without fully endorsing the categories mobilized in her study – the label of the cognitive spaces as “traditional” and “globalized” being a questionable choice – comparable tensions have been nevertheless obvious throughout my fieldwork encounters. They especially focused on intimate relationships and the question of marriage, which summarizes the strains between economic difficulties, strong social assignments, and individualization of the practices. The conversations addressing such issues were generally held “off”, after the main part of the interview, during the informal discussion that generally followed. Philippe<sup>386</sup> was one of the rare students to evoke the problem in the core of our interview:

*”Je me vois étant un cadre d’une bonne société, avec une famille de deux enfants...bien sûr être marié. J’aimerais et j’espère être toujours au Liban, que mes enfants soient éduqués par exemple dans une école laïque (...). Je me vois aussi dans le futur toujours très proche de mes parents (...).*

*-Il est difficile de s’installer pour les jeunes?*

*Oui, c’est très difficile (...). Pour pouvoir bien parler de ce sujet, il faut bien connaître les structures de la société libanaise, parce que nous les Libanais, par nature, nous aimons le show-off. (...) Nous nous voulons faire le plus grand mariage avec la plus belle voiture, les plus belles décorations, la plus grande église, le plus grand nombre de gens invités. Je ne veux pas ça pour moi. Enfin au Liban, même si on ne veut pas faire tout cela, se marier revient très cher quand même. Le minimum coûte déjà très*

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<sup>386</sup> A more detailed portrait of Philippe is presented in the introduction of Chapter Six.

*cher et le revenu minimum des travailleurs n'est pas élevé. (...) Se marier, acheter une maison, acheter une voiture, s'occuper des enfants, tout cela coûte de l'argent...donc oui, je pense que c'est trop tôt pour moi de penser à se marier maintenant, ou même dans deux ou trois ans. Je pense me marier dans dix ans minimum, pour pouvoir me former, épargner une somme d'argent pour acheter une maison, tout en sachant que je suis sûr (...) que je ne serai pas capable d'acheter seul la maison. Mon père devra m'aider. C'est pour cela que je pense aller poursuivre mes études à l'étranger pour deux ans, parce que c'est bien vu, et revenir au Liban pour travailler...pour pouvoir acheter seul ma maison, ma voiture et pour pouvoir payer et m'occuper moi-même de mon mariage".<sup>387</sup>*

The lack of funds retrain young people like Philippe from settling because it is still unacceptable in many parts of the Lebanese society to marry without buying – or constructing – a house. In another discussion, the cost of the sole nuptial ceremony was evaluated by Elza – then preparing her own marriage – around a minimum of 12,000\$, including 3,000\$ for the church only. The necessity to save enough money before being able to marry thus considerably delays the age of marriage as illustrated by the fall of the marital rate of the Lebanese youth (Kasparian 2009, volume 1, p. 32). A contradiction between economic environment and social practices gives birth to hybrid situations: young people continue to live with their parents but organize their lives independently:

*"Depuis que je travaille, je suis devenu indépendant, par rapport à mes parents. Avant, ils me donnaient de l'argent. Maintenant non. Je vis toujours avec eux à la maison, parce que je ne peux pas vivre seul, mais je même une vie différente. J'ai mes propres activités. Je suis content de ça."<sup>388</sup>*

Social norms stigmatizing celibacy and the economic pressure impeding the purchase of apartments or houses combine to induce the youth to create their own universe while cohabiting with their parents. It would be abusive to conclude that the youth remain submitted to the control of their family. As noted in Lucia Volk's article (2001, p. 78), the youth evolve in their own space, with their own activities and references. The sociability events organized in universities denote that parties and nights out count among the main preoccupations of the Lebanese students (ibid., p. 75-76), who often praise in our conversations the quality of Beirut's night life. Other facets of the daily life and free time activities however remain connected with political matters and partisan identification. It is especially the case of sports, generally

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<sup>387</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: November 14, 2007 [in French].

<sup>388</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: April 25, 2008 [in French].

described in the Lebanese configuration as the continuation of politics and sectarian confrontation by other means (Lamloum 2011, p. 139-140; Moroy 2000, p. 94):

*“A l’époque [des Syriens] on ne parlait pas de politique. Il y avait le sport et notamment l’équipe de la Sagesse, Hikmeh. Tout le pays était avec eux (...). C’était une équipe chrétienne (...), libanaise, qui jouait dans des compétitions internationales contre des équipes syriennes. Quand ils gagnaient, on exultait! C’est comme un genre de politique, une revanche. (...) Maintenant, la Sagesse est plus liée aux FL. Pendant l’hymne national d’avant match, ils font tous le signe du Delta [triangle symbolisant le cèdre] avec les mains.*

*-Qui est-ce que tu supportes alors ?*

*Moi ? Toujours la Sagesse...après tout c’est une équipe sportive...”<sup>389</sup>*

Jim's answer denotes all the ambiguity of the Lebanese environment in which everyday life practices and references articulate religious and partisan identities. “La Sagesse” or *Hikmeh* in Arabic, is a team associated with the educational establishments of the same name: a network of schools, high-schools, and universities, administered by the Maronite Church. From the 1980s, “La Sagesse” has been considered a LF stronghold. If Jim maintained his initial preference regarding his favorite basketball team, a distinction nonetheless exists. In an informal conversation I had with Elie and Teddy, two LU students, they explained:

*“Everything is related to politics in Lebanon. In night-clubs, when they play specific songs, people start to make signs with their hands, a triangle for the LF or the 'V' for the FPM. (...) In basket-ball, it is the same thing, you have Champville [the club affiliated with the Champville high-school] against Hikmeh (...).*

*-Why is Champville identified with the FPM?*

*Their coach is Ghassan Sarkis, a supporter the FPM, and so is the president of the club. Besides, Michel Aoun himself invested money in the team. (...) Of course, not all the FPM supporters are supporting Champville, some still like Hikmeh, but generally speaking Champville has become the team of the Aounists. And Champville will be champion this year, so everything is fine!”*

For the record, Ghassan Sarkis had been in the past the coach of *Hikmeh*, between 1996 and 2003, precisely in the years mentioned in Jim's interview. But it remains that rivalry between Champville and *Hikmeh* has nowadays come to symbolize the political opposition between the FPM and the LF. Likewise, Champville team maintains another contention with the club of *Riyâdî – Nâdî al-Riyâdî Bayrût* (Beirut Sporting

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<sup>389</sup> Jim, interview with the author: December 9, 2009 [in French].

Club), a team formerly presided by Tammam Salam, heir of a prominent political family of Beirut. *Al-Riyâdî* is strongly associated with the Sunni Muslims in general and Future Movement supporters in particular, so that violent incidents involving *Riyâdî* fans during an encounter against Champville in February 2012 were labeled as “militiamen behaviors” among Future's supporters in pro-FPM medias<sup>390</sup>, echoing the division sustained by the FPM identity narrative between its members incarnating the State righteousness and its rivals, embodying the militia thugs.

Finally, along with night-life and sports, the participation in scout movements represents a recurrent activity among FPM students, which raises the question of the communal surrounding of the youth in the changing socio-economic environment I described so far.

### ***Religiosity in a changing society: personal beliefs and communality***

*“Moi, personnellement, je suis athée depuis six ans mais disons que l'éducation religieuse est très prégnante au Liban. Il y a très peu d'école à caractère vraiment laïque. A la maison, ma mère est très religieuse. Mon père est croyant mais non pratiquant (...).*

*-C'est rare que les gens que je rencontre se déclare ouvertement athée, pourquoi?*

*Je dirais que c'est plus fréquent que ça en a l'air. Je connais beaucoup de gens qui sont athées. Le confessionnalisme est détaché de la religion si bien que l'on peut être confessionnel et sectaire sans être un bon pratiquant ni même un croyant. Parce que le confessionnalisme a un caractère social, il vient de la société où l'on vit. Si vous allez à Jounieh, c'est à 90% maronite. Moi, je ne suis même pas maronite mais catholique. Mais si à Jounieh il y a 40% d'athées, ils s'identifient tous avec le maronitisme politique. C'est la même chose peut-être avec le chiisme politique. Parmi eux il y a sans doute beaucoup de non pratiquants ou même d'athées.”<sup>391</sup>*

In his account, Virgil, supervisor of Beirut's private universities in the FPM Student Affairs and a Greek-Catholic from Akkar in Northern Lebanon, sketches the distinction between the spiritual and political dimensions of religion coexisting in the Lebanese society. The articulation between both dimensions is all the stronger since clerics have long been the most influential political actors in their respective

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<sup>390</sup> The RPL web site published on February 20, 2012, an article entitled: “Le comportement milicien des supporters du Courant du Futur fait le spectacle dans les gradins et gâche la fête lors du match Riyadi – Champville”. See: <http://rplfrance.org/index.php?content=sport/120220rplfrance2-ec.htm> [May 2013]

<sup>391</sup> Virgil, interview with the author: May 14, 2010 [in French]. Virgil's portrait is detailed in Chapter Six.

communities, organizing at the same time the everyday life of their coreligionists and their relations with the other sects. It was especially the case in the Maronite community, mainly composed of Mountain peasants flanked by influential members of the clergy<sup>392</sup> and represented at a larger scale by the political authority of the Patriarch (McCallum 2012). Historically backed by their early and close alliance with the Roman Catholic Church (Salibi 1989 [1988], p. 83), the Maronite religious institutions had become with the establishment of the Ottoman domination from the 15<sup>th</sup> century the main interlocutor of Constantinople. Ottoman's distant rule allowed a wide margin of maneuver to the Maronite leaders. The Maronite Church had thus arisen as the central institution both on the communal side – the internal organization of the group, in particular because of its immense land ownership – and on the sectarian aspect – the relations and negotiations with the Sunni central power and other sects (Picard 1996). It is only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the power of the Church over the community was strongly questioned, at the same time by the secular landlord elites, incarnated by the character of Yousef Karam, who appeared at the occasion of the 1840-1860 revolts as the main rival of the Patriarch and embodiment of the future idea of Lebanese nationalism inspired by the Maronite upper class (Salibi 1989 [1988], p. 186), and by the Maronite masses, represented by Tanios Shahin, head of a peasant rebellion.

Religiosity has thus long been strongly articulated to communal bonds and sectarian boundaries. However, the religious representations and practices described by the students considered in this study indicate alternative ways of living out religious faith that tend to deepen the differentiation between beliefs and the identification aspect of sectarian affiliation. Among the research participants who label themselves as believers, a strong inclination toward an individualized mode of conception of religion surfaces. First, they overwhelmingly define themselves as “Christian”, independently of their specific rite. This may come from the tendency of the main group, the Maronites, to identify with the whole Lebanese Christian population but also clearly denotes a sense of religiosity centered on the individual rather than on the group:

*“A la maison, (...) on ne croit surtout pas à l'Eglise. Je déteste que l'Eglise intervienne dans la vie publique (...). Mais je crois en Dieu. Je crois au Christ. (...) Je n'aime pas aller à l'église chaque dimanche. Mais j'aime les valeurs, le message (...).”<sup>393</sup>*

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<sup>392</sup> More details about the history of the Maronites can be found in Chapter Five.

<sup>393</sup> Karl, interview with the author: May 1, 2008 [in French].

*“Je suis pratiquant, mais je considère que ma foi est entre moi et Dieu. Je n’aime pas que les autres sachent ma religion. Je n’aime pas dire si je suis Musulman ou Chrétien...vous voyez, c’est juste que je suis pratiquant. C’est entre moi et Dieu. J’essaie de ne pas parler de la religion et de ne pas classer les gens en fonction de leur religion (...). Si vous voulez savoir, je suis latin, Chrétien latin, on est une minorité au Liban. (...) J’étais dans une école grecque-orthodoxe et maintenant je suis à l’Université Saint-Joseph, Jésuite. Donc vous pouvez remarquer que mon entourage est plutôt chrétien (...): mon école est chrétienne, ma famille est chrétienne, je suis dans une université chrétienne.”<sup>394</sup>*

*“Pour être plus direct, je dirais que non, je ne suis pas pratiquant. (...) Dans ma famille, ils le sont...moi je ne vais à l’église que lors d’occasions, pour satisfaire tout le monde. Parce que je crois que ce n’est pas cela qui compte. C’est le fond qui compte. Si je crois en Dieu, je peux prier chaque jour et chaque nuit sans jamais aller à l’église.”<sup>395</sup>*

Consequence of this individualized conception of religion, ecumenical practices are commonly asserted, as did Layla, an AUB student officially registered in the Greek-Orthodox sect, but whose parents belong to different confessional groups:

*“Je suis chrétienne orthodoxe par mon père, et catholique par ma mère. (...) Ma mère est de plus en plus religieuse. Mon père ne fait pas le Carême par exemple, mais ma mère ne mange plus de viande. (...) Tous les deux ont insisté pour que je fasse du catéchisme. J’ai fait ma première communion dans l’Eglise maronite, même si je suis orthodoxe.”<sup>396</sup>*

Belonging to the Christian religion is asserted beyond confessional distinctions. Likewise, some other AUB students I met, namely Lea and Fouad, actively participate in a Christian association, University Christian Outreach, gathering students independently of their confessional rite. However, activities in their local parish are also frequent among the most dedicated Christians, who often informally take part in organization of ceremonies and holy days’ festivities in their neighborhoods or villages. Aida and Kamal, two LU students respectively Maronite and Greek-Orthodox, demonstrated a more official engagement in their own communities:

*“There is a Christian association in my hometown. We organize festivals and many things to make people not forget about religion and their Christianity. (...) I believe in Christianity...I see myself as a Christian, I’m not an atheist. And I’m also active in*

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<sup>394</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: November 14, 2007 [in French].

<sup>395</sup> Joseph, interview with the author: March 19, 2011 [in French].

<sup>396</sup> Layla, interview with the author: March 25, 2011 [in French].



*another association, for the Patriarch. I work for a website, but I'm not paid. They send me some texts and I need to correct them so they can publish them on their web page. (...) But I didn't have always time to do it. So I'm in two Christian associations. The first is more like Scout, but not really (...). We spend praying nights in the Church, and we make recitals, in a religious way.”<sup>397</sup>*

*“Je continue d'avoir une éducation religieuse et je donne aussi une éducation religieuse à un groupe d'enfants de douze à quinze ans. Mais quand je donne des cours de religion, ça n'a rien à voir avec la politique. La politique est à l'université, la religion à l'église. On ne confond pas entre les deux. (...) C'est dans le Mouvement de la Jeunesse Orthodoxe, le MJO. (...) Je n'ai pas un poste défini mais je suis un des responsables pour un groupe de trente-quatre jeunes. Je donne des cours sur les idées chrétiennes et orthodoxes. Je suis rentré quand j'étais un enfant, comme ceux qui aujourd'hui reçoivent cette éducation. (...) Parfois je vais dans un endroit, un monastère, c'est comme une autre vie. C'est tout à fait religieux: je ne suis plus pris dans les problèmes ordinaires et dans la politique, je ne réfléchis à plus rien d'autre. C'est important de temps en temps pour relâcher.”<sup>398</sup>*

Participation in scout groups constitutes the main materialization of parish activities. Lebanon fosters a multiplicity of these groups. Some, designated as “scouts” actually constitute youth organizations related to political parties (Le Thomas 2008). The most important organization among genuine scout groups is the “Scouts of Lebanon”, but a myriad of structures exist, formed along local parishes or schools. Among the students constituting the core sample of this study, eleven have had a long-term experience in a scout formation, some of whom were still actively involved at the time of the interview. Notably, the narrations describing participation in the scouts do not focus on the religious dimension, but rather on the skills and abilities acquired throughout the scout experience, as well as the human bonds born in collective actions:

*“Qu'est-ce qu'on apprend chez les scouts? On apprend à être responsable. On apprend à être chrétien, on apprend à être actif. On apprend à influencer les autres. On apprend à être sportif. (...) Donc pendant les camps, on apprend à respecter la hiérarchie. C'est quelque chose de très important. On respecte le responsable et puis on apprend à assumer une responsabilité. On devient responsable du groupe à son tour et puis on passe à un autre niveau et ainsi de suite. J'ai d'abord été louveteau puis responsable et ensuite tu passes chez les scouts à proprement parler. Là tu recommences de zéro, jusqu'à devenir routier. C'est la même chose dans la vie. A l'université et dans la vie de tous les jours. [He switches to English] If I start as an*

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<sup>397</sup> Aida, interview with the author: December 9, 2010 [in English].

<sup>398</sup> Kamal, interview with the author: December 6, 2010 [in French].

*engineer, I won't start from the top. I would be a trainee. Then I would have responsibilities within a small group. I could then become a manager. And again, I would start to be a manager of a team as a trainee, and so on.*"<sup>399</sup>

*"Je suis dans les Scouts du Liban. J'ai été guide du Liban pendant neuf ans. (...) Être scout, ça apprend à être responsable, à améliorer sa personnalité, ne plus être timide, avoir une personnalité plus forte. On apprend comment on peut aider vraiment les autres, comment on organise un camp. (...) Je voulais faire partie des scouts parce que je voulais faire une activité chaque samedi, retrouver mes amis (...). J'ai essayé et ça m'a plu. J'aime parce qu'on t'apprend à respecter le responsable, puis à être responsable à ton tour et à te faire respecter."*<sup>400</sup>

*"Au début, quand tu es jeune, tu es immature. Les scouts t'aident. Comme les chefs sont des "scouts parfaits" – on les appelle comme ça – ils doivent t'aider à te développer, pour devenir un bon citoyen. Le but des scouts est de former de bons citoyens. Et tu te fais des amis. (...) "Scout un jour, scout toujours" est une devise. Il y a aussi: "un scout est le frère de tout autre scout". Si tu regardes les dix lois du scoutisme, elles sont comme les dix commandements. Si tu peux les suivre, ta vie sera bonne. (...) Moi, je n'étais pas louveteau. Je voyais mes amis louveteaux et j'ai aimé ce qu'ils faisaient. Alors je suis rentré aux scouts. Les scouts, c'est plus dur. On fait des camps dans la nature, pour plusieurs jours. Il y a des camps de deux semaines. Quatorze jours dans la nature, sans voir tes parents, alors que tu as douze ans. Tu dois porter du bois, faire des installations, des tours, des tables, etc. (...) Tu deviens fort, débrouillard. C'est le premier but: tu deviens un bon citoyen et débrouillard. Tu sais prendre tes responsabilités. Quand tu es chef de patrouille, tu as neuf personnes sous ta responsabilité. Chacune doit être comme ton frère. Aucun ne doit avoir froid dans le camp, tu dois les aider, être comme leur grand frère. C'est ça le scoutisme."*<sup>401</sup>

In our next encounter, as I questioned him about the Christian dimension of the scouts, Jim added:

*"Oui, Baden-Powell était chrétien. Oui, il y a la promesse et tout. Mais il y a aussi des Musulmans. Si tu es musulman, la seule différence est que tu ne prononces pas la prière scout au début des rassemblements. (...) A part ça, il n'y a pas de religion. La formation scout, tout le monde peut la faire, pour devenir un bon citoyen. Il y a des*

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<sup>399</sup> Karam, interview with the author: May 15, 2010 [in English and French].

<sup>400</sup> Layla, interview with the author: March 25, 2011 [in French].

<sup>401</sup> Jim, interview with the author: March 17, 2009 [in French].

*Musulmans qui veulent devenir de bons citoyens. Et tous on aime le Liban. Il y a pas de problème (...).<sup>402</sup>*

Scouts thus appear more related to the inscription into local communities than into confessional networks *stricto sensu* as the students generally engage in the scout group of their village, district, or school, which do not necessarily match their sectarian registration. Participation is besides evaluated mostly in terms of individual improvement and often connected with the time of childhood and adolescence, as most of the members of scout groups end their participation during the university years or once they start their first job. Scouts certainly participate in the internalization of religion as a central reference for identification and bringing a community-based sense of belonging, which sustains the translation between religious beliefs and social positioning in spite of a religiosity more and more centered on the individual.

The maintenance of the confessional power sharing in the Lebanese political system and, above all, the takeover of confessional laws on civil personal status impose the perpetual reference to religious groups as a basis for social interactions. The most striking example is once again provided by the issue of couple relationships:

*“Mon fiancé est Musulman, (...) c’est quelqu’un qui sait que la religion apprend comment respecter les gens. Tous les deux, on est contre les lois de l’Eglise. Je suis religieuse mais contre l’Eglise, contre les lois que les hommes de religion imposent. Je pense qu’ils font ça juste pour leurs propres intérêts. Lui aussi. (...) Il y a des gens qui disent plein de mauvaises choses, mais ils disent ce qu’ils veulent, je suis convaincue de ce que je fais. Quand tu aimes quelqu’un, ce n’est pas quelque chose de mal, c’est quelque chose de bien, et pas seulement aimer d’amour, aussi aimer dans le sens d’accepter les gens. (...) Parmi mes amis par exemple, ma meilleure amie est contre. Elle est trop catholique [sic.] et me dit qu’il ne faut pas, que je vais aller en Enfer (...).*

*-Pourquoi est-ce si dur à accepter?*

*C’est à cause de la guerre...c’est tout. Parce que dans d’autres pays où il y a plusieurs communautés, ils n’ont aucun problème avec des trucs pareils. Par exemple en Amérique entre Noirs et Blancs, c’est à cause de la guerre qu’ils n’arrivent pas à s’accepter, alors qu’un mariage entre un Blanc et une Hispanique ne pose pas de problème...je crois que c’est la guerre qui a beaucoup d’influence.”*

Justine, whose portrait was introduced earlier in this chapter, exposes the difficulties of inter-religious couples. The personal beliefs and sense of religiosity of the two young people do not prevent their relationships, whereas the social perception of

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<sup>402</sup> Jim, interview with the author: December 9, 2009 [in French].

“boundary crossing” nurtures negative reaction from their friends’ circles. In spite of the religious argument put forward by her friend to dissuade her to go on with her fiancé, Justine's reconstruction of motives underlines the weight of the war memory. It is not about faith but about status, with the issue of the group's maintenance and perpetuation lurking, as perfectly illustrated in the words of Mehdi, a pro-Hezbollah USJ student, whose case was presented in Chapter One:

*“Le nombre de célibataires augmente car le mariage est un très grand problème au Liban. Du coup, les jeunes préfèrent sortir avec leurs copains ou même le concubinage, même si c’est socialement très mal vu (...). C’est un peu plus facile chez les Chrétiens, un peu (...). Les jeunes sortent avec une amie et c’est beaucoup plus fréquent maintenant les relations sexuelles avant le mariage car ils préfèrent pas s’engager. C’est difficile de s’engager...si tu es riche, ça va, sinon, il faut que tes parents t’aident, donc approuvent le mariage. J’ai des amis fiancés depuis des années, mais ils n’arrivent pas à se marier (...). Moi, j’ai eu la chance de connaître mieux l’Autre, j’ai eu une petite amie chrétienne. Mais on s’est séparé pour des questions religieuses car on savait qu’on allait nulle part (...). C’est très difficile en plus de l’argent. On a essayé, mais même à l’université, nos amis communs étaient contre (...). Au Liban, tu peux être ami avec quelqu’un d’une autre secte, mais pas te marier (...). C’est très difficile, la pression sociale. Et puis, les enfants, ils seront quoi?”<sup>403</sup>*

The question of marriage concentrates the main tensions running through the Lebanese society: on the one hand, a socio-economic environment participating in an individualization of the self even in the realm of faith, and on the other, the maintenance of community-oriented social conventions and identifications. If personal identity – that is the individual agency of the sense of the self or “self concept” (Gergen 1971, p. 23) – may exclude reference to religious or confessional characters, social identity – the positioning of the self into the systems of categorizations constituting social environment (Turner 1982, p. 18) – on the contrary imposes the inclusion of the confessional categories in interactions, so that personal religiosity seems inextricable from the perception of intergroup relations:

*“Moi, je suis pratiquant, je vais à l’Eglise, mais maintenant, j’ai beaucoup de doutes. Vraiment, j’ai beaucoup de doutes. Pas vis-à-vis de Dieu mais de l’Eglise. Au lieu de soutenir l’égalité et la vérité, on supporte un criminel comme Geagea. Moi, je me souviens très bien pendant la guerre, quand j’étais petit, ma mère qui passait une à deux heures devant certains miliciens seulement parce qu’ils avaient envie de la faire attendre. (...) J’habite à Achrafieh, c’est une région qui était sous contrôle des*

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<sup>403</sup> Mehdi, interview with the author: February 2006 [in French].

*Forces Libanaises, et je me souviens très bien que la milice passait dans les maisons pour demander si on avait de l'eau. C'était pendant la guerre entre le Général et les FL...on leur a dit qu'on avait une bouteille d'eau, c'est tout. Ils ont pris la bouteille et nous ont dit: 'puisque vous êtes avec le Général – en plus ils ne savaient pas avec qui nous étions – vous n'aurez plus d'eau'. Et ils ont jeté l'eau par terre".<sup>404</sup>*

Paul's story interestingly starts from his own attitude toward religion to immediately assert a partisan identity, anchored in a wartime memory. His own faith apparently suffered from the association he constructs between the Maronite – although being Orthodox himself – Church and the Lebanese Forces and their leader, Samir Geagea. Through a succession of implicit cognitive displacements – from religion to Church, from Church to, implicitly, the Maronite Patriarch, from what he considers the support of the Patriarch for Samir Geagea to the memory of militiamen violence experienced during the Army-LF war in 1990 – Paul exposes the impossibility to live his faith independently from the partisan boundaries. The individualized conception of religion arising from youth's descriptions does manifestly not disqualify the articulation between religious belonging and political identification:

*“Au niveau religieux, nous sommes croyants et pratiquants. Nous allons rarement à l'église mais au fond nous sommes pratiquants. Nous sommes avec le Général Michel Aoun parce qu'il n'est pas religieux en politique et qu'il protège le droit des Chrétiens. (...) Pour mes parents, avant son exil, il défendait les droits des Chrétiens et en même temps la lutte n'était pas religieuse: c'était contre les Syriens – non pas en tant que Musulmans mais en tant que régime – mais aussi contre d'autres Chrétiens comme les Phalanges et les FL. (...) Plus tard, pendant l'époque de Rafiq Hariri, les Sunnites et les Chiites étaient pro-syriens alors que les Chrétiens étaient isolés, et ils étaient contre les Syriens. Depuis, c'est vrai qu'il y a eu une coalition avec les Chiites mais ce n'est pas pour le bénéfice des Chiites: c'est seulement pour faire un équilibre avec les Sunnites qui sont soutenus par tous les grands régimes que sont l'Egypte, l'Arabie Saoudite et les autres pays arabes. Donc pour nous, c'est le Général Michel Aoun qui protège les Chrétiens maintenant, ce n'est pas Samir Geagea. (...) C'est aussi pour ça que je trouve que le Général est le gardien des droits des Chrétiens. Ce n'est pas qu'on ne veut pas vivre avec les Musulmans, je suis habituée à vivre avec eux et je n'ai pas de problème avec les Musulmans, mais je ne peux pas accepter d'arriver dans la même situation que les Coptes en Egypte. Je ne peux pas accepter cela.”<sup>405</sup>*

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<sup>404</sup> Paul, interview with the author: November 21, 2007 [in French].

<sup>405</sup> Laure, interview with the author: November 4, 2008 [in French].

Laure's apparent contradiction when she stresses her support for Michel Aoun because he does not emphasize religion in politics and protects the rights of the Christians illustrates the distinction between the confessional categorization of individuals, generally experienced as an abusive assignation, and the sectarian interrelations, dominated by the issue of power sharing and, beyond, of balancing between communities and the fear of minorization. As a consequence the identity and political dimensions of religion overcome the strictly religious aspects. The result is the end of the monopoly of enunciation of the religious identities for the original institutions devoted to this task – the clerical institutions, in this case the Churches. The religious question seems to have evolved from the outlining of the faith and everyday life rules to the issue of power sharing and positioning toward alternative groups. As a consequence, the communal “we” is restructured through partisanship. Identification with a party includes the determination of an attitude vis-à-vis the other sects and their representatives. As belief supposes relation between the singular and the plural, the individual and the group (de Certeau 1981, p. 76), the emancipation of faith and other mundane representations from the influence of communal structures logically results in a displacement of the sense of *groupness*. Fuad Khuri, in his study of Beirut suburbs in prewar Lebanon, asserts that the decompositions of village social bonds and their reconstruction in the city triggered a process of re-communalization under the influence of new elites – especially political parties – opposing the traditional domination of the religious elites (Khuri 1975). Similarly, *Aounism* today might represent a mode of maintenance of collective links threatened by the individualization of the social practices, synergetically imposed by the economic environment and pursued by a youth eager to emancipate from heavy assignations.

***Conclusions: the triple heritage of postwar generations***

From the study of personal trajectories of socialization in interaction with social networks, contexts, and environment emerges the image of a generation understood in a triple meaning: biologically within the family, as a cohort of activists in the history of the FPM, and in the sense underlined by Mannheim classical work (1990 [1928]) of a human group sharing a same context of existence, here summarized in the expression “postwar generation”. These three significations position contemporary Lebanese youth in a triple filiation in three symbolic lines: the heritages of their family, of their predecessors in their partisan group, and of their elders in the history, i.e. the heritage of the war whose reference strongly structures their social interactions and deeply conditions their identifications. They bear responsibility for maintaining the bonds and

attributes of family and partisan group and managing the legacy of intimate violence that destructed coexistence between political segments.

The notion of heritage further echoes socialization processes that emphasize the construction of affective family-like communities and sustain a narrative identity turned toward “un passé qui ne passe pas” to use the words of the French historians Eric Conan and Henry Rousso (1994). A party that renounced its position of opposition to the regime to participate in governing coalitions, the FPM has changed its modes of action but nevertheless maintained its past repertoires of legitimacy, according to a wartime storyline. Such past-oriented narrative constructs a sense of continuity. Perceptions of a shared memory – anchored in family, neighborhood spaces, and encounters – shape bedrock of identification. They unfold a familial, partisan, and social memory at the same time specific to the individuals and fostering their sense of belonging to a same community, unified by the conception of a common horizon of destiny. In the countless voices composing the FPM narrative identity, the emphasis on war and memory implies that the dominant stories, those articulating the conception of *groupness*, are the ones underlining bonds and boundaries in the enunciation of the past. The modalities of composition of such narratives and the mechanisms through which they convey the processes of identification are the focus of the last part of this work.







# **PART THREE**

## **Memory, Narrative, and the Multivocality of Social Times**



As the insertion within the partisan universe deepens, a group style – constitutive of a shared collective perception on the group, a “working agreement” (McCall & Simmons 1978, p. 146) between members about their social identity – emerges. Implementing boundaries, asserting bonds, and favoring a selected version of the group’s narrative identity, this style plays a crucial part in the socialization process experienced by the youth during their integration. It fosters their sense of belonging by crafting standardized enactments and meanings of their affiliations in an exchange with the primary socialization and the social environments in which they are evolving. These significations are, as highlighted in the preceding pages, strongly articulated to convocations of the past, which intend, in the present time of their enunciation, to support the unity of the Party and to sustain differentiation with the out-group. Strongly articulated to a narrative identity oriented toward the past, socialization within the FPM seems to work as an “organized secretion of memory” (Nora 1997 [1984], p. 32).

Memory stands as the main mechanism in the elaboration of the group style because it “conveys homogenization, because within ‘social frames’, it aggregates various individual representations, organizes their sharing and projects them, once fused into a collective perception of the past, as the historical substance of identity.”<sup>406</sup> (Martin 2010, p. 55) Since identities are processes, they remain labile and particularly vulnerable in their relation to time. Such an exposure justifies the use of memory as the temporal dimension of identity, to create, in the present, an illusion of stability that enables the projection in the future (Ricoeur 2000, p. 98). The use of memory within the group intends to frame and provide shared references to its members, and thus to agglomerate their respective experiences of the past so as to organize temporal foundations for its claimed identity. To describe such a procedure in the case of the FPM, it becomes necessary in this final part to expand the study of the narratives about the past in order to examine more fundamentally their role in the construction of *groupness*. The aim I am pursuing is to pierce into the depth of the construction of the self through the mobilization of the concept of collective memory and thus to dig out the threads on which the significance of the affiliation is suspended, in an attempt to sketch how the FPM interpretative community is internalized by the actors to constitute the pivotal dimension of their selves.

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<sup>406</sup> I translated the original formulation from French: “La mémoire sert à l’homogénéisation, parce qu’à l’intérieur de ‘cadres sociaux’ (Halbwachs 1950), elle agrège des représentations individuelles, organise leur partage et les projette, une fois fusionnées en vision collective du passé, comme fondement historique de l’identité.”

The term of collective memory refers to a shared social framing of the representation of the past, originally described in the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1997 [1950]). As learning a language, remembering the past operates as the internalization of mechanisms constructed outside the individual, in the society (*ibid.*, p. 31). Memory is thus intrinsically linked with the social groups in which the actors are inserted. They only remember by adopting the point of view of one or several of these groups and positioning themselves in their collective thoughts (*ibid.*, p. 65). The “collective” dimension refers to the joint construction and sharing of perceptions of the past. The social memory constitutes the socially produced frames along which the joint horizon is composed. Collective memory thus emerges as a shared representation built on socially constructed frames ordering the perception of the past.

Interpreting memory as representation implies that it essentially differs from history (Nora 1997 [1984]). Contrary to history, memory is not centered on the issue of the knowledge about the past, but rather focuses on what the actors select and order in their perceptions of the past to serve their present positions and future projects (Lavabre 1995, p. 43). In fact, the way people remember informs more about their present than their past (Halbwachs 1997 [1950]). Yet, rather than being antithetic (Nora 1997 [1984]), both memory and history remain inherently connected (Haugbolle 2010, p. 10). First, history is often mobilized by social groups to justify and legitimize their present definition of the past. Second, beyond the claim of scientific rationality endorsed by history, historians remain actually inserted within spatially and temporally defined human groups. History consequently participates in the diffusion of specific perceptions on the past – memories – as well as in their potential conflicts as the case of the Lebanese historians studied by Ahmad Beydoun clearly illustrates (Beydoun 1984).

As noted by Nadine Picaudou (2006, p. 7-8), the issue of memory in the field of the social sciences as well as in the public debates has been strongly reinforced during the last decades, to the point of becoming exorbitant. According to her, three main reasons explain such an interest: first, the renewal of history as a scientific discipline, perfectly illustrated by the emergence and success of oralhistory that focuses on the representation as well as the usages of the past; second, “the public use of the past”, to paraphrase Habermas, which intends to highlight specific historical events for a purpose of civic education, conferring them ethical virtue; third, the concern for alternative narratives about the past, long concealed by dominant versions of history.

Middle Eastern studies have also been concerned with this general turn towards the problematic of memory, especially focusing on the politics of public memory (Haugbolle & Hastrup 2008) and on the Palestinian case whose specific history

emphasized even more the importance of the remembering on past events for the construction of the identity of the group (Picaudou 2006, Said 2000, Sanbar 1984). In Lebanon, two recent works both published in 2010 have focused on the issue of memory in the contemporary Lebanese society, around twenty years after the end of the fighting in 1990: Sune Haugbolle's *War and Memory in Lebanon* – the outcome of several years of research on the thematic; and *Mémoires de guerre au Liban*, edited by Franck Mermier and Christophe Varin and mobilizing a team of French and Lebanese young scholars. These two volumes underline the growing interest for the question of memory in Lebanon, encouraged by the gradual crumbling of a “system of collective amnesia” (Haugbolle 2005, p. 194).

After the end of the civil wars, public authorities tried to obliterate the time of violence as to prompt reconstruction. A law of amnesty was rapidly adopted on March 1991<sup>407</sup> to implement the famous formula propagated at the end of the hostilities: “*lâ ghâlib, lâ maghlûb*” [no winner, no vanquished]. Only at the end of the 1990 decade came public interrogation about the past, mainly in the cultural domain (Ibid., p. 195) – in particular the movie *West Beirut* directed by Ziad Doueiri released in 1998, although not the first, generated an unprecedented interest. Yet, in spite of the efforts of a relatively dynamic civil society to address the issue of the past, both *War and Memory in Lebanon* and *Mémoires de guerre au Liban* highlighted the division of memory along sectarian and partisan lines. At the same time symptom and cause of the absence of reconciliation in a divided society (Kassir 2000), the fragmentation of memory seemed explained by a double absence: on the one hand, the absence of “a national narrative”, symbolized by the impossibility to adopt a common History handbook in the various schools of the country; on the other, the absence of a “shared suffering”, as the multiplicity of the wars endured between 1975 and 1990 did not impact the Lebanese populations evenly (Mermier & Varin 2010, p. 16). Lebanon appears in that sense to host fragmented and opposing collective memories.

To understand how the kaleidoscope of collective memory in Lebanon strongly supports the existence of distinctive sub-universes, each relying on its own version of the past, it becomes necessary to focus on the human experience in which they originated. Indeed, collective memory is more a potentiality than a reality (Lavabre

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<sup>407</sup> This law granted amnesty for all crimes, including crimes against humanity, at the only exception of crimes committed against religious or political leaders. This decision was moreover primarily motivated by the need of the new rulers to control some of the former chiefs of the militias who had become political leaders in the new Republic of Taef (Haugbolle 2005, p. 193) – especially Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces who, in spite of being at first invited to the government in 1991, remained considered with much suspicion by the Syrian sponsored power before being arrested, tried, and sentenced in 1994.

1994, p. 222) and only concretizes in the individual living memories that represent as many points of view on the collective memory (Halbwachs 1997 [1950], p. 94). Individual memories – also labeled as living memories – stand as the conditions of possibilities as well as modes of actualization of the narrative produced on the history of the group. “Memory cultures, whether political, intellectual, or artistic emanate from individual experiences that are socially constructed, imagined, and represented, and are discernable to observers as social patterns, expressions and narratives.” (Haugbolle 2010, p. 9)

The final part of this study is concerned with such a social construction of memory operated by the members of the group. My working hypotheses are here twofold. First, highlighting the ability of the actors to influence the definition of the structures of identification (Martin 2010, p. 51), I consider the young activists as the producers and the transmitters of the collective memory supporting the FPM’s identity narrative. There could be no collective memory without its human incarnation. In that sense, the testimonies collected about the past represent symbolic constructions that produce a reality. It is through this process of allocation of signification that group and membership are elaborated, transmitted, and possibly transformed. Second, due to the plurality of the social groups in which the student FPM members are inscribed, from their family to their religious communities, the collected narratives necessarily integrate the points of view of these various gatherings in the production of the stories about the past. Accordingly, the testimonies I accumulated also represent an arrangement of the different temporalities related to these distinctive groups that embody as many contributors to the identity narratives voiced by the students. The polyphony of narrations thus reemerges through the voices of the youth and composes an assemblage of temporal scales articulated by the partisan storyline.

Chapter five focuses on the emplotment of the identity narrative to underline how the sense of belonging emerges from the interpretations of past events. It describes the embeddedness of the partisan group into a specific plot constructed from various living memories and distinct scales of temporality reunited by the partisan storyline.

Chapter six turns toward the main characters populating the stories on collective memory, mainly the head of the Party and his alter egos. The evocations of the *za’im* [leader] as the hero of the partisan storyline in themselves, carry significations about the nature of the group and of the ties unifying it. Their study therefore enables the decryption of *groupness* as well as a better understanding of the maintenance and evolution of party-based identifications across time.

If collective memory appears as central in the construction of identifications, members play an active role in this production. Remembering is not the passive

reception of a story about the past modeled by the organization, but rather implies the dynamic participation of the individuals who select, highlight, and dismiss, meaningful episodes in order to shape their own interpretation of the identity they intend to present. An interpretation that remains highly situational and strongly entrenched into the present position of the actors. The ability of the student activists to actualize the group identity narrative in order to present themselves in interaction and to define their own relation to the past illustrates the deep integration of the reference to the party within the components of their self.





## Chapter Five

# “A Promethean community”

## Social times and the narrative construction of memory

*“Toute vie sociale s'écoule dans des temps multiples, toujours divergents, souvent contradictoires, et dont l'unification relative, liée à une hiérarchisation souvent précaire, présente un problème pour toute société. Chaque activité sociale, chaque Nous et chaque rapport avec Autrui a tendance à se mouvoir dans un temps qui lui est propre. Cependant, la société ne peut vivre sans essayer d'unifier la pluralité des temps sociaux”*

George Gurvitch (1950, p. 325)

“Attachment to others cannot be explained” claimed Gérard Lenclud in his analysis of social ties among political clans in Corsica (Lenclud 1993, § 43). Bonds, he argued, are only to be understood within the frame of a social construction, concretely manifested. As a consequence, rather than trying to seize the attachment through its denomination – here partisanship, there nationhood or the communality – I propose, following a proposition of Bogumil Jewsiewicki (2004, p. 188) to focus on the processes of its representation so as to question the analytical categories ordinary mobilized to describe the social ties in Lebanon, in particular the notion of community<sup>408</sup>. Representation here refers at the same time to the staging of the partisan bonds and to the horizon of signification attached to the collectivity.

In the conception elaborated by Maurice Halbwachs, memory articulates the individual and collective scales (Farrugia 1999, p. 99). A first issue immediately arises, however. How to understand the transition between the two levels of analysis without assuming that the collective memory automatically imposes itself upon the individuals? It is not enough to qualify the memory as “collective”: the aim is to tackle the social realities implied by the “collectivization” of individual remembering. How to access and decrypt the construction of the shared representations of the past? The relative vagueness of Halbwachs' description of this process gave rise to some critics. In a famous polemic, Marc Bloch, cofounder of the *Ecole des Annales*, warned against the reification of the social implied by Halbwachs' model and insisted on the role of

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<sup>408</sup> For a general view on these notions, see the Introduction of this work.

transmitters in the production of a social memory. His suggestion implies to focus on the concrete individual mediation of the collective memory and confront it to the work of social actors invested with the legitimacy of authorized producers. It is the encounter between the politics of memory and the personal representations of the actors that enables the concrete capture of the social processes supporting the construction of a shared memory.

The question of the homogenization stands as a second difficulty. Not only the constitution of a collective memory supposes the transition between a multiplicity of individual memories and a relatively unified conception of the past, but the collective memory as such is also, according to Halbwachs, constituted by a plurality of references originating from the diverse social groups in which the individuals are inserted. How does the horizontal – between the many members – and vertical – linking the various social inspirations – unification of the memory operate? This second interrogation refers to the process of construction and allocation of meaning in the representation of the past. It additionally entails the dynamics of distinction as the fusion of a plurality of memories into a shared horizon of signification supposes the differentiation of this view from other perceptions of the past lying in alternative groupings. Linking personal memories to a specific repertoire of interpretation means thus also marking a boundary with an imagined out-group, a fortiori in a Lebanese context characterized by strong divergences in the apprehension of the past (Haugbolle 2005; Mermier & Varin 2010). To figure out these two issues, I suggest to concentrate on the vectors of transmission and aggregation of the memory.

Friday October 31, 2008, in an empty classroom of the USJ Institute of Political Sciences, in Huvelin Street. Caroline, then 23, started our interview with an unsophisticated presentation of herself, particularly highlighting her educational trajectory, her penchant for journalism and associative action. Rapidly, the discussion turned toward her family environment. She explained that her father was recently elected in the municipal council of Jounieh but also, more importantly, that the uncle of her mother had been a member of Parliament since 2005, presented on the FPM list for the Kesrwan region, the same list on which Michel Aoun was himself candidate. Consequently, she added, discussions about politics were frequent in her family. To the question of the political atmosphere at home, she answered:

*“Mes parents aimaient depuis toujours le Général! A l’époque de 1990, ils montaient à Baabda et ils nous prenaient nous les enfants avec eux. Je ne suis pas très consciente de cette époque, j’avais cinq ou six ans. Donc je ne me souviens même pas être montée avec eux. Mais bon, tu sais ici au Liban quand la famille, je veux dire le père et la mère sont avec Geagea par exemple, les enfants sont avec Geagea. Et tu*

*vois, le blâme et toutes les mauvaises choses qu'on fait à l'adversaire, ça marque. En fait, moi j'ai été aussi touchée par cette époque. Il y a un moment je me souviens de Samir Geagea et des gars [shabâb – ici les miliciens] qui étaient avec lui. Ils avaient un poste juste à côté de la maison. Et à certain moment, il y avait ma petite sœur, elle n'avait que deux ans à l'époque, qui avait assez peur. Elle avait des vomissements et des diarrhées...donc à un certain moment, ma mère m'a pris[e] avec elle et elle est montée chez eux, donc pas les soldats mais les miliciens qui étaient là. Elle leur a dit: 'je vous en prie, je suis une mère avec deux enfants, arrêtez ou changez vos canons de place!'. Et leur réaction a été assez brutale, tous les noms que tu peux imaginer, toutes les insultes. Et même, je peux te montrer, j'ai une cicatrice ici, voilà [elle montre] j'ai été poussée et j'ai basculé. Je n'avais peut-être que cinq ans. Je ne peux pas imaginer en train d'être avec eux. Tu vois, j'ai une cicatrice qui me rappelle toujours les atrocités qu'ils faisaient. Et quand ils avaient quitté cet endroit, ils venaient casser les maisons, casser les voitures puisque la plupart du village soutenait l'armée libanaise à l'époque. Donc j'étais assez petite et je me souviens toujours de cette image.<sup>409</sup>*

Considering the general structure of this extract, it is possible to underline three interrelated elements: the dynamics of interaction, the telling of a biographical experience, and the pivotal role of memory in identification. The passage begins with a short story functioning as a self-anchoring device, i.e. the attachment of her parents to the same leader, Michel Aoun. Then, Caroline states what she presents as a rule in Lebanese politics, both the centrality of the leadership and the familial dimension of political affiliation. It can be labeled as an explanatory device destined to explain her first short story. This part of the discourse seems to be more directly addressed to me: in her views on our interaction, I may typify an outsider trying to understand the Lebanese context. After that, comes the main part of the extract, the telling of a personal experience dating back to the civil war. The story is performed by a series of antithetic characters presented in a specific situation. From this experience, she concludes with an assertion, a kind of moral, before returning again to a shorter anecdote about the behaviors of the militia-fighters in her village.

To understand the role played by the narrative in the construction of a shared memory, the starting point is to examine how the narrator positioned herself. First she does it through a reference to her parents, which highlights the transitivity of the partisan affiliations between generations. Belonging to a political group is, at first, expressed as a familial link and an emotional – they “*liked*” the General – attachment to the leader, Michel Aoun. But it is not limited to these dimensions. As her short story

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<sup>409</sup> Caroline, interview with the author: October 31, 2008 [in French].

about the demonstrations in Baabda illustrates, claiming a FPM identity is also to anchor her family and herself in the central historical roots of the party. However, the narrator's situation only acquires all its meaning in the main part of the extract. The telling of the biographical experience allows her to draw up a line separating herself and her family from the Lebanese Forces fighters, interestingly defined in reference to their own leader, Samir Geagea. The position of the leader as incarnation of the group is such that, in listening to the beginning of her account, it is possible to imagine that Samir Geagea was actually present on the ground with his militiamen. The differentiation between the two kinds of people is then mainly performed through the interaction between Caroline, her Mother and the fighters, characterized by their brutality, their vulgarity, and their violent behaviours. The symbolic boundaries between the two sets of characters are made real by the ending of the story: Caroline's fall and the subsequent inscription of the division in her body – the scar – in an attempt to solidify the distinction in time and space. The telling of the episode aims at mobilizing a personal memory to create a social map interpreted through the distinction between Michel Aoun's followers, presented as supporters of the legal Army, and the Lebanese Forces, incarnated by the militia-fighters. The anecdote seems told to materialize her irreducible attachment to one of the groups as well as her subsequent rejection of the other. The story of her childhood experience came out in order to recount the encounter with the militia men. Though it was actualized in the evolution of interactions with the LF members since then – still defined by a political and social antagonism – it also frames her possible relations to them – after the incident, she cannot imagine supporting them. The narrative is thus at the same time a result from and a determinant for social interactions. As Tilly puts it (2002, p. 8): “Stories emerge from active social interchange, modify as a result of social interchange, but in their turn constrain social interchange as well”.

Identification claims are not only produced by the narrator. Her positions appear also negotiated, both in the narrated story and in the situation of the interview. In the narrative, the last passage underlines that the hostility of the militia-fighters derives from the fact that the whole village was identified as supporting General Michel Aoun. Thus, Caroline not only positions herself and her family as Aoun's followers, she is also being positioned as such by the rival group. Similarly, the use of the explanatory device about the familial dimension of politics in Lebanon during the interview represents another way of negotiating a position, this time regarding the researcher, by

stating a general sociological rule that may re-qualify her as a legitimate party-member beyond her familial heritage<sup>410</sup>.

Present identification creates the memory of the past. It is her present attachment to the FPM that provides the signification of this episode and frames it into a lasting socio-political dispute. Caroline's story organizes a memory of the wartime structured around the rivalry between Michel Aoun (and the Army), symbolizing the institutional state, and the militia-order imposed by the Lebanese Forces of Samir Geagea. The members of each group are defined collectively in reference to their belonging. The normative evaluation of both categories fits a past opposition between two projects actualized in a present political dispute. In addition to this double reading of the distinction, it is possible to infer from her story various scales of inscription for the cognitive representation of the past. First, obviously, the biographical scale related to a personal and familial experience of a life trajectory. Second, the partisan scale, linked to the local opposition between the factions at the time of their struggle for the hegemony on the population leaving in the "Eastern areas", the mainly Christian districts of Lebanon leaving outside the Syrian rule until 1990. In this territory, the people lived under the domination of the Lebanese Forces before the emergence of Aoun's authority.

Her narrative also bears the memory of this supremacy of the militia. Finally, the distinction acquires its meaning in a communal perspective. The battle for leadership between Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea morphed into a conflict over dominance on the Christian community in general. Auto-proclaimed protectors of the Christian, the LF centered their project of the "Christian canton" (Picard 1994). On the contrary, Michel Aoun campaigned for the unification of the whole country under the banner of the state. However, the constraints of the Lebanese sectarian political system as well as the spatial and symbolic inscription of his movement strongly connected it to a Christian horizon. He became, after all, another Christian leader (Davie 1991, p. 179). In that sense, the episode related by Caroline may as well equate to a more global socio-political process produced by and within the Christian populations who wear their own past legacy. These three scales built distinct temporalities corresponding to the multiplicity of the collective memory theorized by Maurice Halbwachs. They are likewise informed by a plurality of narratives: the life story of the narrator and her family, the partisan story of local factionalism, the communal story of struggle in a difficult environment. Caroline's account therefore appears to originate in a polyphonic

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<sup>410</sup> See the Framing Chapter of this work.

construction, carrying many embedded social meanings beyond the storyteller own voice (Bakhtin 1981).

The story of Caroline informs the two questions of appropriation and homogenization as bases for the construction of the collective memory. In this chapter, I intend to demonstrate how narrativity provides an answer for both dimensions. First, focusing on the elaboration and voicing of individual stories ensure the seizure of the “human dimension” of the social phenomena. Testimonies work as a metaphor i.e. a device that supports a mediation of signification. They constitute concrete materialization of the attachment and symbolic processes of condensation of meaning (Picaudou 2006, p. 24). Second, narrativity supposes the use of a specific plot to organize the stories. The construction of such emplotment stands as the unifying force allowing the translation of individual memories within a shared structure as well as the articulation between the various components of the collective memory. The antagonism built in Caroline's account originates from such emplotment, which underlines the socio-political distinction between the rival factions. The plot discloses the selectivity of the collective memory: the selection of episodes, their ordering, and the oblivion of others. Memory is a fable built from motivated occurrences and silences (Valensi 1992, p. 278). Such choices condition the identification. Illocutionary and performative, narratives produce hierarchization of meaning that sketches the boundaries of social groupings.

Produced by distinct individuals and inspired by plural sources, stories stage a diversity of representations but also interpret agency, integration, and unification. The personal narratives stand as particular points of view about a collective sense of belonging, materialization of the internalization, appropriation, and publication of references perceived as constitutive of the group and thus demonstrating the attachment. Though homogenization of the representations of the past remains relative, the elocutionary force institutes the version of the memory presented as a shared horizon for the identification of the self. The “present storytelling creates the past” (Farrugia 1999, p. 103). The collectivity emerging from these conceptions of the past appears as what Gurvitch labeled a “Promethean community”, i.e. a community realizing the awareness of its own existence (Gurvitch 1969 [Vol. II], p. 356). In telling her story, Caroline represents – that is cognitively constructs and stages – her attachment to Michel Aoun's party, revealing in the interaction her sense of belonging and her inscription within the partisan milieu in which specific significations about the past circulate. The narrative construction of memory therefore equates the realization of her *groupness*.

This chapter explores the question of the cognitive construction of what is perceived as a shared representation of the past from multiple experiences of the group members (1). It proposes the recognition of a specific emplotment as the unifying force allowing the coherence between the plurality of the living memories of the members (2). Finally, it turns toward the issue of temporality to uncover the articulation of three temporal scales through the narrative construction of identification. The inclusion of a plurality of social times in the collective memory amounts to the multiple voices of the narrative identity (3).

## 1. BIOGRAPHICAL SCHEMES AND TRANSCENDENTAL EXPERIENCES

Shifting the focus from collective memory as such to the memory practices enables to understand how individual actors internalize the horizon of signification resulting from a social framing of the past. The composition and voicing of stories constitute a memory practice<sup>411</sup>. Their study grants access to the concrete social construction of a relatively defined representation of the past that manifests the attachment to the group. Studying stories thus allows questioning the mechanisms of elaboration of memory and their consequences in the processes of identification. While the Party diffuses to its members a framed version of the past<sup>412</sup>, its acquisition depends on the echoes it brings back in the living memory of the individuals. Narrativity operates this articulation between the partisan memory, mobilized in a given political configuration, and the multiple personal experiences of the past, in turn voiced in a specific moment of the individual trajectory. Therefore, inevitably, the past tense of the told story meets the present of the storytelling. Narratives about memory open a triple actualization of the past (Lavabre 1994, p. 32): first, stories are produced to match the requirements of the present for the group; second, they enable the interpretative materialization of the identity endorsed by the storyteller; finally, they imply a selection of key moments that make sense for the actor at the time of the elucidation. As Mead (1932) conceptualized it, past is perpetually constructed and actualized in relation to the present events and the projected future. The invention of a collective memory takes place in this interplay between past and present, between collective meaning and personal signification.

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<sup>411</sup> Memory practices are multiple: commemorations, visual productions, movies, songs, etc. Many of these practices include a narrative dimension. In this work, I focus specifically on the production and the performance of personal stories.

<sup>412</sup> See Chapter Three.



## A) Staging the self in a collective horizon

In the opening chapter of this work, I introduced the engagement story of Elza, exemplary of the imbrication of personal memories in a collective fate. The presentation of her self within the frames of a shared history was crucial to her introduction as a FPM activist. At this stage of the study, I would like to return to her opening narrative in order to stress some features of the narrative construction of memory.

*“J’ai commencé à seize ans avec le CPL...mais j’ambitionnais le travail militant depuis mes huit ans peut-être...”*

*- C’était quelque chose qui venait de ta famille?*

*Non, pas du tout. Personne de ma famille n’est militant, ni mon père, ni ma mère...ma mère était dans le temps dans les Phalanges Libanaises, mais c’était avant qu’elle ne se marie...donc il y a longtemps. Il n’y a pas d’influence directe. D’ailleurs, mes parents ne sont pas politisés. Je me rappelle bien l’époque du général Aoun à Baabda, j’ai remarqué là que tout le monde montait pour des manifestations, mais pas mes parents. Moi, j’y suis allée, mais une seule fois, avec mes voisins. Je me rappelle de quelques images de cette période (...). Je suis née en 1982, alors en 1988 j’avais 6 ans et quand le Général a quitté le Liban, j’avais huit ans. Mais je me rappelle bien du 13 octobre 1990, ça m’a touchée énormément, je ressens encore maintenant ce que j’ai ressenti ce 13 octobre 1990. J’étais au Metn<sup>413</sup>, dans mon village qui était déjà occupé par les Syriens, depuis 1975...je me rappelle que ma mère nous a réveillées le matin moi et mes sœurs pour qu’on descende chez les voisins. Ils avaient une petite cave et on devait se réfugier là car les Syriens bombardaient Baabda. Nous sommes restées jusqu’à 9h du matin. Alors notre voisin, qui était des Forces Libanaises, est descendu me dire: “ha, ha, Aoun a laissé le pouvoir!” Et il s’est moqué. Moi, je ne le croyais pas. Je suis montée chez nous pour entendre la radio...je me rappelle bien que j’ai pleuré. Il y avait des Jeeps syriennes qui passaient dans le village et c’était la première fois que je me sentais tellement incapable de faire quoi que ce soit. Alors j’ai pris un caillou et j’ai jeté vers les Jeeps syriennes qui étaient très loin en plus...je pleurais, je pleurais. C’était vraiment décevant. Donc c’était le 13 octobre 1990. Pendant des années, j’attendais que le général Aoun revienne...mais après peut-être sept ans, il n’était toujours pas revenu, j’étais encore une fois très déçue. J’ai pensé que j’étais la seule Aouniste encore au Liban. (...) Et puis quand j’avais 16-17 ans peut-être, les Aounistes ont manifesté contre la censure d’une interview télé du Général. Je me rappelle bien que quand je les ai vus, je me suis dit: ‘ah, voilà, il y a d’autres Aounistes...ils sont là [rires]’.*

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<sup>413</sup> Metn is a Lebanese district situated in the North-eastern border of Beirut’s agglomeration.

*Je n'avais pas de contact avec eux, mais j'ai pris leur communiqué de presse dans les journaux, je l'ai photocopié et je l'ai distribué à l'école, au Collège Saint-Cœur, une école, catholique. Il organisait une grande messe à Noël, et chaque classe devait présenter un spectacle...alors mon truc, si je me rappelle bien, ou le truc de la classe car j'étais le porte-parole, c'était de parler de l'Homme aux yeux de Dieu. Je ne sais pas comment j'ai tourné le truc, mais j'ai réussi à parler de politique et de liberté...je ne sais pas comment, j'ai parlé de la liberté et en plus, nous nous étions mis d'accord de porter du noir comme si c'était les funérailles des libertés. Alors tout le monde était en noir, les costumes, les chaussettes, tout. Tout le monde était vêtu en noir et c'était la grande messe, les télévisions avaient l'habitude de filmer le spectacle...alors c'était catastrophique. D'ailleurs c'était ma dernière année à Saint-Cœur! Je suis passée à une école officielle ensuite."*<sup>414</sup>

Elza's introduction to her attachment plays on a mimetic structure between personal events and the successive phases of the FPM identity narrative: the irruption of Michel Aoun on the political scene, his violent fall, and the secret struggle organized by his followers. It stages life episodes indexed to what is brought in as collective experiences of the past in search of a definition of the self matching the perception of a shared story. Elza had interpreted the group identity and had called upon memory to do so. The reference to past experiences derives from what Husserl labeled "ressouvenir" (Heurtin & Trom 1997, p. 12). The intentional recomposition of the past grants it a positioning feature: as Ricoeur demonstrated, it enables to seize memory in the present time of its elucidation and to follow up its trace in time and space through an interpretative work connecting past, present, and future (Ricoeur 1988 [1985]). The convocation of these memories positions Elza in the group – both in regard with the out-group and in the internal economy of the FPM. In the activist character she assumed, Elza "re-presents" i.e. actualizes and situates an interpretation of the past.

The passage is composed of two main parts. The opening one, itself divided in a succession of episodes, intends to state the motives of the attachment to the Party. The justification of the adhesion is declined into three scenes. The initial description refers to the collective gatherings around the Baabda presidential Palace. It anchors the narrator to the origins of the Party. The following recalled incident constitutes the central component of the narrative. Historically significant in the frame of the FPM identity narrative and emotionally loaded, it ensures the parallelism between personal experiences and collective destiny. The Syrian military and the Lebanese Forces supporter incarnate the repulsive figure of the enemy. Due to his proximity in the everyday life, this last character exemplifies the interactional nature of intergroup

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<sup>414</sup> Elza, interview with the author: November 10, 2007 [in French]. .

relations in the Lebanese divided social structure. The first part is then concluded by her encounter with the activist networks that would give her the opportunity to materialize her attachment in collective action.

The final part of the narrative fulfills another objective. It signifies the insertion of Elza's daily life activities within the partisan frame. Her engagement mirrors the actions of those who had initially started to set up mobilizations in support of Michel Aoun and his slogans since 1990. These initial efforts were mainly individual or decided in small autonomous groups, without any coordination nor instructions coming from the former officials of the 1988-1990 movement. They were micro demonstrations: tags on the walls, tracts thrown on the streets at night, private comments, etc. Elza thus stages her self in this early phase of the Aounist movement although at that time, around 1998 according to her indication, the organization of the mobilization had already improved drastically. The first attempts by Michel Aoun and his close circle to support and control local activists was initiated in 1996 with the creation in Paris of what would become the FPM. At first marginal, the structure progressively gained influence on the ground. At the end of the year 1997, a constitutive body, *al-Hay'a al-'âma*, grouped around twenty people in charge of representing the movement in the various regions of the country, headed by General Nadim Lteif who was the representative of Michel Aoun in Lebanon. Elza seems to live on her own the same trajectory as the movement did. Her first steps into political activism bear mimetic resembles to the original phase of the collection mobilization during the 1990s.

The successive episodes of her story localize her identification with the group in three lived contexts: internal, inter-subjective, and social<sup>415</sup>. The first one relates to her internal being materialized by her physical presence. This inner time is structured by her conscience of continuity. Interpreting her present self through the memory of her past suggests the existence of a continuum, a succession of steps that marks an internal rhythm: her political awaking during the demonstration around the presidential Palace in Baabda; the deception and frustration of the defeat; the hope opened by the encounter with activists. The internal time only acquires its meaning in relation with a second level characterized by inter-subjectivity. The crowd converging to Baabda, the neighbors bringing her to the demonstrations stand out in the story as harmonious relations. They express the perception of shared feelings. On the contrary, the interaction with the Lebanese Forces neighbor symbolizes the fragmentation of the

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<sup>415</sup> These contexts were inspired by Thomas Luckmann's conception of the plurality of "lived times". See Luckmann 1997.

society and the subsequent conflictual relations. The gap between her intention during the school performance and the expectations of the majority of the people denotes the isolation of the activists in their own society. Their distinction comes from the display of alternative values in front of a conservative majority. Christmas could in these conditions become a Mourning, at the opposite of its “normal” signification. Finally, a third level, introducing social categorizations enables to interpret the world experienced in the course of the different interactions. These categories are not incarnated physically, but are defined by the stock of knowledge in use within the group in which the actor is inserted (Luckmann 1997, p. 28). The division between Aounists and LF, for example, finds its origin in the internalization of the political rivalry between the factions. Similarly, the symbolic of Baabda or the rhetoric of Liberty call upon shared references in the FPM networks.

Elza's narrative also produces its own topography. Baabda, birth-place of the FPM, where the people rallied to support the message of an emerging leader, emerges as the starting point of the personal path toward activism mirroring its status of *primus locus* in the identity narrative of the Party. The location symbolizes the attempted return of the central authority during the reign of the various militias. The unity and collective mobilization it represents opposes the territorial divisions imposed by the implantation of the armed groups in their respective strongholds. The presidential Palace was renamed “Palace of the People [*Qasr al-Sha'b*]”, typifying this thought of unification and empowerment of the people. “*Baabda is the place of the revolution*” said another of my interviewees. Elza's narrative restores this image of a popular movement going beyond partisan politics. She indeed specified that her “parents were not politicized”, pointing out the novelty of the occurrence, the rupture it introduced in the political landscape. The story thus re-situates her spatially in the heart of the Party.

The next scene, focusing on October 13 presents another symbolic landscape. The village in which Elza lived with her family is, by contrast to the unitary space of Baabda, a divided territory. It epitomizes the “Eastern areas” in which two political identities were coexisting. The character of the neighbor perfectly illustrates this interlacement of the populations supporting the General Aoun and the Lebanese Forces. It also represents the lost of the land to the Syrian troops materialized in the story by the Jeeps of the Syrian army. The last passage of the extract opens a void horizon, in which no spatial basis seems to exist. For Elza, Aounists were nowhere to be found in the whole country, in a striking parallel with the exile of their leader, before emerging back to light on the occasion of a demonstration. The narrative thus reproduces both the territorial rivalry with the LF that culminated in the “Elimination war” and the physical absence of the movement after the Syrian victory in 1990 until

the emergence of youth mobilizations. Claiming her attachment to the FPM by mobilizing these past episodes makes the connection between her past character and her present self, between the origins of the Party and its present identity. Biographical experiences and social categories thus meet to build a sense of continuity in the story.

Finally, the last episode is located in the school. This place may relate to the crucial role played by educational institutions in the history of the FPM. Already in Baabda the first to mobilize were the school and university students. Their participation was organized by the *Tansîq*, the Central Office for National Coordination – known as the BCCN, its French acronym. From the fall 1989, the BCCN had secured the transportation, scheduled the successive turns of the different institutions, thus ordering the mass movement that assembled to support the General (Davie 1991, p. 148-149). Then, under the Syrian rule, universities were the epicenter of the Aounist mobilizations. For Elza, who was a teenager at that time, the school space may also appear as a stage to publicly demonstrate her attachment. By reversing the values of Christmas, Elza and her classmates manifested their belonging to different references, at odds with the dominant perceptions, symbolizing the minority situation of the movement during those years. Elza therefore stages herself as an activist completely identifying her life story with the cause.

The narrative rests on temporal and spatial cognitive structures that grant to biographical events the signification of a shared collective experience of reality. The re-memorization and the re-presentation of the past realized through narrativity allocate a global meaning to a succession of selected life episodes. They maintain the subjective signification of actions and categories in order to connect the past and the present in the process of reconstruction of memory. The biographical events are inserted into what is presented as a collective scheme organizing meaning along a normative frame. The diversity of the episodes is structured in only one story, the story of her progressive immersion in activism. The succession of events and states retold by the narrative sustains a “significant totality”, a coherent construction aiming at a “final point”, Elza's present attachment to the Party, revealing the structuring function of the closure of the story (Ricoeur 1984 [1983]). The scheme of the narrative thus links the presentation of the present self with the memory of past events working as legitimizing devices. The stream of time flows reversely from the present to the past, from the end of the story to the beginning (Ricoeur 1983, p. 131). The parallelism between Elza's biographical experience and the FPM history aims at disclosing an inevitable fate: her integration within the Party. The narrative form thus enables to give a common signification to disconnected events.

During our several encounters, Elza always insisted on her total devotion to the FPM. She confessed that her choices of study as well as her professional projects all aimed at helping the organization. In her presentation of her self, she interpreted her position of FPM activist by underlining her submission to the collective interest of the group. The narrative drew from her living memories to stage her “*remise de soi*” to the organization and her “interest to be disinterested” to paraphrase Bourdieu's expression (Bourdieu 1994, p. 160). Without fully reflecting the structuralist bias of the author – Bourdieu (1987) defines his work as a structuralist constructivism – the formulation rather intends to highlight the universe of signification in which the narrator inscribes her participation in collective mobilizations<sup>416</sup>. She adhered to the FPM while it was still a secret organization grouping a handful of activists united by the necessities of illegal protestations. The mode of legitimation was morale while the risks remained high – imprisonment, violence, etc. She accordingly represents her activism as a sacerdotal engagement, which incorporates almost totally her personal sense of identity. Such a strong connection may even appear at odd with the changing situation of the organization since 2005. During our last meeting, in April 2010, she acknowledged to experience some difficulty to cope with the transition from activism to political action: “*You feel that now that we are in politics, we are not free anymore, we cannot push the limits. Sometimes you have to stop half-way, because of the other [parties]. On the contrary, in activism, you could go through with it, because in front of you you only have an enemy. In politics, there is no enemy anymore.*”<sup>417</sup> Her narrative defines an horizon of signification that portrays and legitimates her interpretation of engagement, a mode of *groupness* strongly impacted by her past of activist.

## B) Personal narrative as axiology

Older than the rest of the core sample, Halim was preparing at the time of our meeting a doctoral degree in the Lebanese University. Our encounter was, in many aspects, accidental. Born in 1975, he originates from the coastal city of Jbeil, the ancient Byblos, where he has lived all his life. A prominent professor in the Lebanese

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<sup>416</sup> In that sense, the conception of social movement adopted here refers to the work of authors such as Francesca Polletta (1998), Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper (2003) who insist on the universes of signification and the narrative dimension in collective action.

<sup>417</sup> Elza, interview with the author: April 14, 2010. The original statement was in French: “*Tu sens qu'on est en politique, nous ne sommes pas libres, on ne peut pas marcher jusqu'au bout. Parfois, tu dois t'arrêter à mi-chemin de ce que tu voudrais, à cause des autres. Au contraire, dans le travail militant, tu pouvais aller jusqu'au bout, parce que face à toi, c'est l'ennemi, l'adversaire. En politique, il n'y a plus d'ennemi.*”

University, his father rallied the cause of Michel Aoun in 1989. He created a kind of think tank that used to meet every week and publish bulletins aiming at publicizing the politics of the General. It also organized conferences in the regions beyond the Syrian military presence to call for popular support. Halim, teenager at that time, participated in the process, distributing fliers at the doors of churches and mosques with other young sympathizers. A time of political awaking, the period was also, according to his interview, a moment of emancipation. For the first time, he left his home town to join the gatherings around the presidential palace, meeting people from all regions and different religions. This golden age lasted until the closure of the border separating the area under the control of the Army and the territory held by the Lebanese Forces, at the end of January 1990. After dedicating several minutes to describe these elements, Halim focused on that day when the militia seized Jbeil, marking a clear cut in the course of his existence:

*“Le jour du 31 janvier [1990], je me rappelle très bien que c’était un mercredi, car j’attendais mercredi soir la diffusion d’un match de foot le soir. Pendant la journée, on a senti que quelque chose n’allait pas. Le préfet [le directeur de l’école] est venu, il m’a appelé et il m’a dit d’aller chercher mes frères et soeurs, parce que nous étions dans deux écoles différentes. (...) Mon école, [celle] des frères maristes, est dans le centre du vieux quartier de Jbeil, à dix minutes de notre maison. Donc le préfet m’a dit: ‘on va faire sortir les élèves, mais toi, avec ton père qui connaît le Général [Aoun], pars dès maintenant et passe prendre tes frères et tes sœurs et tu rentres vite à la maison!’. Et il m’a prié de ne même pas passer chez l’épicier chercher du chocolat ou quoi que ce soit, d’aller directement à la maison.*

*Quand j’arrive [sa voix change], j’ai vu mon père...mon père inquiet comme jamais auparavant. Ma maison a deux étages: au premier il y a notre famille et au second la famille de mon oncle. Nous avons un grand portail en fer. De toute ma vie je ne me suis jamais rappelé que ce portail ait été fermé. C’était toujours ouvert. Et là, j’ai vu mon père avec mon oncle, vraiment inquiets, en train de tout faire pour fermer le portail, le pousser pour qu’il ferme et l’attacher avec des chaînes. J’ai demandé pourquoi. ‘Par précaution!’ a été la réponse. J’ai vu que quelque chose ne va pas. A Amchit [un village voisin de Jbeil, plus au Nord sur la côte], il y avait une caserne de l’armée et j’ai compris d’après les appels téléphoniques de mon père qu’il parlait à un officier: il était inquiet et j’ai compris que l’officier essayait de le rassurer. On a compris après que l’armée a été surprise [de l’attaque des Forces Libanaises] parce qu’ils [les militaires] croyaient à des manœuvres d’entraînement des milices. C’est pour ça que Jbeil est tombé si vite dans les mains des Forces Libanaises (...).*

*Vers 15h (...) on était sur le balcon au deuxième étage pour voir ce qui se passe. Juste en face de la citadelle, sur l’autoroute qui avait été transformé en aéroport*

*militaire, il y avait deux avions de l'armée (...). Et soudain, on entend derrière nous une explosion (...). On se retourne et on voit de la fumée. C'était le déclenchement de la guerre...le point zéro. Ils [les Forces Libanaises] venaient d'attaquer la caserne de Amchit. (...) D'un seul coup, à côté de la citadelle, je vois surgir d'un buisson un canon qui a attaqué directement l'aéroport! Tout le monde s'est réfugié dans la maison immédiatement. On a deux chambres à coucher et entre les deux, la salle de bain...maman a pris les matelas et on dormait dans la salle de bain car c'était l'endroit le plus sûr [loin des fenêtres]. L'électricité était coupée, rien ne marchait. Nous avons un petit générateur dans la cour, alors on est sorti avec mon père pour [le] déclencher (...).*

*Vers 20h, il y avait le journal à la télé comme d'habitude...non, d'habitude c'était à 19h15, mais ce soir là, c'était plus tard. (...) Toutes les deux minutes, il y avait un flash pour dire où les bombes étaient tombées (...) mais moi, j'attendais toujours à 20h30 la diffusion du match de foot! Avant cela, vers 17h, il y avait eu un appel de mon oncle, le frère de ma mère. Il a dit que les routes sont bloquées et qu'il est coincé à Beyrouth mais qu'il va essayer de passer avant le blocage total. S'il peut passer, il viendra chez nous. Alors le soir, alors que le portail est fermé, vers 20h15, une voiture vient devant la maison. On entend qu'elle s'arrête et que des gens descendent. Quelqu'un a dit 'nous sommes arrivés!', et on entendu comme la voix de mon oncle. J'étais dans le salon, ma mère était à ma gauche et mon père était assis à droite et moi, en face de la porte où il y a le balcon. Ma mère m'a dit: 'ouvre la porte, c'est ton oncle qui vient'. Mais juste alors que j'ai ma main sur la poignée de la porte [il fait le geste], mon père me dit: 'Arrête!'. A la même minute, on a entendu le bruit des mitraillettes que l'on arme [il fait a nouveau le geste, le récit est pénible]. On les entendait tout autour de nous, la maison était encerclée.*

*J'ai rampé jusqu'à mon père. Ma mère est allée dans la salle de bain, elle a donné à mes frères et à mes sœurs du jus avec un somnifère pour qu'ils dorment et elle les a recouverts avec des matelas. Elle a ensuite pris à côté d'elle un pistolet. Elle se disait qu'au moment où ils vont tuer son fils et son mari, puisqu'on allait défendre la maison, elle était prête à se tuer. (...) Mon père m'a dit: 'rappelle-toi de la chasse, ce que je t'ai appris....considères que c'est comme du gibier et tire. Mais n'attaque que s'ils rentrent, essaie de rester calme et attend mon signal'. Je me suis approché de la fenêtre, à travers le volet, j'ai pu compter les pieds des assaillants. Je me rappelle, douze pieds, donc six hommes. Mais je ne savais pas combien ils étaient de l'autre côté. On ne craignait que la porte de la cuisine, car le générateur est devant et donc ils vont savoir qu'il y a quelqu'un comme le générateur tourne. Donc j'avais essayé de prendre un angle où je pouvais voir la porte de la cuisine et à la porte du salon. Maman priait, et là, je me rappelle [alors qu'il était au bord des larmes, il sourit], je me rappelle les coups de fusil mais nous, on n'a pas répondu! On attendait toujours qu'ils essaient de rentrer dans la maison, on était toujours calme. Ils sont arrivés au*



*grand portail et ils le secouaient en hurlant: 'Ouvrez! Ouvrez!'. On n'a pas répondu. Après quinze minutes, on a entendu une voix dire qu'ils allaient se retirer. Alors mon oncle et sa famille sont vite descendu chez nous pour être unifiés et être ensemble au cas où ils reviendraient. Vraiment, je ne sais pas par quel miracle ils se sont retirés (...).*

*Le lendemain, il y a eu un appel téléphonique qui a dit à Maman, parce que c'est elle qui a répondu: 's'il vous plait madame, sans aucune question, quittez la maison immédiatement!'. On a quitté sans rien, ni même un vêtement et on a trouvé refuge chez mes grands-parents à Jbeil...c'était le 1<sup>er</sup> février 1990.*

*Après la guerre, on a su que cet appel, c'était un de nos voisins qui l'avait donné. [Il nous a] appris que c'était des gens de la région [qui étaient venus encercler la maison cette nuit là]. Donc ils n'avaient pas osé rentrer, car peut-être ils avaient peur qu'on les reconnaisse ou je ne sais pas...en plus, on avait fait circuler la rumeur depuis une semaine avant qu'on était armé (...). Le lendemain, les Forces Libanaises avaient envoyé des troupes extérieures à la région, avec une description de la maison mais ils sont rentrés chez les voisins. Ils ont demandé si c'est bien la maison de notre famille, mais ils [les voisins] ont dit que non. On avait décrit [aux miliciens] la maison juste à côté de la citadelle mais ils s'étaient trompés. La vieille dame [la voisine] leur a dit qu'ils étaient d'une autre famille et elle leur a donné les cartes d'identité pour prouver qu'ils n'étaient pas de notre famille. (...) Et pendant qu'elle était allée chercher les cartes d'identité, elle avait dit à son fils de nous appeler vite, qu'elle allait essayer de les retarder.*

*(...) Nous sommes allés chez mes grands-parents. Mon oncle et mon père se sont réfugiés au couvent, chez le prêtre du quartier pour se cacher. Le 2 février, vers 6h du matin, on leur a apporté de fausses barbes et de faux cheveux et on a déguisé mon père et mon oncle en vieux prêtres. Il [le prêtre] les a pris dans sa voiture pour traverser [la ligne de démarcation entre la zone contrôlée par la milice des Forces Libanaises et celle au main de l'armée] vers Beyrouth, à Nahr el-Kalb, c'était le tunnel qui faisait la frontière. Il [le prêtre] a pu traverser cette frontière là parce qu'il connaissait les Forces Libanaises. Mais nous, nous étions toujours à Jbeil, nous étions seuls...*

*Un mois plus tard, Maman m'a demandé d'aller voir notre maison et de prendre quelques habits, car nous étions partis sans rien. Elle m'a dit aussi de l'attendre là-bas, qu'elle me rejoindrait. J'arrive là-bas et je trouve les voisins. Ils me disent qu'une troupe [de la milice] vient encercler la maison environ toutes les heures. (...) Je m'inquiète parce que je ne sais pas quand ils vont revenir. D'un coup, une voiture est apparue un moment après que j'ai regardé la route. Je me rappelle très bien de la voiture, c'était une Mercedes blanche. Six hommes en sortent, en habits vert foncé et un, uniquement qui m'adresse la parole [il se trouve alors sur le balcon de la*

*maison]: il me demande ce que je fais là. Je réponds que c'est ma maison. 'Quelle maison?' [demande le milicien]. 'La maison de la famille A.' je réponds. Alors il me demande où est mon père. J'ai dit que mon père est en France. Il a juste fait un geste de la tête et soudain, un des hommes quitte la troupe, saute sur le balcon et me fait tomber à terre, par-dessus la rambarde. Un autre m'attrape et me met à genoux, les mains derrière la tête. Il me pose encore la question: 'Où est ton père?' Je dis à nouveau: 'il est en France'. Je sens un pied dans mon dos [le milicien le pousse avec son pied pour le faire s'allonger au sol]. Je suis au sol avec son pied sur ma tête. 'Pour la dernière fois, je te demande où est ton père?'. Je ne sais pas par quel courage, mais mon regard était toujours pointé sur la route, pour voir si ma mère venait sur la route. 'Pour la dernière fois, je vous dis qu'il est en France, depuis deux mois'. Il a enfoncé son pied plus sur ma tête [il pleure] et m'a dit: 'Ce connard ton père qui est contre nous, est-il chez ce grand chien de Michel Aoun?' Et alors il a continué à insulter mon père et puis finalement il m'a dit: 'Ne bouge pas d'ici, nous quittons mais on revient et gare à toi si on ne te retrouve pas en revenant!'. (...) J'ai fermé toute la maison tout de suite (...) et je suis parti en courant dans les prés.*

*Je ne sais pas par quelle force, j'ai pensé qu'ils pourraient me suivre [jusqu'à ma famille] alors je suis passé par les champs. A la sortie du champ, il y avait la maison d'amis à nous, et ma mère était passée chez eux. Elle m'a vu au même moment, je ne sais pas quelle tête j'avais, vert de peur (...). Elle m'a appelé par mon nom et elle m'a demandé ce que je faisais là. Moi, j'ai juste dit: 's'il vous plaît madame, il faut que je vois ma mère, je dois la prévenir avant qu'elle n'arrive à la maison!'. (...) Alors le voisin [l'ami], pour ne pas alerter les voisins et les miliciens, m'a attrapé et fait rentrer dans la maison. Il m'a jeté de l'eau sur le visage et lorsque j'ai repris conscience, j'ai tout raconté à ma mère (...). Depuis on vivait dans la terreur, on ne dormait pas.*

*Quatre mois après, il y a eu une sorte de trêve (...) et on a pu rejoindre mon père chez un ami, dans le Metn. (...) Mon père enseignait à Tripoli [à l'Université Libanaise]. (...) Il avait décidé de s'installer dans un village proche de l'université. Mais nous, on devait reprendre l'école [à Jbeil]. [Pour aller voir mon père] on passait à Batroun, il y avait un barrage syrien moins d'un kilomètre après le barrage de la milice des Forces Libanaises. (...) On quittait Jbeil vendredi soir après l'école et on passait les deux barrages. Tu ne peux pas imaginer les embouteillages et les humiliations quand on passait, surtout au barrage de la milice, quelle peur on ressentait à ce barrage. On avait toujours peur qu'ils nous reconnaissent, qu'ils demandent nos cartes d'identité (...). Longtemps avant le barrage, on commençait à prier (...), on coupait notre souffle. (...) Ma mère ne pouvait pas supporter cette situation et elle a demandé à mon père d'aller au Mexique chez mon oncle. [Peu de temps après, ce fut le 13 octobre]. Après 13 octobre 1990, c'était la fin d'une bataille*

*pour nous (...), le début de l'exil du Général (...). La chute militaire mais c'était le début de la résistance. (...).*"<sup>418</sup>

The narrative is a powerful evocation of the outbreak of the war opposing the Lebanese Army of Michel Aoun and the Lebanese Forces for the supremacy over the mainly Christian territories of the "Eastern regions", the areas avoiding the direct influence of the Syrian army. The dramatic description of the initial day of fighting came spontaneously and lasted for many minutes, becoming the main object of the interview. As the story unfolded, Halim went through a succession of contrasted emotional states that exposed an absence of distance between his present self and the narrated events. To comment the passage and disclose its main implications, four themes are to be tackled: the progress of the story, the positioning of the characters, the performance, and the lessons learned from the episodes.

### ***The structure of the narrative***

Two episodes compose the story, themselves divided into several scenes. The first part recounts the invasion of Jbeil by the militiamen, forcing Halim and his family to hide and leading to the departure of his father. The second section takes place a few weeks later and stages this time the narrator as the main character facing the newly established militia order. It ends with a final disillusion that marks at the same time the beginning of a new era. The main framework of the narrative is thus constituted by the war opposing the Army of Michel Aoun and the Lebanese Forces. Although this phase of fighting was not the first, it rapidly developed into the most severe battle between the two factions, causing "one thousand deaths, three thousand wounded, and the worst destruction of the entire war." (Picard 1997, p. 139). Karim Pakradouni, a Kata'eb official and former adviser of Samir Geagea labeled in the second volume of his war memoirs this episode as the climax of the five successive "earth-quakes" that ravaged the Christian – and more particularly Maronite – community in Lebanon during the 1975-1990 wars: the Ehden operation on June 13, 1978, ordered by Bachir Gemayel to submit his rivals of the Franjeh family; the massacre of Safra on July 7, 1980, in which the LF suppressed the armed force of their rivals from the National Liberal Party; the first uprising within the LF command on March 12, 1985; the elimination of Elie Hobeika by Samir Geagea to take the control of the militia on January 15, 1986; and finally the January 31, 1990 war (Pakradouni 1991, p. 227-228). The 1990 fighting was the second round of the violent antagonism between Aoun's Army units and the LF. The first erupted as soon as February 14, 1989, when

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<sup>418</sup> Halim, interview with the author: March 14, 2009 [in French].

the recently appointed head of the military government ordered the closure of the illegal ports in the country and forced the LF to hand back the control of the fifth harbor basin in Eastern Beirut. At that time, the clash between the two rival projects was materialized by Aoun's slogan: "No to the statelets, yes to the State" (ibid., p. 235).

Michel Aoun's Liberation war against the Syrian presence in Lebanon launched on March 14, 1989, certainly helped to contain the tension with the Lebanese Forces. However, confrontation was only postponed. The joint presence of the militia and the Army on the same territory inevitably led to discord. Aoun's project of restoring the authority of the State and impose its monopoly of legitimate violence was incompatible with the existence of the LF. Building his legitimacy on "national unity", the General could not get along with a force constituted against – or as substitute to – the State. Beyond the political postures, Samir Geagea and Michel Aoun acted like two warlords in competition for the same territorial and political space, aiming at the domination over the Christian populations (Picard 1997, p. 152). Coexistence was deemed impossible, logically leading to ferocious fighting.

On January 31, 1990, as recounted in Halim's story, tension was already high. "*Something was wrong*" as he said, and school was dismissed as it used to be during troubled times. The day before, on Tuesday January 30, Army units took control of a permanence of the militia in a school situated close to the Southern Suburb of Beirut, the Qamar School of Tahouita, in the district of Furn el-Chebbak. The objective was to seize all the LF positions in Beirut. At that time, the "Eastern regions" – between Madfun, North of Jbeil near the coastal city of Batroun, and Kfarchima, South of Beirut – were roughly divided between the authority of the LF and the one of the Army along a East-West line marked by the Nahr al-Kalb river. However, the rupture was not total and both sides still had troops in the zone of the other. The militia, for example, continued to control the districts of Achrafiyeh and Ayn al-Rummaneh in Beirut, but also Dbayeh in the northern outskirts of the city. The Army maintained barracks in Amchit, Adma, Jounieh, Sarba and Safra, within regions globally dominated by the LF. Feeling after the Tahouita incident that the Army would increase the pressure on his side, Samir Geagea retaliated the next day with a strong operation. According to him, the survival of the militia was at stake, naming Aoun's advance as an "Elimination war [*Harb al-Îlghâ*]".

Jbeil was located in the areas immediately taken over by the militia. The attack of the LF is described by Halim as a surprise for the Army units stationed in the region. They were in any case too isolated to resist. With the advance of their rivals, the supporters of Michel Aoun found themselves exposed to retaliations. The role played

by Halim's father directly suggested that he could become a target for the forward-moving militia-fighters. The intervention of the school director singles out Halim in comparison with his classmates, imposing on him a strong political identity inherited from his father. Himself and his family then suffered from their engagement as they found themselves attacked by a commando of the LF. The first part of the narrative ends after this operation. Halim and his family escaped thanks to the composure of his father and the help of a friendly neighbor. The crossing of Nahr al-Kalb by his father disguised as a priest symbolizes the solidified division of the “Eastern regions”. While the militia confiscated the Army bases in Amchit, Jounieh, Safra, Sarba, and Adma, Michel Aoun's units were able to expel the LF from Ayn al-Rummaneh and Dbayeh. Only Achrafiyeh remained under the control of the *Quwwât*. The respective zones of the two factions were then clearly marked: the militia controlled Jbeil and its Mountain heights, Jounieh and the whole Kesrwan while Aoun's troops dominated the Metn, Eastern Beirut – excepting Achrafiyeh – and Baabda.

The second part focuses more on Halim himself. From this point, the narrator tends to become the hero of the story. He found himself directly confronted with the violence of the militia-fighters but nonetheless managed to escape again thanks to his bravery and ruse. He answered the assignation of political identity imposed on him and his family in the first part by the pride of claiming his attachment to it, answering proudly to the militia man that the house was his. The small personal story appears here more detached from the historical events than in the opening episode. After the escape, the narrative nonetheless reminds the double pressure exercised on the population of the “Eastern regions”, between the hammer of the militia and the anvil of the Syrian troops. The scene of the check-points represents a commonplace in the living memories of the activists. It exemplifies the double alienation of the territory by the external powers (Syria) and internal sectarian factions (the Lebanese Forces). Furthermore, it stages without naming it the check-point of Barbara, marking the limit of the LF territory in the North and one of the famous locality remembered in the popular memory as a symbol of the militia order, the rule of the arbitrary it typifies. Remarkably, Halim describes the crossing of the militia check-point worst than the Syrian one, demonstrating the deep animosity felt toward the LF.

The conclusion accelerates the time to suggest that October 13 was the logical consequence of what preceded. Although crucial historically, the event does not retain his attention, as if everything was already decided after the invasion of Jbeil. The lived experience in that sense underlines specific moments that do not necessarily match the more global narrative about this final phase of the war, which tends to highlight the fall of Michel Aoun. Despite this emphasis on biographical memories, the plot

structuring the narrative relies on a process of social identification. As conceptualized in the first volume of Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (1984 [1983]), the plot is not composed *ex-nihilo*, but integrates the various elements of the lived stories into a general cognitive understanding of the reality. The emplotment supposes the capability of the narrator to identify the signification of the action unfolded in the society and to evaluate it ethically. Here, the structural features of the story are constituted by the existential opposition between the LF and the Aounists. The narrative not only traces back to Halim's sense of belonging to the FPM but also to the major shift into the Christian political landscape that continues today. Already in 1990, the escalation of violence generated a dual cleavage: the National Liberal Party withdrew from the LF directorate and its leader Dany Chamoun announced the creation of a new Lebanese Front in a symbolic redistribution of power; meanwhile, the Kata'eb Party divided in two parts, one supporting the militia, the other backing Aoun (Pakradouni 1991, p. 258). This pre-assumption about the duality of the society in which Halim lives – the Christian populations – informed the whole story, as illustrated by the cast of characters.

### ***Cast of characters***

A sense of self develops as people create an interpretation of their social positioning. This representation emerges from narrativity. The cast of characters included in the storyline thus materializes the social map on which the actor projects his self. In the presented episodes, three groups of people arise. They can be placed on a scope polarized between positive characters on the one hand and negative ones on the other. Halim and his family constitute the first group. The second group is composed of their entourage, which can be divided between friendly and hostile people. Finally, the militia men make up the last group.

In Halim's family, the story shows a clear distinction between the figure of his father, his mother and his brothers and sisters. His mother performs a rather passive role. Although displaying courage, she is represented as less able to change the destiny of the family. Her part is emotional and reflexive, providing advices and serving as the agent of fate – she transmits the message of the neighbors. The father on the contrary stands out in the first part as the main agent. He protects the family and guides Halim, playing a pivotal role in the initiation of the teenager. As he disappears in the second part, his allusive presence persists through the interaction of his son with the militia-fighters. Despite his departure, he thus remains a crucial element of the plot. The other children are inactive as perfectly illustrated in the scene of the sleeping pill. They represent additional elements in the frame of the plot without any influence on it. This

situation contrasts with Halim himself. Active from the first scene at school, he plays a pivotal part in both parts. His role follows a classic model of action hero, first learning from an initiating figure – here his father – before facing directly the dangers.

The difference of staging between the children of the family gives a key of interpretation of the whole narrative: Halim constructs these events as the climax of his passageway to adulthood. The transition initiated before, as he acknowledged at the beginning of the interview, with his frequent visits to Baabda symbolizing the opening toward otherness. However, the events are told as a ritual of initiation, a moment that separates an after from a before. During the first night, he suffers from the political identification of his father. But in the next episode he takes on himself the whole weight of the cleavage with the LF. The progressive birth of his adult self is highlighted by the successive shifts in the first part between the worlds of childhood – the school, the chocolates, waiting for the football match in spite of the events – and the conscience of the adult reality – the war. Unlike his brothers and sisters, he does not take a sleeping pill but actively defends the house. He is considered as an adult before fully becoming one in the confrontation with the militia. The representation of his self performed through the narrative seems therefore deeply connected to the identification with the FPM in opposition with the LF as well as to the model of his father.

The intermediary group of the neighbors reproduces the general normative dichotomy. On the one hand, some of them provide a much needed help, even if they had to take major risks to do so. The solidarity between people at the time of the war has been neglected for long, as most of the analyses focused on conflictual relations. Theodore Hanf (1994) studied such mutual support to conclude on the “rise of a nation”. The support is related to political beliefs only once, in the case of the director of the school. In the other instances, only neighborhood relations are cited excluding any partisan references. The figure of the priest helping the family while having at the same time good relations with the militia provides a good example of the phenomenon. However the solidarity ends on the intergroup boundaries: the characters from the neighborhood concretely affiliated with the militia do not hesitate to attack the house of a family respected in town. They are nonetheless presented as afraid of being recognized, which tends to represent their behaviors as shameful.

According to Halim, it is precisely to avoid such local solidarity that a group of militia-fighters from another area is mobilized to keep an eye on the house. This group of characters typifies the evil in the story. Brutal in their actions, they exemplify the arbitrary of the militia order: they allow themselves the right of life and death upon the population. Their status of outsiders moreover fuels the common narrative about the

LF members coming from the northern Christian Mountain. Himself originating from the North, Samir Geagea is said to have assembled under his leadership the deprived population of this peripheral area<sup>419</sup>. Halim's account thus seems to actualize oppositions regularly mobilized to describe the Lebanese political strife: the tropes of the Militia against the State, the Mountain versus the City echo Ibn Khaldun's classic model of rival solidarity groups competing for the control of the State (Hourani 1976). It displays irreducible confrontation based on opposite morale evaluations of the respective groups.

### ***The performance***

Among the proprieties of the narratives discussed in the framing chapter of this work stands the equivalence between representation – *mimesis* – and narrativity – *diegesis* (Genette 1969, p. 55). “Storytelling thus objectifies its subjects, confers a kind of fixity and stability on them. (...) Tell[ing] a story of the collective “we”, (...) [helps] to bring that identity into being” (Polletta 1998, p. 423). Accordingly, memory emerges from the performance and the signification it produces. Storytelling creates time: according to Ricoeur (1984 [1983]), the narrative configures the perception of the experience of time. Past is composed in the present. No past exists in itself but only through narrative reconstruction (Farrugia 1999, p. 103). Time is a product of narrativity, a constructed yet operative reality (*ibid.*, p. 106). In his performance, Halim expands moments of his represented past, forgets others, organizes the sequence of events, hence forging a specific memory emerging in the present of the storytelling.

The transitions between different focal points in the narrative typify this process. The voiced account alternates the points of view of the teller's past self – the child – and his present one. The remarks about later developments, the analytic return on the situation, the explanation introduced for example about the neighbors' phone call or the local militia-fighters, all belong to the time of the storytelling. Other details directly refer to the experience of the child, such as the concern about the football game. Besides, Halim also integrates a perspective focusing on macro-history, especially when summarizing the happenings – his formula, “*This was February 1, 1990*” – and in the end, when he introduces the events of October 13 and the exile of the General. From the group perspective, these references may work as anchoring devices, allowing collective landmarks in a personal story. The narration presents his interpretation of the origins of the FPM as a social group, largely defined in opposition to the LF.

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<sup>419</sup> For more details on this narrative, see Chapter Six.



Unlike Elza's engagement story, in which emotions were suggested but expressed with distance, Halim's narrative triggered strong feelings to resurface. At several points of the story, he shed tears. The passage from one state to another was sometimes brusque. The worst part to live out was the scene in which the militia-fighter insulted Halim's father and Michel Aoun, even more than the moment when the young boy was physically brutalized. The model conceptualized by Aleida Assmann to understand the emotions embedded in memories offers an interesting perspective here. She differentiates between three processes supporting the inscription of events in the individuals' memory: *Affect*, *Symbol*, and *Trauma* (Assmann 2001). The first element, *Affect*, enables the recovery of emotional memories differentiated from ordinary experiences. *Symbol* refers to the narrative reconstruction of the signification of the memory. Finally, *Trauma* arises when a hypertrophied *Affect* impedes the allocation of meaning: *Trauma* is a failure to integrate a painful story within a coherent narrative.

Commenting on this model, Sune Haugbolle suggests that “Heroic memories allow for a narrative, whereas unheroic memories leave people with a sense of meaninglessness” (Haugbolle 2005, p. 194). Here, it seems possible to propose that Halim actually experienced a *Trauma* on the precise occasion of the flow of insults addressed to his father. He is able to attach signification on the brutal behavior of the militia, inserting his resistance in a heroic narrative. However, he cannot contain his emotions when he recounts the offense against his father. As a child, he may have not been able to understand the source of such an hatred toward his father because of his political affiliation. Contrary to the global social interpretation of the situation as a division between two social groups – one positively evaluated as a figure of identification, the other negatively envisaged – the origin of the detestation exceeds understanding. The moment, experienced as a traumatic event, remained fixed in his memory and resurfaced with all its strength in the storytelling. The *Trauma* has stopped the run of time, past is made present again.

### ***Conclusion: the “point-zero” of identification***

“To know who you *are* is to be oriented in a moral space” (Taylor 1989, p. 28). Here, the story functions as the origin of the universe of signification of the narrator. It constructs an axiologic horizon ordering the global perception of the social world. With the story emerges a situated actor (Ricoeur 1984 [1983]), implicated in a morale layout. The episodes stand as the “point-zero” to use Halim's own expression. Michel de Certeau notes that an event is not what it is possible to observe or to know about it, but what it becomes (de Certeau 1994, p. 51). In Halim's case, the narrated episodes become a source of signification: the understanding of the events turns into an

understanding of the social emanating from the events (Quéré 2006, p. 186). This conception of reality is built through the reconstruction of a living memory. All is represented as if Halim took conscience of his attachment to the FPM as well as of the equivalent existential opposition to the LF during these events. The realization of his affiliation emerges from story. Symbolically, the events turned him into a different man, as metaphorically presented in the episode in which he lost conscience, not recognizing his own mother, before re-emerging. The personal memories are here the condition of cognition and recognition of the sense of collective belonging.

### **C) Beyond life experience: the transcendence of meaning**

Many young activists today do not carry any personal memory of the origins of the FPM and of its rivalry with the Lebanese Forces. How, in this condition, may memory serve as an anchor for identification? The solution lies in the allocation of signification produced by and through narrative representation. To illustrate this process, I focus on a short concrete example.

Nassim was born in 1989 in a Greek-Catholic family. His father was a general in the Lebanese Army and he fought alongside Michel Aoun during the Liberation war and the struggle against the militias. Strongly inserted within the Party, he leads the activities of the FPM group in AUB and participates in the School Committee of the organization. Affable, he expressed at many occasion his despise for the Lebanese Forces during our frequent encounters. On the occasion of our second formal interview, when presented with the word “Baabda”, he commented:

*“D’abord, moi je vis là-bas, c’est la première chose. Ensuite, bien sûr, le président habite là-bas. Troisièmement, on connaît l’histoire du Liban. On sait bien sûr que Baabda, à la fin des années 1980, était le dernier endroit libre dans le territoire libanais, jusqu’au 13 octobre (...).*

*-Tu as vu des images de l’époque?*

*Oui bien sûr, il y a les vidéos, les discours, les manifestations...moi je suis né en 1989, alors je ne suis pas de cette génération, mais il y a des choses que je me rappelle. Pas de 1989, mais quand j’avais trois ans, vers 1992, les gens parlaient. Alors il y a quelque chose de cette époque. Et je pense cette époque, ce n’est pas seulement se rappeler. (...) Ceux qui ont signé l’accord de Taëf, même Samir Geagea, le chef des FL, chacun l’a fait pour son intérêt (...). Ils veulent que le Taëf soit la base de la constitution. (...) Mais dans les faits cette loi ne s’applique pas. Déjà, pourquoi il s’appelle Taëf? Tu trouves normal qu’un accord inter-libanais s’appelle Taëf, une ville d’Arabie Saoudite? Comment moi je peux supporter ça? C’est quelque chose fait*

*par l'Arabie Saoudite avec le feu vert des Américains (...) seulement pour que la Syrie prenne officiellement le Liban. C'est ça.*

*- Quels sont tes premiers souvenirs personnels à propos de la politique?*

Moi, mon père était général dans l'armée libanaise. Alors on était dans un immeuble pour les officiers, à Baabda, près de Jamhour. Je me rappelle très bien que sur chaque porte de l'ascenseur, il y avait un autocollant de Michel Aoun collé sur la porte. Quand ils sont arrivés [après le 13 octobre 1990], les Syriens sont rentrés dans toutes les maisons des officiers pour chercher s'il y a quelque chose de suspect. Ça, c'est une des choses qu'on me racontait, mais bien sûr il y a beaucoup d'autres choses."<sup>420</sup>

“*We know the history of Lebanon*”. This simple statement resonates with a peculiar echo in a country characterized by a total absence of consensus regarding the past. Perceptions of History as well as its scientific study remain deeply impacted by socio-political cleavages. Lebanese Historiography has been unable to escape communal and partisan perspectives (Beydoun 1984). The incapability of the State to spur an agreement on the adoption of a unified History book exemplifies the disintegration of the perceptions of the past (Gilbert-Sleiman 2010). Memory thus appears in Lebanon as a broken mirror, scattered fragments of meaning constituting as many intergroup boundaries. Nassim's assertion perfectly denotes the self-centered apprehension of the past within the various social constituencies. The internal perception adopted here tends to objectify the definition of the events in use within the FPM to present it as a shared truth. The assertion locates the speaker within the cognitive universe of the group, thus exposing Nassim attachment to the Party. Such tendency to adopt auto-centered interpretation of the reality has been analyzed as one of the main features of the socialization within Lebanese political parties (Ishtay 1997). Collective memory surfaces here as a convention uniting all those who adopt the same point of view on history. It serves as a marker of identification: it only acquires value for the group in which it is in use.

In the second paragraph, Nassim makes a short inventory of the vectors of transmission of memory. However, he rapidly suggests that direct memory of the events is not central compared to the signification allocated to it and the imprint it left on people. Halbwachs himself noted in his theory that to be a physical witness of the events is not necessary to develop social memories (Halbwachs 1997 [1950], p. 53). Nassim's assertion that “*Something remains*” directly connects past and present in a common interpretation of the Lebanese socio-political reality. It is possible, he is

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<sup>420</sup> Nassim, interview with the author: October 27, 2010 [in French].

claiming, to be a legitimate FPM activist without having experienced the founding moment of the Party. However, instead of highlighting alternative modes of belonging, he still refers to the 1989 events to insist on the permanence of its signification. Such posture contains the illusion of continuity, which is according to Halbwachs one of the main characteristics of the collective memory: when considering its past, a group thinks about its own perpetuation and the continuation of its cognitive universe (ibid., p. 139-140). It seems possible to propose that for FPM members, the situation opened by the 1989-1990 period remains present as long as it is not associated with a final point. On the contrary, former activists engaged in the episode of Baabda who later parted way with the organization insist on the transformation they perceived in the Party.

*“Baabda, j’y étais. Ce sont les manifestations du Qasr al-Sha’b [Palais du peuple]. (...) C’était un mouvement très spontané, les gens venaient de partout, de tout le Liban. C’est surtout cela, plein de bon souvenirs. C’est symbolique, plein de naïveté aussi. C’est un peu ma jeunesse, naïve et idéalisée. [...] Et puis j’ai trouvé que celui qui nous parlait de laïcité est devenu un chef chrétien comme un autre. Bon, en rupture avec le Patriarche, et ça, ça plaît aussi, moi par exemple je suis anticléricale et pas attachée à ma communauté en tant que telle...mais ça me gêne de voir qu’il ne travaille pas sur son Courant comme institution, comme une structure, mais qu’il met en avant son personnage, son entourage proche. Je vois qu’il tombe un peu dans le piège de ce régime confessionnel. Il est devenu comme les autres, je ne vois pas de différence entre lui et les autres.”<sup>421</sup>*

One year earlier, she already noted:

*“J’ai toujours cette sympathie pour les jeunes et leur mouvement, moins pour Michel Aoun, dont on a vu depuis qu’il est rentré, qu’il faisait des erreurs, qu’il était un politicien comme les autres. (...) Moi, je peux faire au peu une analyse, parce que je suis maintenant une journaliste, que ça a beaucoup évolué dans ma tête. (...) Je trouve que oui, Michel Aoun a changé. Son discours, sa manière de parler, la façon dont il traite les journalistes. C’est un militaire, un petit dictateur en fait...c’est là que le déplacement a commencé à ce faire.”<sup>422</sup>*

Contrary to Nassim, Carole experienced the movement in Baabda. Whereas the young man insisted on the continuation of the signification of the episode, for her it is over. Only a souvenir remains. She tells the story in the past tense, like something gone that cannot be found any more. Michel Aoun is not the providential man she

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<sup>421</sup> Carole, interview with the author: March 8, 2011 [in French].

<sup>422</sup> Carole, interview with the author: April 21, 2010 [in French].

believed at that time, but another Christian politician. Her biographical trajectory – professional but also personal – has uncoupled her self and the Party. For Carole like many others, no continuity exists between the episode of Baabda and the present situation of the FPM. The problem is not to morally judge the evolution, but rather to understand that the perception of change already supposes distance. Every group changes in time as the conditions in which it exists transform. Its relations to other social units are altered. Yet, only detachment allows the actors to perceive such evolution. Personal development, alteration of interactional settings, moral conflicts or competition for power within the group may all result in a hiatus in the identification. As a consequence, some feel that their engagement was betrayed, like BH the Party official who, after failing to win the leader's support for a Parliamentary seat, progressively entered in open conflict with Michel Aoun<sup>423</sup>. This dissociation triggered a negative re-evaluation of the action of the FPM President:

*“Il a trahi les gens! Michel Aoun, le laïc patriote...c'est ça le patriotisme? Chrétien? Oui, moi aussi je suis chrétien, mais il ne s'agit pas de ça. Quand les Chrétiens sont victimes d'une injustice, on les traite exactement de la même manière qu'à propos des autres communautés mais sans plus.”<sup>424</sup>*

Others do simply not identify themselves anymore with the new phase in which the FPM entered after his legalization, without condemning the Party:

*“[En 2005] j'ai commencé à prendre du recul. Je me suis dit qu'il fallait maintenant laisser la place à des gens qu'on appelle des constructeurs de parti. Je voyais la page du militantisme tournée. (...) Je me sentais personnellement d'une école militante, et le militantisme, lorsqu'il s'agit de reconstruire l'économie d'un pays, de construire un pays (...) n'est pas le bien venu. J'étais convaincu que j'ai fait mon travail, que mon devoir était accompli, mon pays était devenu libre”<sup>425</sup>*

The perception of continuity stressed in Nassim's reaction is thus the result of the attachment, and not the cause as it is often claimed among activists. It is not because the movement or Michel Aoun “*stayed the same*” to use the common expression that they maintain their engagement. Rather, they read the coherence of the Party because they are still positioned within the horizon of signification of the group. Collective memory participates in the illusion of permanence because it envisages the past from an internal perspective (Halbwachs 1997 [1950], p. 140). Group members do not

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<sup>423</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>424</sup> BH, interview with the author: March 21, 2010 [in French].

<sup>425</sup> Albert, interview with the author: November 7, 2007 [in French].

perceive the transformations because they occurred progressively: the frame in which they interpreted their relation to the Party never broke. They construct a point of view on memory from their present insertion, actualizing the signification attached to past events.

The reflections Nassim's elaborated about the Taef Agreement clarify this point. Rejected by Michel Aoun and his supporters in 1989, it remains, according to him, still unacceptable today. If the risks of a US sponsored Syrian grip on Lebanon were then the main concerns, Nassim's present position seems to underline more the role of Saudi Arabia. An emphasis that probably has to do with the fierce political rivalry that has developed since 2005 between the FPM and the Future Movement of the Hariri family, who benefits from close ties with the Saudi Kingdom. Whatever Nassim's evolution, at the time of interview, Taef remained a controversial point in the political debate. Ratified on November 5, 1989, the text intended to put an end to internal fighting. Insisting on the importance of coexistence [*al-'aysh al-Mushtarak*], it implemented the balancing of the political powers between communities by substituting equity between Christians and Muslims to the former Six to-Five ratio in favor of Christians in the Cabinet, the Parliament, and in high administration. It however transferred the majority of the attributes of the Maronite President of the Republic to the council of Ministers and in practice to its President, a Sunni Muslim. This last element associated with the implicit recognition of the presence of the Syrian troops in Lebanon led to the strong rejection of the agreement by Michel Aoun and many of his supporters.

In postwar Lebanon, the Christian populations in general perceived the document as the symbol of their political and social downgrading (Picard 1996). Although adopted as the basis of the new constitution installing from August 1990 the Second Republic, the "Document of National Understanding" remained unfulfilled: the articles organizing the secularization of the political system were never implemented. Since its official formation, the FPM has campaigned for a Third Republic, i.e. the reform of the Taef Agreement, which was, as recently as March 19, 2013, publicly denounced by Michel Aoun as "*a bunch of garbage*"<sup>426</sup>. In the sectarian political system, the FPM has adopted the position of representative of the Christian segments. As did Rafiq Hariri (Gervais 2012, p. 135), Michel Aoun seems to have abandoned his ambitions of national leadership to rather embody a "communal patriotism". In its view, the inscription of Taef in the constitution constitutes an obstacle to the program of political re-empowerment of the Christian communities sponsored by the Party. From

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<sup>426</sup> See *L'Orient le Jour* : March 20, 2013.

a symbol of the Syrian occupation, the Agreement became more the exemplification of the dominated position of the Christians and the negative influence of Saudi Arabia via their Lebanese proxy of the Future Movement. The emphasis in the denunciation slightly shifted to match present issues but the Agreement as such continues to serve as a repulsive reference. The episode opened by its adoption in 1989 is thus not considered terminated. The memory of this past event consequently retains currency to interpret the present situation and the relative position of the FPM in the intergroup interactions.

The last part of Nassim's interview presents interesting developments. In the opening comment, he links his first personal memories about politics to the affiliation of his father to the Army. A Greek-Catholic, he was a companion of Edgar Maalouf, member of the military council of the Army as representative of the Melkites<sup>427</sup> and consequently minister in Aoun's government. Then, he introduces the remembering of pictures marking the adhesion of his neighbors to the cause of the General but only to immediately mixing this with another story transmitted to him orally. The search of the lodgings of the military officers did happen. I collected direct testimonies from older people whose parents belonged to the Army describing the panic caused by the Syrian initiative and the subsequent hiding of any object that could link the family to the General Aoun. However, due to his age, it is impossible that Nassim remembers the episode. As he acknowledges himself, it is a told story. The living memory, understood as the personal representation of memory carried by an individual, is thus in itself more than a collection of actual past experiences. The impact of inherited stories logically underlines the articulation between biographical and collective perceptions of the past, revealing the role of interface played by the collective memory: as conceptualized by Halbwachs, personal memory represents one specific point of view in a socially mediated horizon, inseparable from the socialization of the individual.

From the perspective of the collective memory – that is the representation of the past from the perspective of the partisan group – the past is not a terminated time. The activists attach great signification to the past because it still informs the present construction of their self. History, for them, is not closed. They retell the past, re-create the memory to sustain their present identification. While Carole builds a personal memory of Baabda, operative as an historical memory – i.e. focused on a past and gone perspective – Nassim constructs a collective memory, which actualizes the signification attached to the group, envisaged from the perspective of the present.

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<sup>427</sup> In Lebanon, designation of the Greek-Catholic community.

Similarly, Halim and Elza explain their trajectory from episodes linking their personal biography to the collective trajectory of the Party. Memory is thus for them a considerable source of meaning, the horizon in which they incorporate their selves. As a consequence, their narratives mirror a search for coherence. The connection between their own experiences and the fate of the group relies on a general emplotment that ensures the integration of plural episodes and multiple life stories within a shared narrative.

## 2. COLLECTIVE MEMORY AS AN INTRIGUE

The interpretation of the reality orders the narrative representation of biographical experiences, which aims at asserting and legitimizing a social positioning defined by partisan bonds. Narrativity typifies the appropriation and public display of identification conceptualized by Harré (1983, p. 84)<sup>428</sup>: young activists selected elements and incorporated them within what they presented as a collective horizon of meaning. They propose their own interpretation of this shared horizon in the interview situation. The publication of their sense of belonging creates the partisan community as it materializes their adhesion to one definition of the re-memorized past, thus constructing their social identity (Farrugia 1999, p. 104). The collective memory and the corresponding social identity are thus constituted by the individual narrative mediation of the auto-proclaimed and recognized members: “It is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world; and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities” (Somers 1994, p. 606).

However, Maurice Halbwachs noted that the collective memory is not the simple addition of its individual components. If the personal representations constitute the “micro-foundations of the system”<sup>429</sup> of meaning, the collective memory acquires its own dynamics. The question of articulation between the two analytical scales – the individual and the social – resurfaces. Individuals are constituted by a variety of social experiences and relations – i.e. the socialization. They are what their multiple experiences made of them. Thus they do not represent the basic unit of the social, but rather incarnate “complex composites of heterogeneous experiences” (Lahire 1999, p. 34). Each actor is traversed by the multiple social realities. The narrative approach enables to understand how these social realities are concretely internalized by

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<sup>428</sup> See the Framing Chapter of this work.

<sup>429</sup> The formulation paraphrases an expression used by Gérard Lenclud (1993, § 2).



individuals, hence answering one of the main limits of the theories of socialization (ibid., p. 37). The multiple social realities are organized in reference with “ontological narratives” (Somers 1994, p. 618), featuring a specific emplotment: “the stories that social actors use to make sense of – indeed, to act in – their lives. Ontological narratives are used to define who we are; this in turn can be a precondition for knowing what to do. (...) Ontological narratives are, above all, social and interpersonal. (...) [A]gents adjust stories to fit their own identities, and, conversely, they will tailor “reality” to fit their stories.” (ibid.)

In turn, ontological narratives are incarnated in “public narratives”, “inter-subjective webs of relationality” attached to “cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual, to inter-subjective networks or institutions” (ibid., p. 619). While Halbwachs theorized his conception of collective memory on the basis of “social frames”, re-introducing the notion of narrative adds the dimension of emplotment at the level of the social i.e. ontological and public narratives. As the personal stories were constructed upon specific plots, the reference mobilized by the individual actors to publicize their appropriation of the social identity in which they anchor their self are as well organized along an intrigue. Emplotment makes the differentiation between narrative and frame (Polletta 1998, p. 421). To study the articulation between individual and social scales at the center of the socialization process, I suggest to reconstruct the plot of the ontological narratives and public narratives that inform the sense of self of FPM activists, and to locate “the crucial intersection of these narratives with the other relevant social forces.” (Somers 1994, p. 620)

An institution, the FPM is supported by a normative public narrative about its “identity” – a model of interpretation proposed to the members through a set of socialization devices<sup>430</sup>. This public narrative is sustained by a sequence of central events presented as the typification of the social identity of the group. The official history of the FPM is organized in three periods: the rise of the movement and its initial struggle (1988-1990), the clandestine mobilization (1990-2005), and the formation of the Party (from 2005). By mobilizing this succession of episodes and submitting it to the evaluation of the student activists, I precisely intended to study the intersection between personal stories about the past, the public narrative of the Party, and the ontological narratives inspiring them.

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<sup>430</sup> See Chapter Three.

## A) Exploring the partisan emplotment of memory

During my inquiry, I decided to focus on these eras as well as the key events marking the transitions between the periods: March 14, 1989, the beginning of the anti-Syrian war and highpoint of the 1988-1990 moment; October 13, 1990, the fall of Aoun's government and the opening of the secret resistance against the regime sponsored by Damascus; August 7, 2001, climax of the repression against the FPM clandestine organization in Lebanon, symbol of the activism of the 1990-2005 years; and finally May 7, 2005, the return of the General that led to the subsequent integration of the FPM in the political system. I used these four dates as symbols to elucidate stories about the perceptions of the successive sequences of the partisan history. If the selection of the events is too some extend arbitrary, it nonetheless echoes the production of the past realized by the partisan organization. The examination of the narratives produced in reference with those episodes aims at unveiling the construction of a shared rhythm in the event sequence. The reactions reproduced here are taken from four interviews of student activists, two from LU, one of USJ and AUB.

### *The cast*

Michel (UL)<sup>431</sup> was born in the early 1980s, in a family originating from Zahleh, in the Beqaa, and strongly attached to Bachir Gemayel and the Kata'eb party (especially his father who participated alongside the Phalanges in the 1975-1977 war against the Palestinian organizations) before supporting Aoun's movement from 1988. Michel joined the FPM in 1999 after coming to Beirut for his studies in the Lebanese University. The situation in his home town, strongly controlled by the Syrians, impeded any engagement before. He first came in contact with FPM members in the university but developed stronger relations with activists through the civil movement that had developed in the late 1990s<sup>432</sup>, in particular within *Huqûq al-Nâs* [Rights of the people] campaigning for human rights, secularism, and civil society in Lebanon. His opposition to the Syrian presence in Lebanon was, according to him, his main motivation. After he finished his studies – he did a specialization in USJ in 2008 – he worked for various newspapers (*al-Nahâr*, *al-Balad*, etc.) and was finally recruited by the Issam Farès Center, a research institute founded by a former deputy Prime minister. Michel has occupied various positions within the FPM, especially in the region of Zahleh.

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<sup>431</sup> All Michel's quotations in the following developments come from the interview held on: March 6, 2009 [in French].

<sup>432</sup> For details on the civil movement in postwar Lebanon, see Karam 2006.

Joseph (UL)<sup>433</sup>, born in 1991. He engaged in the FPM in the wake of the 2005 events. He lives in Adma, Kesrwan, with his father, a man without any activist background. Studying in the faculty of Engineering of Roumieh, he was educated in the Mont-la-Salle high school, an elite catholic institution located in Ayn al-Saadeh (Metn). He engaged in political activities mainly in the context of the university but nonetheless participated in other partisan mobilizations such as the demonstrations of December 2006 against the March 14 government and commemorations of October 13. Charles de Gaulle stands out as an inspiring historical character to him, as well as general Fuad Chehab depicted as the best president Lebanon ever had, because of his effort to create an institutional State.

Jacques (USJ)<sup>434</sup> was born in 1984. He studied in Mont-la-Salle before joining USJ from which he graduated in 2008. Like Michel Aoun, his family originates from Haret Hreik, in the Southern suburbs of Beirut. His father became acquainted with the General, all the more since they were both supportive of the National Bloc (*al-Kutla al-Wataniyya*)<sup>435</sup>. When Michel Aoun was nominated Prime minister, Jacques's father joined the BCCN, the Central Office of National Coordination. Jacques had thus frequented the Baabda Palace from an early age. He was later recruited while in high school, influenced by a monitor strongly involved within the FPM, who used to distribute leaflets to the students. Jacques participated in most of the demonstrations organized by the movement from the early 2000. After graduation, he had to leave the country to work, but continues to occasionally assist his fellows during his stays in Lebanon.

Issam (AUB)<sup>436</sup>, born in 1990. His parents have a long history of activism. Students, they were engaged in Christian movements: his father in the *Tanzîm*, his mother in the Women Committee of the Kata'eb (*Maktab al-Nissâ'i*). After graduation, they joined a computer company owned by the Lebanese Forces during the 1980s. Both accompanied Aoun's arrival in 1988 with enthusiasm. After October 13, they participated in the clandestine actions against the Syrian presence in Lebanon organized by the supporters of the General. Issam was consequently socialized in culture of activism from an early aged. He started politics himself at school, in

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<sup>433</sup> All Joseph's quotations in the following developments come from the interview held on: March 19, 2011 [in French].

<sup>434</sup> All Jacques's quotations in the following developments come from the interview held on: April 30, 2008 [in French].

<sup>435</sup> For a presentation of the National Bloc, see Chapter Three.

<sup>436</sup> All Issam's quotations in the following developments come from the interview held on: October 29, 2010 [in French].

Gemmayzeh's Saints-Coeurs high-school, in the wave of the 2005 “Beirut Spring”. He then became one of the leading figures of the FPM in AUB while also supporting the Party's School Committee.

The profiles thus vary in their backgrounds and present situations. The interviews were also conducted in different periods of fieldwork, so as to neutralize potential contextual effects.

### **March 14, 1989: a starting point**

Michel: “(...) *Le 14 mars, c’est notre rêve. Il y a une chanson qui dit: 'Révoltez-vous, révoltez-vous un seul instant, envahissez les places, disons d’une seule voix non, mon peuple qui ne se révolte pas tu resteras sous le joug, tu vas rester brisé'. C’est un appel pour le changement, pour la révolution, et cette chanson est parue en 1989 dans une manifestation à Nahr al-Kalb, cette place très symbolique au Liban où les troupes qui occupaient le Liban ont laissé des plaques pour l’Histoire (...). Quelle comparaison entre les Français et les Syriens...mais cette chanson, il faut la traduire, c’est Rabih el-Khawly qui l’a chantée. En Arabe, elle s’appelle 'Yâ nâtrîn, shû nâtrîn'. Le titre veut dire: 'Ceux qui attendent, qu’est-ce que vous attendez?' (...).”*

Joseph: “*14 Mars 1989, le jour où le Général Michel Aoun a déclaré la guerre de Libération contre la Syrie. Peu de gens le soutenaient et il savait qu’une guerre contre un pays comme la Syrie, compte tenu du rapport de force, ne serait sans doute pas une guerre victorieuse. Mais c’est une date pour l’histoire, une date pour marquer cette époque pour dire que lui, cet homme, est libre, ne s’est pas soumis à tout ce que l’on a voulu lui imposer. On lui a dit de devenir président, il a refusé. C’est ça essentiellement. Et le fruit de ce 14 Mars, c’est le 14 Mars 2005 (...).”*

Jacques: “*C’est le palais de Baabda...c’est le rêve pour moi depuis mon enfance, le rêve de chacun au CPL et même de la plupart des Libanais. Le rêve, je veux dire Michel Aoun au palais de Baabda, c’est le Liban dont on rêve...un Liban constitutionnel, un Liban purement libanais...un vrai pays. [...] Le 14 mars, c’est le CPL! Je ne veux pas utiliser un terme des FL – parce qu’ils le disent souvent – mais c’est la flamme du CPL. Le 14 mars 1989, ça représente le seul leader qui a défendu le Liban...même si on n’a pas gagné la guerre. On a gagné après quinze ans, après avoir milité pour quinze ans. On a refait le 14 mars dont on rêvait en 1989. Ça a coûté très cher, beaucoup de soldats sont morts, beaucoup encore prisonniers dans les prisons syriennes, et d’autres disparus (...). Le 14 mars n’est pas terminé maintenant, aujourd’hui on lutte pour libérer les esprits. On a libéré le territoire et maintenant on doit libérer les esprits, initier une nouvelle mentalité pour les Libanais (...).”*

Issam: *“Ça représente le jour où le Général a annoncé la guerre contre les troupes syriennes en 1989. C'est pour moi un jour où on a vraiment montré au monde que s'il y a une volonté libanaise résolue et libre, on peut faire quelque chose. C'était la première fois que quelqu'un avait osé dire non contre les projets que les grandes nations préparaient pour nous. Ça représente le jour où, chaque année, le 14 mars, après 1990, les jeunes descendaient dans la rue pour défier les forces de sécurité libanaises et syriennes, les services de renseignement (...). Je me souviens particulièrement du 14 mars 2004 (...). Il y avait aussi des gens des FL qui participaient mais ils se sont retirés car (...) parce qu'ils avaient passé un deal avec le pouvoir. Je me souviens très bien de ce jour. Et il y a bien sûr le 14 mars 2005. Ça a été comme si ils ont arraché de ce jour son vrai esprit, son esprit pur (...) – l'esprit libre, l'esprit qui, face au mal, face au danger, face à la menace sur [la] souveraineté de notre pays, se révolte et ose appeler les choses par leur nom.”*

The dimensions sketched by the stories elucidated in reference with March 14, 1989, are twofold. First, the day of the beginning of the Liberation war is mobilized as a symbol of the “Free Lebanon”. “A day for history” and exemplification of a cause, March 14, 1989, is described from a symbolical perspective. The war in itself is not at the center of the stories. Like Jacques, who talks about a dream, Michel insists on the ignition of the revolution, a dream of unity and popular participation. The demonstration he notes is known as “the Liberty Festival” (Bourre 1990, p. 176). It took place in the archeological site of Nahr al-Kalb – designated after the name of the river separating Greater Beirut from its northern periphery. In itself, the site consists in a series of engraved inscriptions hewn into the hill slopes dominating the river. Carved into the rock, twenty-two messages commemorate the passage of the successive rulers of the land, the more ancient dating back from Ramses II. After the French mandate officially ended in 1943, the first President of the Republic, Bishara al-Khoury, inaugurated a monument proclaiming the departure of the French troops on December 31, 1946. The site thus became a symbol of national independence (Volk 2008, p. 302). The supporters of the General thus organized a demonstration to call for the withdrawal of the Syrian army. On the occasion, the singer Rabih al-Khawli interpreted the song “*Yâ Natrîn*” composed by Elias al-Rahbani. The song is a call for mobilization in favor of Aoun's government. Focusing on the theme of engagement, it echoes two representations incorporated to the FPM narrative identity: the assertion of a link between Aoun's movement and the “silent majority”, defined as the middle-class population in opposition to the *za'rân* of the militia, and the refusal of discouragement, *ihbât*, that prevailed during the 1990 decade, especially among the Christian populations (Labaki 2008, p. 105).

Second, March 14, 1989, is described as a starting point. Joseph, Jacques, and Issam adopt a perspective unifying the battle initiated in 1989 to the civil movement of the 1990s and the outcome of the “Beirut Spring” in 2005. Though a military defeat at its time, the Liberation war is symbolically prolonged and transformed into a success, reversing the course of history. The event is thus the departure of the FPM struggle for the liberation of the territory and beyond, as Jacques's reflection about the Party's official slogan “from liberation to emancipation” illustrates, its entire *raison d'être*, its political identity. This role of starting point in the sequence of the partisan history is exemplified by the evocations of commemorations voiced by Jacques (through the symbol of the “flame”) and Issam (through the narration of the demonstrations). As such, it conveys a dual legitimation of the event. A legitimation of the FPM past first. While Aoun's decision to declare war against Syria is subjected to controversy in the Christian political milieu, in Joseph's testimony, the General foresaw the military defeat but decided to wage a symbolic war. The binding of March 14, 1989, to the Beirut Spring aims at asserting the success of the enterprise after all. Then, it intends to build a present-day legitimacy for the FPM against its political opponents.

Initially, the FPM activists took part in the “Beirut Spring”, playing a central role in the organization of the mobilization (Chaoul 2005, p. 94). Because of the symbolic importance of the date, marking both the declaration of the Liberation war against the Syrian troops and the first month after Hariri's assassination, March 14 turned out as the climax of the anti-Syrian demonstrations. However, in spite of the massive participation of *Aounists*, the dominant political figures rallied to the cause – mainly Walid Joumblatt and Saad Hariri – chose to ally with Hezbollah and Amal for the upcoming general elections while surfing on the “March 14” label. FPM followers blamed their adversaries for having collaborated with the Syrian authorities in Lebanon for years before climbing on the bandwagon after Hariri's murder. The struggle for the signification of the episode evoked by Jacques and Issam denotes the insertion of an event in an open sequence of meaning: the delimitation of the significance is not fixed once for all when the episode unfolds. The narrative about the past is constantly transformed according to more recent developments (Valensi 1992). The political cleavage between the FPM and the rest of the March 14 coalition in 2005 generates a transformation of the meaning of the popular gathering: from a symbol of unity underlined at the time (Chaoul 2005, p. 91) that matched the image of the 1989-1990 period in the FPM narrative, it turned into the exemplification of treason and misappropriation. The “discontinuity of the event” (Quéré 2006, p. 193) manifests the ascendancy of the present perspective in the construction of a collective memory.

**October 13, 1990: the mask is dropped**

Michel: *“C'est le pire scénario, c'est la mort...mais aussi la renaissance, comme dans la légende d'Adonis, la résurrection, comme Jésus Christ. On était battus mais on allait continuer la lutte et accomplir notre but. (...) Mais en ce jour-là, je me souviens des avions syriens, les Sukhoïs, qui venaient des montagnes, de la chaîne Est comme on dit ici au Liban, pour bombarder le palais présidentiel de Baabda et le ministère de la Défense. C'est (...) une défaite complète...le discours du Général qui capitule, assiégé. C'est le jour des martyrs qui sont restés au combat jusqu'à la mort (...).”*

Joseph: *“C'est le massacre de l'histoire récente du Liban...c'est quand tout le monde s'est mis d'accord pour écraser une armée qui veut défendre son pays. Et malheureusement, le pouvoir des armes était plus fort que la volonté et l'honnêteté. Il y a eu des massacres en ce jour, perpétrés par l'étranger comme par l'intérieur, et tout le monde a participé au départ de Michel Aoun de la vie politique du pays. Et quand je dis Michel Aoun, je ne veux pas simplement dire sa personne, mais je veux dire lui et tout le courant qu'il guide.”*

Jacques: *“C'est comme un phœnix, l'oiseau, qui renaît de ses cendres...le CPL aussi a continué. Il a commencé le 14 mars et là, il a survécu. C'était un coup violent, militaire et politique, mais on a trouvé quelques âmes qui ont continué l'esprit du Général, incarné en eux...ils ont continué la lutte contre l'occupation syrienne...”*

- Tu te rappelles du jour ?

Non. *Je ne me rappelle pas du jour mais je me rappelle du visage de mon père qui pleurait. J'avais alors six ans et quand je l'ai vu pleurer, j'ai pleuré aussi. Il m'a dit : 'Le Liban est perdu'. Quand tu me dis 13 octobre 1990, je fais un flash-back sur les photos des soldats qui ont donné tout ce qu'ils pouvaient, qui se battaient avec tout ce qu'ils trouvaient parce qu'il n'y avait plus d'armes, rien. Je me souviens du discours du Général quand il a demandé le repli et donné le commandement à Emile Lahoud. C'est tout [silence]”*

Issam: *“Le 13 octobre, c'est le jour où pour moi on a vu la fusion entre le sang et les principes que le Général et avec lui les Libanais défendaient. C'est le jour où on a montré que non, c'était vraiment sérieux, il n'était pas question de se retirer, que perdre cette bataille était une décision réfléchie, que l'on était très conscient de ce que l'on faisait. Cette détermination, elle s'est manifestée à travers ces soldats et ces jeunes qui combattaient et dont un grand nombre est devenu martyr le 13 octobre. C'est aussi un jour où tous les participants à cette conspiration ont été mis à jour, clairement. On les a vu. Il y avait tout le monde contre Michel Aoun. C'était le jour où tout est devenu très clair: les USA, la Syrie, Israël, l'Arabie Saoudite, les FL, Rafiq Hariri, Amal, les Socialistes, toutes ces factions! (...) On a vu que les autorités*

*religieuses comme le patriarche Sfeir, les partis, les présidents, tous étaient partie prenante de la conspiration, sauf ces gens qui combattaient le 13 octobre, l'armée et les supporters de l'armée, ainsi que les gens qui ont pleuré ce jour là. Tandis que d'autres comme May Chidiac<sup>437</sup>, à Jounieh, célébrait une bouteille de champagne à la main”.*

Strongly correlated with the rhetoric of Death, the general perception of October 13 typifies the fall. This negative episode represents the vanishing of the reality as constructed during the 1988-1990 era. The narratives demonstrate how the affirmation of a collective experience sustains the framing of the signification of the event beyond individual plurality. Three themes, all articulated to Death, participate in the integration of October 13 to the FPM identity narrative.

The first thematic is defeat. Joseph and Issam especially draw a horizon dominated by a general conspiracy. According to their narratives, October 13 is considered the moment when the hidden felony of the enemies of the *Aounist* movement appears in full light. “The mask is dropped”, to refer to a famous song interpreted by Majida al-Roumi, one of the most famous singer in the whole Middle East, deeply engaged with the General's cause (Lombardo 2005, p. 56-57), *Saqata al-Kina'*. In Issam words, the glorification of the Lebanese Army in which Christians and Muslims coexist contrasts with the denunciation of the conspirators. Lebanon is described as the victim of an odious international bargaining. The rhetoric of the conspiracy, a classical trope in political mythologies (Dechezelles 2006, p. 427), not only exonerates the group from auto-criticism but furthermore designates the out-group as an enemy and echoes the common perception of internal violence as the result of a “*war of the others*”. The formulation was coined by the diplomat and journalist Ghassan Tueni as the title of a book he published in 1985. This definition of the Lebanese wars as a “war of the others” emerged mainly in the Christian milieu, rejecting the internal malfunctioning of the Lebanese system to blame the importation of the Cold war, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Arab rivalries in Lebanon as the central cause of the violence. The thesis was that the weakness of the Lebanese State made it vulnerable to these external pressures. “Tueni unwittingly gave birth to a very convenient (...) popular mythology of the war.” (Haugbolle 2010, p. 14) In the case of October 13, the guilt is rejected not only upon external actors but also upon unpatriotic traitors, favoring their own interests over the general wealth of the nation.

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<sup>437</sup> May Chidiac is a famous journalist of the LBC – the Television network created by the Lebanese Forces during the war. A prominent member of the March 14 coalition, she was victim of an attempted murder in the aftermaths of the Syrian withdrawal in 2005.



In Jacques's story, the emotional transitivity between the father and his son translates the transfer of memory from one generation to the next. The qualification that "*Lebanon is lost*" recalls a group-centered definition of nationalism: competing perceptions of the country are created from the perspectives of the various sub-societies composing the nation. "*We all want Lebanon, but none of us wants the same one*"<sup>438</sup> told me one of my interviewees referring to the political divergences between parties.

The second theme is sacrifice. Moreover, since October 13, FPM has claimed that the Syrian invasion was followed by massacres. Private memories echo this claim, though the historical occurrence and amplitude of such events is difficult to establish, a situation fueling a war of memories between partisan self-referential definitions of the past. In the FPM community, medias have tried to document the reality of executions. An Internet site affiliated to the Party and specialized in wartime violence reports the existence of several cases, the most important being situated in Bsous, a village situated on the border between the district of Baabda and the region of Aley. According to this source, some fifteen civilians were executed by Syrian soldiers<sup>439</sup>. An activist originating from this small town evoked "thirteen martyrs in the village"<sup>440</sup>. Some humanitarian organizations also asserted that around 250 unarmed Lebanese soldiers were killed after their surrender<sup>441</sup>.

The commemoration of the episode and its Martyrs plays an important part in the ongoing reconstruction of the meaning of the event and its insertion within the Party's public narrative. The notion of "Martyr" is polymorphic, especially when a religious dimension is introduced. However, in the context of the Lebanese partisan societies, a Martyr usually designates any member of the group killed in a military operation, whether he or she was a fighter or a civilian affiliated with the party. The trivialization of the use of the term in the country however tends to empty the word of its meaning. The evocation of the Martyrs has become a figure constructing intergroup fragmentation. The commemoration of the Martyrs started during the first years of the Lebanese wars, with the edification of monuments by the various armed groups (Mermier 2010, p. 185): the Kata'eb, the PSP, the SSNP, Communist Party, or Amal, followed by the later created Lebanese Forces and Hezbollah. Such practice favored

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<sup>438</sup> Emile, interview with the author: November 12, 2007 [in French].

<sup>439</sup> See: <http://www.liberty05.com/civilwar/civil5.html> [April 2013]

<sup>440</sup> Justine, interview with the author: October 24, 2007 [in French].

<sup>441</sup> See: Human Rights Watch World Report 1990 (1991, p. 507). Moreover, in November 2005, a mass grave was discovered in the Ministry of Defense in Yarzeh, containing the corpses of seventeen soldiers.

the establishment of irreconcilable conceptions of the past along partisan and sectarian lines. It also anchors the identity of the movement in the memory of violence.

During the 1990-2005 era, the commemorations of October 13 were for FPM activists occasions to demonstrate and to challenge the Lebanese authorities. After the Syrian withdrawal however, official mobilizations were organized. They usually consisted in a gathering in which Michel Aoun pronounced a speech, followed by a Mass and a visit to the family of the Martyrs. The objective seemed mainly internal and only in 2006 was a demonstrative event organized (Ruiz Herrero 2010, p. 112). Certainly, the evolution of the political configuration played a role in the relatively low profile of the commemorations as the progressive rapprochement between the FPM and the Syrian regime made insistence on their past confrontation uneasy. However, the commemorations have continued, illustrating their crucial role in the internal economy of the group. They enable to trace back the history of the Party to its origins and to reinforce its public narrative. The pivotal position of the commemoration of October 13 as legitimizing device was demonstrated by the attempts of FPM dissidents to capture the signification of the event. It was especially the case in 2010: while the official FPM celebrated the memory of the fall of Baabda in Hadath (Southern Suburb), a dissident split-off named the Movement for Change led by a former follower of Michel Aoun, Elie Mahfud, set up its own memorial in the Saint Elie church of Antelias, in the Northern outskirts of the capital. The place chosen by the dissidence allied with the March 14 coalition and denouncing in particular the political positioning adopted by the General since his return, was symbolic as the Saint Elie church used to be the location of the commemorations at the time of the Syrian rule<sup>442</sup>.

The third and last theme is resurrection. The intention of the partisan narrative identity to link the first two phases of the history of the movement transforms this end into a step, an interface between two realities of the FPM: an idealistic birth in full light that culminates in the dual wars engaged against Syria and the militias and a progressive reconstruction in the shadows associated with a new kind of fighting. The posterior resurrection imprinted a new hopeful signification to the defeat. A plurality of symbolic horizons is convoked to assert the mythical dimension of the episode. Michel evokes the legend of Adonis – interestingly an Oriental divinity integrated into the Greek pantheon but also the name of a river in Mount Lebanon today known as *Nahr Ibrahim*. Adonis succumbed because of a ruse of Artemis (or Ares, depending on the version of the myth) who, jealous of Aphrodite's love for the young god, sent a wild boar to attack him. Adonis died in the arms of Aphrodite, who added Nectar to

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<sup>442</sup> See *L'Orient le Jour*: October 13, 2010.

the blood of his beloved. From his blood, as it touched the ground, sprang the anemone flower, symbolizing the delicate renaissance after death. Michel remark about the resurrection of the Christ assumes a comparable image of salvation through blood and suffering. The image of the Phoenix voiced by Jacques represents another declination of the myth of renaissance. The symbol of this long-lived bird that is cyclically regenerated or reborn echoes a slogan in the demonstrations around Baabda in 1989-1990: “*Sabbo faw'ak al-Nâr*” – reborn from the ashes (Bourre 1990, p. 210), the title of a song by Sabah Zay al-'Asal, a famous Lebanese artist, supportive of Aoun's cause in 1989. The story of the Phoenix, strongly connected to the cycle of life and especially to the Sun, dying every night to reborn on the morning, can be found in many mythologies: Persian, Greek, or Hebraic – a creature named “*Khôl*”, the only bird that did not eat the forbidden fruit after Adam and Eve's fault according to the exegesis of the Genesis (Midrash Rabbah, Genesis, 19, 5). Mentioned in the Talmud, the bird was adopted as a symbol in Early Christianity.

The memory of October 13 constructs the confrontation of the group with its own death. The amount of details – the localization of the planes, their type, the radio-diffused speech of Michel Aoun – incrustated in the narration typifies the centrality of the story in the narrative identity of the group, especially for those among members who have experienced the event. For the younger members, collective canons also strongly organize the narrations through the actualization of the past event in present-day oppositions as illustrated in Issam's description. The partisan construction of memory thus offers a frame for the personal appropriation of the meaning of the event and the integration of biographical experiences within this common cognitive space. As such, it allows the projection of the self within a shared universe of signification.

The publication of the perceptions of October 13 demonstrates the capability of a party or social movement to get over a failure. According to Francesca Polletta the narrative perspective enables to understand better this dimension that has been often neglected in the sociology of mobilization (Polletta 1998, p. 430). The ability to overcome such traumatizing event as October 13 partly relies on the capacity to inscribe the failure into a sequence of signification surpassing the setback. The survival of *Aounism* partly stems from its ability to transfer the meaning of the defeat in a unfinished chain of events. The trope of death and renaissance perfectly performs the function: the construction of a public narrative about October 13 actualizes it not as an ultimate failure but rather a painful yet necessary step proving the superior moral value of the group members and opening a new era.

### **August 7, 2001: a necessary step**

Michel: *“Malgré que nous ayons été emprisonnés ce jour-là, (...) comme en 1990, de nouveau on a continué. Nous n’avons pas arrêté notre résistance. Cet événement, ce jour-là nous a donné plus de force pour continuer notre lutte. C’est la première fois que je me trouve emprisonné, avec les copains, avec mes camarades. Je suis fier d’avoir été avec eux. Vraiment, en prison, nous sommes restés seize jours, et je ne trouve pas des personnes disant qu’ils voulaient être libérés (...).”*

Joseph: *“C’est un jour qui a aussi beaucoup marqué ceux qui luttait contre l’occupation syrienne dans une lutte de quinze ans. Le 7 août, tout le monde, tous les responsables officiels du Liban, pas les responsables que le peuple voulait, se sont mis d’accord et se sont soumis aux Syriens. Même s’ils savaient que ce qu’ils faisaient n’était pas juste car ce n’étaient que des jeunes qui manifestaient pour dire que leur pays n’était pas libre (...). Mais c’est bien d’avoir des jours tels que le 7 août, quand on vit maintenant la période actuelle. C’est important de voir qu’il y a vraiment des gens patriotiques, des gens qui ont vraiment voulu un Liban libre.”*

Jacques: *“C’est une des étapes que les jeunes du CPL devaient accomplir. C’était comme un carême si tu veux. C’était un honneur pour eux de faire cela quand ils étaient les seuls à faire cela, les seuls à lutter contre l’occupation syrienne. On voit aujourd’hui les hommes au pouvoir, les gens du Futur et du PSP [deux des partis principaux de la coalition du 14 Mars à l’époque], essayer de nous faire croire que le 7 août, c’est eux. Ils volent cette date. Le 7 août ressemble un peu au 13 octobre, mais politiquement.(...) J’étais là-bas moi, sur le terrain, lors de la deuxième manifestation du 9 août. Mais quand j’ai vu ce qui se passait, je me suis réfugié dans une poubelle. Quand je suis rentré à la maison, je suis resté toute la journée dans ma chambre à pleurer parce que deux de mes amis proches ont été arrêtés.”*

Issam: *“Le 7 août, je me rappelle un peu plus que les autres dates. (...) Je n’y étais pas personnellement, j’avais 11 ou 12 ans, je n’étais pas pleinement conscient de ce qui se passait mais je me souviens de ce jour parce que le mari de ma tante avait sa voiture garé à 'Adliyah. Il est lui dans la Sureté Générale. Je me souviens qu’ils ont parlé du fait que sa voiture est sur les images passées à la TV. Je m’en souviens très bien. (...) C’est aussi l’année où le site Internet tayar.org a été lancé je crois. C’était dans les premiers mois du site et ils ont mis les photos des gens qui ont battus les jeunes avec leurs noms. Et je me souviens aussi de ce que mes parents disaient. (...) Je me souviens de leur discussions sur comment ça s’était passé, sur le fait que Rafiq Hariri (...) donnait tous les ordres.”*

August 7 symbolizes a moment of transition, a time of struggle envisaged as the path to salvation of the cause. This phase is populated by new characters incarnating the ideal role-model of the activist, a collective heroic figure inspiring the right way to

follow. Together, the stories about August 7, 2001, design a dual thematic. First, the arrest of most of the members of the semi-clandestine organization is represented as a collective experience. The elder one were participating and thus have a direct memory of the event. Michel uses the plural pronoun “we” and insists on the solidarity between “comrades”. Jacques mentions that he was present. *A contrario*, his incapacity to fulfill the role-model of the activist introduced a break in the sharing of the experience, thus nourishing the regret of the young man, conscious that he did not fully participate to this collective narrative<sup>443</sup>. For Joseph and Issam, the experience and signification of the event is mediated by television, photos, and family members. Symbolic meaning is allocated as a mean to transcend the physical absence. August 7 serves then as a basis for a social map that positions the political actors along a clear line separating the morally superior FPM activists from the “collaborators”. The present-day significance of the episode is stressed accordingly to deny the public narrative built by the March 14 coalition around their role in the 2005 uprising and their constant defense of the national interest since then. The fact that Issam and Joseph did not experience personally the demonstration implies that they stress a more general signification related to the contemporary political configuration and introduced as the morale of the episode.

A second dimension of the August 7 narrative involves the idea of purification through suffering. Metaphorically, the experience of imprisonment is depicted by Michel as a suffering from which the power arises to fight against the contested regime. The image seems to parallel the Christian teaching according to which salvation comes from pain. Similarly, Jacques identifies the pain caused by repression with “Lent”, a religious act of expiation and purification. In the horizon of the internal economy of the group, the narration echoes the group style inspired by the activist background, made of solidarity, readiness to support the punishment of the enemy, and appreciation of the suffering endured for the cause. Joseph, although not participating, stresses in the same way that the events like August 7 – i.e. the civil protests and the confrontation with repression – enabled the emergence of “Free Lebanon”.

### ***May 7, 2005: a dream returns***

Michel: *“Ce sont des rêves successifs avec le départ des Syriens, on n’osait pas espérer que le Général revienne un jour. J’ai toujours pensé que le Général serait enterré en France (...). Et nous sommes descendu avec un bus, avec des chansons et tout. (...) On a attendu deux heures sous le soleil, mais vraiment c’est un leader qui*

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<sup>443</sup> The incident is analyzed in Chapter Four.

*était en exil pendant quinze ans, il était toujours franc, il disait toujours la vérité pour son peuple, pour libérer le Liban. Il a payé...le Général, il a le diabète (...) qu'il avait attrapé à cause des bombardements syriens et de l'exil."*

Joseph: *"Le slogan était 'awdat al-watan ila al-watan, 'le retour de la patrie à la patrie'. C'est le jour où le Général est revenu au Liban. Malheureusement, je n'ai pas participé non plus, mon père ne m'a pas laissé y aller, bien que lui-même voulait s'y rendre aussi. Mais il craignait que quelque chose se passe, qu'on l'assassine ou quelque chose. Et c'est un jour normal dans l'histoire mais très important pour le CPL. Le Tayyâr est rentré de nouveau dans la politique mais par la grande porte."*

Jacques: *"Ce jour là, j'ai pleuré...on est descendu, on organisait l'événement mais lors du discours, je n'étais plus un organisateur...je criais, je sautais (...). Je crois que j'ai battu un record de saut en hauteur avec la joie (...). Je peux dire que la préparation du 7 mai, c'était (...) au niveau universitaire. On a fait un package avec un t-shirt et une casquette et un badge, sur le 7 mai, avec un CD de chansons patriotiques du CPL. On a organisé le transport pour les étudiants aussi."*

Issam: *"C'est le retour. Ça représente l'espoir. Moi, le 7 mai, ma mère m'a dit qu'avant ce jour là, ils ne pensaient pas que le Général reviendrait au Liban ou qu'ils verraient la libération de leur vivant. Ils combattaient pour cela, mais n'avaient pas beaucoup d'espoir que ça se réalise un jour. Donc c'est le jour de l'espoir. (...) C'était une très bonne ambiance, de joie. Même si certaines personnes avaient essayé de gâcher la fête. (...) C'était un sentiment de gloire, de fierté et d'espoir. (...) Je suis descendu avec un groupe d'amis. Mes parents étaient là-bas un peu plus tôt déjà (...)."*

May 7, the homecoming of Michel Aoun to Lebanon marks a return to the “dream” lived in 1989. Michel plunges back in the atmosphere of the origins of the movement, with the soundscape of the memory from that era. The evocation of the anticipated death of the leader in exile sustains a metaphor of a coming back from hell. An image also used by Issam, although through the mediation of his mother, mark of the generational gap with Michel. Furthermore, in Michel's story, Aoun is portrayed as a repented man, who suffered in his flesh to liberate his people and country. In Joseph's words, the slogan mobilized on that day echoes the very same thematic. “The return of the nation to the nation” further suggests that Michel Aoun incarnates the representation of the country, sketching him as a guide and forefront of the FPM project. The crowd also celebrated the return of the soldier to the nation, the commander in chief who symbolized the institutional state in front of the militia order, and a return that inaugurates the revival of the FPM in the public political field. However, the penultimate sentence seems to contradict the rest of the extract by

acknowledging the limitation of the importance of the event for the FPM. It recognizes the fragmentation and the closure of the Lebanese social scene.

May 7, 2005, emerges as a climax, a reminiscence of the lost original Paradise experienced in 1988-1990. It also represents the end of the second era of the movement, opening the times of political struggle within the system. The return of Michel Aoun tops the promise of resurrection made after October 13. This climax in the era of activism marks a turning point in the biographical trajectories as it opens new horizons of engagement, new hopes for the future. The meaning of the event also strongly highlights the main character of the partisan public narrative, the General Aoun, who appears as the incarnation of the group and its project.

Beyond the personal differences, the comparison between the representations about these four events constitutive of the FPM public narrative discloses the same allocation of symbols, the same moral evaluation, and the same positioning of the episodes in the sequence of the collective story.

## **B) The reading of the partisan emplotment**

If the feeling to share a common past is a classic component of *groupness*, the investigation about the construction of this mode of representation of time and memory is necessary to understand the horizon in which identification of the selves with the group operates. “The rules governing storytelling may help to define and sustain the very interests, boundaries, and mandates that *constitute* the institutions within which they are told.” (Polletta 1998, p. 425-426) The stories constructed by the student activists around the key events of the public narrative of the FPM all obey to a common ordering principle: the diversity of experiences and relative positions in the internal economy of the group is nonetheless transcended by shared global understandings of the sequences designed by the successive events. The personal stories are attached to the partisan public narrative through the mobilization of specific meanings allowing the construction of a chronology that unifies the separated elements constituting the human foundations of the collective memory (Murray 2008 [2007], p. 114-116).

The narratives illustrated how shared history is elaborated around common attribution of signification, moral evaluation, and position in a sequence of events. This construction of meaning sustains an emplotment, sketching in the case of the FPM the following sequence: Lost Paradise – Fall – Purgatory – Resurrection. The intrigue reminds the structure of the Judeo-Christian myths, as described by Gérard Genette in his analysis of the temporality in Proust's saga, *In Search of Lost Time* (Genette 1966, p. 65). The plot of the FPM public narrative educes steps, articulations,

genealogies, and signification of a collective perception of memory. The composition of this specific plot not only links the different episodes of the partisan public narrative to one another but also extends the intrigue to the present context of storytelling. The history of the past is thus perceived as still open, hence potentially subjected to alteration due to the imperatives of the present.

The insertion of living memories within the re-composed collective memory thus relies on the use of a special intrigue, the partisan plot serving as an ordering device to interpret a succession of heterogeneous social experiences. The mobilization of this emplotment allows the harmonization of a plurality of inspirations within the socialized individual. I called the “partisan plot” the public narrative of the group about itself. It re-presents a collective memory, which supports the realization of the group insofar as the members use the partisan reference in order to interpret – in the double sense I exposed – their positions in social situations. Hence, narrativity works as an integrative concept (Hammack 2011, p. 312), one way of realizing the potentiality of collective memory through the incorporation of plural experiences within a unique emplotment. “By telling the story from the perspective of th[e] self, as in a first person narrative, usually told in the past tense, [one] distance[s] this self from the intersubjective matrix of experience in order to claim it as [his/her] own: a personal past with which [one] claim[s] identity” (Crites 1986, p. 159).

From here, it is possible to formulate the hypothesis that the frequency of the interaction in which the partisan narrative is mobilized defines the degree of attachment to the Party. The use of life-line interviews I tested during my inquiry offers exploratory elements on this hypothesis. The comparison between life-lines drawn by Marc, a former USJ student and spokesperson of the Party for the youth activities, Elza, whose strong identification with the movement has already been highlighted in this work, and Philippe, who used to be a mere USJ activist, elucidates this point: Marc, interpreting his role of spokesman, only mentioned dates related to the history of the Party, while Elza added a few extra-elements. Philippe, apparently the most detached, was the one that distanced his references the most<sup>444</sup>.

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<sup>444</sup> The life-lines designed by these three students are available in the appendix.



### 3. THE POLYPHONY OF SOCIAL TIMES

The student activists I met were interviewed because they proclaimed to be attached to the FPM. In the conversation, they produced stories to represent their *groupness*, unified by shared interpretations of memory and social reality. The characteristics of the position they adopted to present their selves are sustained by the group style and the ideal type of members it projected. The narratives constitute consequently performances aiming at staging their sense of belonging and insertion within the FPM society. They open inter-subjective repertoires of signification mobilizable in interactional situations and concretely realized in the dramatic dimension of the stories. I noted how the present context and the relative position within the internal system of the Party influence the substance of the stories and the perceptions of the past they produce. Yet, the issue of temporality, central in cognitive sociology (Gurvitch 1969), remains to be explored. It yields a double dimension: the plurality of social times and its impact on the construction of memory on the one hand, the question of transmission, reproduction, and evolution on the other.

#### A) A polyphonic inspiration

In their stories, the activists construct discursively their positioning not only in front of the interviewer, but also in the social structure surrounding them. Pointing out that people tried to hijack the real signification of March 14 1989 as Issam does implies that he locates himself from the perspective of the group that legitimately controls the attribution of the event's meaning, opening the way for a moral denouncement of the FPM's rivals. Similarly, he mentions in his recount of the March 14, 2004 demonstration the pact allegedly sealed by the Lebanese Forces with the pro-Syrian authorities. By doing so, he affirms his right and the credibility of his Party to define the social reality. Thus, the narratives function as dual positioning acts: claiming their author's personal membership within the FPM and locating his/her group in the Lebanese socio-political landscape. Such positions are constructed in the time of the storytelling but in reference to other systems of temporality, internal to the narratives. Starting from the stories, it is possible to identify multiple scales of signification that sustain the construction of the narratives.

Inspired by Gurvitch's theory of social times, asserting that each scale of the social life – from the individual consciousness to the collective mentalities, ideologies, or traditions – is evolving in its own temporality, I propose the hypothesis of the

coexistence of three schemes of historicity<sup>445</sup>, which inspire the multiple voices that compose the narrative identity I am exploring: a personal time, an organizational/partisan time, and a communal time.

The first scale refers to the biographical time of the actors' lives. It integrates personal memories and family stories to the narratives, i.e. the constituents of a living memory that enables the insertion of the self within the collective horizon framed by the partisan public narrative. The inspiration consequently results from the socialization within the family and the Party. Such a convergence strengthens the attachment (Halbwachs 1997 [1950], p. 77). If the partisan emplotment supplies the sequence mobilized in the perception of the past, the collective memory finds its necessary human foundation in these living memories. Throughout this chapter, the various narratives I presented provided many exemplifications of the influence of biographical and familial inspirations. They develop a temporal perspective defined by the human life in which the flow of time follows the trajectory of the individual, made of legacies, experiences, plans for the future, and anchored in the space of the everyday life.

The second scale corresponds to the time of the organization. The many references to the history of the FPM, its Heroes – above all Michel Aoun – and symbols, but also its adversaries, design the horizon of a human group engaged in a political struggle to impose its perception of the reality. The living memories that compose the narratives only acquire their meaning when stood against the signification attached to the original and present battles. These struggles disclose successive rivals: the Syrian army, the Lebanese militias and more specifically the Lebanese Forces, the authorities of the regime established under the influence of Damascus, and finally the political enemies in the post-2005 era. The memory of these battles penetrate the individuals that compose the partisan collectivity and sustain their attachment to the group as illustrated by the convocation in the narratives of legitimizing registers centered on the moral superiority of the FPM collective actions. This temporality also refers to the Martyrs of the movement and seems anchored in the symbolic space of the past pinnacle of the partisan cause. In this median temporal scale, time flows more slowly, underlining the reminiscence of the collective mobilizations and the persistence of the oppositions across the life of the organization, in particular opposition to the LF still defined in reference to their wartime militia identity. The LF and Aoun's authority were implanted into the same territory, the “Eastern areas” that were the last regions escaping the Syrian occupation in 1988. The rise of Michel Aoun thus generated an

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<sup>445</sup> I am relying here on the concept of “régimes d'historicité” (Hartog 2003).

intense competition for the local leadership between two incompatible projects: while Aoun built his legitimacy on the rhetoric of the restoration of a unified State, Geagea advocated the protection of the Christians, i.e. their isolation.

The mention of intergroup relations constitutes a privileged access to the last temporal scale. The central part reserved to the Lebanese Forces as a repulsive figure as well as the reference to inter-religious coexistence give evidence of the presence of narrative codes inspired by the voices of the religious and sectarian belonging, attached to the division of the lived space between the components of the Lebanese social structure, “a house of many mansions” to use the expression of the Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi (1989). The special position attributed in the narratives to the rival of the Lebanese Forces, the factionalism built between the two groups are inspired by their inscription within the same ensemble of reference in the sectarian political order prevailing in Lebanon. The competition between the FPM and the LF has to be relocated in a memorial space institutionally and territorially defined in reference to the Lebanese Christian populations. The opposition originated in the competition between two leaders inevitably sent back by the institutional system to their belonging to the same sectarian group, the Maronites. If many Muslims supported the Aounist movement in 1988-1990 and continue to do so, it remains that the FPM is intrinsically defined by its original spatial implantation and the sectarian identity of its leader. Such a positioning inscribes the movement in the long chapter of the political history of the Lebanese Christians. Indeed, the lack of influence of Aoun's government outside the “Eastern areas” strongly limited the symbolic and political impact of the movement he incarnates in the lives of the populations living outside the Christian enclave.

The duality between the LF and the FPM thus immediately situate the stories in a Christian perspective. However, this perspective is generally conjugated with the partisan element. Many were the students who told me that, as Christians, they had to “choose” between the FPM and the LF. Asserting what is presented as a “natural opposition” is already adopting a position located within the horizon of signification of the FPM, which illustrates the fact that all elements presented as natural or normal actually result from the socialization work as Garfinkel noted (1967), because it supposes to interpret them from a frame that makes it appear as normal. Although those two forces represent the main ones, many alternative parties still exist among Christians (the LNP for instance or secular parties also massively recruiting among Christians like the SSNP). In a way, the political identification with the FPM triggers – or includes – a positioning within the horizon of Christian politics.

The Lebanese political order hence encourages the articulation between the partisan memory and the religious and communal memory. However, the social representations deriving from the Christian heritage does not exclusively stem from inter-partisan competition. The references to the beliefs (the resurrection of Jesus Christ), myths (the Phoenix, the emplotment of the partisan narrative, etc.), rituals (the Lent mentioned by Jacques, the parallel made between suffering from the repression and a penance, etc.), and symbols exemplify the existence of a social knowledge related to a “Christian legacy” among students. If religiosity varies depending on individual, the existence of social frames inherited from Christianity goes beyond the personal beliefs to include non-believers and the Muslim minority belonging to the organization. The FPM as a political project is deeply embedded in a social fabric predominantly Christian and has been mainly built on rhetoric and symbols associated with political traditions related to the Maronite politics in Lebanon. Hence cultural elements of Christian origin imprint the universe of signification of the collectivity as the structure of the partisan plot illustrates. Time here flows even more slowly to sketch a long time History.

Beyond biblical references, the mark of the Christian time in the construction of a collective memory drives from the history of the constitution of the Maronites as a community and the close identification between their communal politics and the emergence of Lebanese nationalism that nourishes the FPM identity narrative. Probably originated from central Syria around Aleppo, the Maronite Christian community migrated to Northern Mount Lebanon between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many controversies arose about the circumstances under which the migration took place: for some it was to escape persecutions from the Byzantines, for others from the Muslims (Picard 1997, p. 13). If the historical reality of these persecutions remains unclear, each answer had of course sustained opposite political definitions of the Maronites, either “as Easterners attached to their specific identity distinct from Western Christendom or as the frontline troops of Christendom's resistance to Islam.” (ibid.) Similarly, the ambivalent attitude of the Maronites during the Crusaders fueled the same duality. The representations existing among FPM students about their own political project of coexistence and the regime of the statelets associated with the LF directly echo this debate.

Internally, the community developed in Mount Lebanon from its original monastic settlement. Its demographic growth rapidly gave them a local preponderance. A people of peasants, the Maronites were strongly implanted on the land. Their territory is symbolically built around monasteries and religious orders, deeply participating in the definition of the spatial identity of the group. Externally, as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century,

Maronite monks established a College in Rome (1585) and tied special relations with the Kingdom of France (1535), sustaining privileged bonds with the Western powers that had a strong impact in particular in the domain of education, with the opening of a vast number of schools from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, thus fueling a sense of superiority over its Muslim environment. Several myths came to reinforce this asserted superiority, associating the Maronites with Phoenicians or Marmaic (a mythical people allegedly originated in present Turkey) ancestors (Salibi 1989 [1988]). These ideas, without historical foundation, strongly participated in the construction of a self-centered Maronite political identity strongly differentiated from the out-group, in particular the Muslim world, defined as a threat (Beydoun 1984).

The confrontation with this negatively perceived environment took two main figures. First, on the legal level: the Ottoman conquest of Mount Lebanon placed the Maronite under the domination of Sultan and theoretically submitted the population to the status of *dhimmi* – minorities whose obligations and rights, unequal to those of the Sunni Muslim, are defined in a specific code. However the geographical situation of the Maronites left them a margin of maneuver *vis-à-vis* the Ottomans and the *dhimmi* code (Longva & Roald 2012). The Maronites remained under the direct domination of their Church and Patriarch, the leading figure of the community, whose centrality in the community derives from their land ownership and networks of institutions surrounding the group.

Another confrontation with alterity arose with the growing interactions with the Druzes, the second bastion of the construction of modern Lebanon after the Maronites (Picard 1997, p. 15). The inter-relations between Druzes and Maronites were marked an increasing political and economic rivalry, reaching its climax in the massacres of 1840 and 1860. These episodes deeply impacted the modern political identity of the Maronites (Picard 1996, p. 5) and its link with the Lebanese nationalism (Salibi 1989 [1988]). It constituted the foundations of what was named *Maronism* (Khalaf 1976, p. 44-45), that could be defined in reference to a famous quote of Istfan al-Duwayhi (1629-1704), a clergyman and historian: “The Maronite community's history is a continuous struggle to maintain national and religious identity in a dominant Muslim environment” (cited in Khalaf 1976, p. 43).

Therefore, the process of construction of the Maronite community entailed a historiography characterized by a syndrome of perpetual persecution developed in a monastic and patristic social organization from which emerged a sense of solidarity built around the figure of the clergyman and against the other communities, especially Muslims, perceived as hostile. The relations to establish with this environment – integration vs. isolation – still serve as the delimitation line defined by FPM students

to separate their own political identity with the one of the Lebanese Forces. These developments did not intend to *explain* partisanship among FPM students but rather to understand the symbolic and social horizon in which it is constructed.

The multiple voicing identified in the narratives works as the social frames of memory theorized by Maurice Halbwachs. This framing goes beyond events and characters to inform the streams of experience born within the social groups in which the FPM activists are inscribed (Halbwachs 1997[1950], p. 113). Such multi-vocality is embedded in the plurality of social times whose coexistence composes “memorial combinations” (Verret 1984, p. 422). The interpretation of the self within the universe of signification of the group is realized through the representation of a memorial combination specific to each individual.

The collected stories constitute spaces and times of actualization of the ontological and public narratives inspired by these multi-vocal social times and organized in reference to the partisan emplotment. The storytellers consequently construct identification in reference to – and insert them within – the collective horizon of the FPM. Made of a selection from these multiple voiced narratives, the self presented in the interview situation – and in every other interactional configuration – is therefore more a conversation than a monologue. It is elaborated in the flow of social interactions i.e. in the experience of inter-subjectivity. Hence, the self is not the precondition of the experience of everyday life reality but its consequence: it is because they define their selves as FPM members and are recognized as such by the others in the flow of social interactions that the interviewees structure their interpretation of their personal identity on these specific ontological and public narratives.

The deconstruction of the collective memory and its narrative composition thus enables to understand the impulses of identification: they rely on the insertion of multiple streams of experience within the partisan public narrative defined by a specific emplotment. The collective memory is thus to be understood as a narrative reconstruction composed in reference to a plurality of social times, here identified by three temporal scales. The narrative nature of collective memory implies that it is constantly evolving, depending on the spatiotemporal configurations: the group is not the same when a student born in 1990 uses it to represent his self in front of a foreign researcher as it was in 1989 in a demonstration around the Baabda Palace. The issue of the collective memory consequently necessitates questioning the conditions of possibility of its perpetuation in time.

## **B) The inter-generational transmission of narrative identity**

Maurice Halbwachs suggests that the perpetuation of the collective memory of a social group depends upon its capacity to emerge as such in the consciousness of its members when they conceive their past (Halbwachs 1997 [1950], p. 58). This condition imposes the actualization of the perception of the collective experience of the past across generations. The question is all the more acute since the 1988-1990 era seems hypertrophied in the construction of the horizon of meaning in the public narrative of the FPM.

The notion of generation defined by Karl Mannheim originates in a socio-historical reality experienced by the author himself: the acceleration of the social dynamics consecutive to the World War I and to the socio-political it introduced in Hungary (Perivolaropoulou 1994, p. 25). Mannheim bases his analysis on the concept of generational situation defined as the belonging to a common “historical and social space”. The unity of a generation is constructed in reference to particular events impacting the horizon of experience its member. As a consequence, it would be possible to infer that the shared experience of the 1988-1990 moment would provide a strong basis for the generation that emerged in politics in that specific context – what was called the Aoun generation or *Jil 'Awn* in Arabic<sup>446</sup>. Is it possible that the specific situation of this generation created a gap with the other components of the Party today, especially with those who did not experience at all this era? To explore this question, I would like to give emphasis to two tracks of analysis.

The first aspect refers to the nature of the collective. As a social group, the FPM is composed of individuals belonging to different generations, which consequently coexist at the same time in the movement. All the generations are not renewed simultaneously, explaining the maintenance of the social group (Simmel 2009 [1897], p. 669). The progressive evolution of the collective ensures the persistence of the allegiance all the more efficiently since, as a sub-society in the Lebanese structure, the group is constructed by its relations to the others. The gradual generational turnover eases the maintenance of the specific positioning of the FPM in front of its rivals. Alterity is essential in the persistence of the group collective memory: the perpetual confrontation between the competing narratives about the past tends to harden through their repetitions in many occasions of the social life. Perpetuating references to the militia identity allows preserving the original conception of the FPM, born as a social movement in opposition to the militia order. The recurrent disputations about wartime events facilitate the maintenance of these identities defining the LF as a militia and the

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<sup>446</sup> See for instance Bourre 1990.

FPM as a national and ethical alternative. The retention of this cleavage is an artifact that justifies the group's conception of reality in front of the new generations: if the LF remains a militia, it is natural to reject their model. However, in this modeling, the FPM and the LF are intrinsically linked together in the image of their conflict. They appear not only inseparable, but also recall the Christian horizon in which their competition was born.

The second track elaborates on the description of the plurality of social times. Because of its embeddedness in median and long time, the multiple voicing of the collective memory logically ensures its persistence beyond individual life. However, as it was noticed, the living memory constitutes a necessary component of the collective perception of the past. The narrative construction of memory must consequently rely on devices so as to persist. Two of these devices can be mentioned here: legacy and filiation, two concepts inspired from the work of Florence Haegel (1990, p. 865).

Legacy refers to the existence of a factual and objective heritage. It thus implies the objectification of the social as an objective reality. It supposes to impose a definition of the group so as to present the self as the depositary of its characteristics. The legacy functions at all the three temporal scales: the adhesion to the FPM ideals can be mediated by the conformation to a familial model (Halim or Issam for example), by referring to its political substance (in the evocations of March 14, 1989 by contrast to 2005), or by echoing its source in the political history of the Christians.

Filiation is, in the narrative perspective I selected, even more interesting. It refers to the construction of codes to represent the continuation of the social bonds. It presupposes the elaboration of mimetic figures (ibid., p. 877) i.e. reproductions of past images. In the case of the FPM, such construction is frequent: for example when Jacques compares August 7 (2001) to “a political October 13” (1989). In the median temporality of the organization, the main mimetic figure derives from the dual dimension of March 14 – 1989 and 2005. The parallels between the two moments – the popular gathering, the anti-Syrian demands, the role played by the FPM – sustain the experience of 2005 as a moment of re-foundation and actualization of the 1989 episode. It not only introduces a generation to political activism, it also enables those who, among this youth, identified with the FPM, to create for some or recharge for others the source of their bonds with the Party by living *ex-post* a reproduction of the 1989 period. It was then all the more possible to anchor their selves in the public narrative of the organization. Yet, the evolution of the events weakened the myth of unity that presided over mobilization (Chaoul 2005, p. 91). The narratives must



consequently integrate this disruption with the original pattern and, to do so, develop the rhetoric of treason by the March 14 coalition.

Mimetic figures also exist at the biographical scale. I encountered one of the more obvious in my interview with Patrick, a LU student, when he told me that he was named after the brother of his mother, a military in the Lebanese Army, killed during the 1989-90 war against the Lebanese Forces while Patrick's mother was pregnant<sup>447</sup>. In the perspective of long History, mimetic constructions are equally identifiable. Dima de Clerck brilliantly demonstrated how the war of the Mountain in 1983-1984 actualized for the Christians living in this area the memory of the 1860 massacres (de Clerck 2010, p. 65). The perception of a reproduction of the conflict between Druzes and Christians still impacts the definition of the self for the FPM students originated from regions in which the two communities coexist. Justine, another LU student born in 1983, for instance recounted that she and her family preferred to move from their house situated in the region of Aley because they feared the proximity with the Druzes<sup>448</sup>. Even more significant was the confidence made by Tino, an AUB student born in 1990 and originating from Kahhaleh. He explained that his uncle had taught him how to shoot with all kinds of guns: “*In our place in Kahhaleh, near Aley, with the PSP around, we have to learn to protect ourselves, we never know when they would like to pay us another little visit. We have to be ready!* [Laughs]”<sup>449</sup> This trait of humor seems to bear “an euphemistic imagined version of real tragic stories”, whose literal transmission would threaten the narrative of coexistence (de Clerck 2010, p. 68) promoted within the FPM and more generally in Lebanon.

From a temporal perspective, the FPM society is a constructed object, produced by the combination of memories endlessly represented, in particular through narrative utterances that ensure the capacity for the various social influences in which the FPM as a social group originates to go back in time and perpetually go over the tracks it left of itself (Halbwachs 1997 [1950], p. 192).. The alchemy of the social bonds is impossible to fully explain as Lenclud wrote (1993, § 43). But “identities are forged only in the context of ongoing relationships that exist in time, space, and emplotment” (Somers 1994, p. 622). Memory and narrative thus play a crucial role in the process of identification. Social identities always rely on memory because of its capacity to transcend and recompose time to “found the cognition and recognition” of identities

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<sup>447</sup> Patrick, interview with the author: December 5, 2010 [in French].

<sup>448</sup> Justine, interview with the author: October 24, 2007 [in French].

<sup>449</sup> Tino, interview with the author: May 2010. The original statement was in French: “*chez nous, à Kahaleh, nous sommes à côté de Aley avec le PSP, il faut savoir se protéger, on ne sait pas quand est-ce qu'ils veulent venir nous rendre une petite visite! On doit être prêts [rires]!*”

(Farrugia 1999, p. 116). The development of the narrative dimension offers a perfect complement to the analysis of collective memory and social-ties construction as “we may turn to narrative precisely when we cannot *explain*, when our non-narrative explanations fall short, and yet that narrative may recapitulate more than resolve the puzzles we pose it.” (Polletta 1998, p. 441)

The capacity of the collective memory to transcend individual differences does not mean that it smooths the complexity of the personal relations to the group. The individuals are what their multiple social experiences made of them, consequently sustaining an infinite variety of situations. Studying the processes of personal identification with the FPM thus imposes to question such complexity. According to Bernard Lahire, an analysis of the endless variations of the individual consciousnesses should be capable of giving substance to the theories of socialization that rhetorically envisage the internalization of the social without substantiate their models with ethnographic descriptions (Lahire 1999, p. 37).

In this chapter, I proposed the narrative construction of a collective memory as a global device to concretely understand the appropriation and the publication of the social identities for the individuals composing the group. However, it remains to be studied how such internalization operates. In fact, it is possible to envisage individuals internalizing social identities through the mode of obligation, the mode of desire or reject, etc. Consequently, it is necessary to explore such modes of internalization of the collective memory available for the FPM young members. Taking stock of the conception of collective memory I designed in this chapter, I propose in the next one to analyze the emotional modes of appropriation of the FPM horizon of signification as a first step toward the elucidation of the paths toward the cognitive appropriation of the social. In doing so, I intend to describe the plurality of the modalities of internalization through the exploration of the affectivities of the collective memory. I construct this analytical model in reference with the figure of the leader, the main character of the partisan public narrative.



## **“The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”**

### The leader and the affectivity of collective memory

*“Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.”*

Karl Marx (2001 [1852], p. 7)

Joining the organization is to bind oneself to an aggregate to which one is already linked, argues Marie-Claire Lavabre in her study of the collective memory in the French Communist Party (Lavabre 1994, p. 270). Her claim could perfectly apply to the case of the FPM student activists. The polyphony of the accounts told by the student members illustrates how the existence of the Party is embedded in the social experiences of the individuals populating the group. The employment of the identity narrative only works as an integrative force because it meets the living memories to form representations about the past and present that support the collective memory of the FPM. The variety of the stories is transcended by the shared significations allocated to concrete events but also by the reference to pivotal characters that incarnate the storyline and participate in the outlining of the collective memory. In this cast, the leader of the Party, General Michel Aoun, certainly plays the major part as the hero of the partisan story.

Outcome of a three year research program set up in the French Institute of the Near East (IFPO) in Beirut, a volume edited by Franck Mermier and Sabrina Mervin (2012) proposed a critical review of the analysis of leadership in Lebanon. Drawing on a wide range of well documented fieldwork studies, and building on actualized conceptions of key notions such as *zu'amâ'* or charisma, the book mainly focused on the affirmation of leadership figures and the relations established between the leaders and their followers. However, it remained to be concretely demonstrated beyond general hypotheses what are the paths, the modalities, and the significations of the construction of the leadership bonds from the perspective of the partisans. In this chapter, my

objective is to suggest, through the mobilization of the narrative perspective, analyzes that would enable to shed light on these blind spots. Like the evocations of key episodes, the narratives produced around the figure of the leader provide a decisive glimpse on the universes of significations shared within the group. As much as the emplotment of the narrated past, the reference to the leader creates and activates political as well as social boundaries (Abirached 2012, p. 39). The character of the leader as such participates in the interplay of identification between the individual and the Party. Founder of the movement and incarnation of its history, Michel Aoun arises as the figure crystallizing the collective identity of the group. His personality enables the projection of the followers within the narrative of the FPM, paving the way for the process of fusion between collective substance and personal selves composing it.

The omnipotence of the leader within the Party<sup>450</sup> parallels his omnipresence in the stories of the followers. At the same time an emblem and a role-model for his supporters, Michel Aoun finds himself staged in a multiplicity of anecdotes and accounts describing all sorts of interactions, from intimate encounters to political or moral tales shaping more overall horizons. Demonstrating the construction of the sense of belonging in the case of FPM student members as well as questioning more generally the formation of political and social ties in contemporary Lebanon thus requires investigating the actors' interpretations of the relation of leadership in order to understand how they participate to the identification process. Though the function of the chief as a figure of identification supporting the reciprocal relation between the leader and his followers has been acknowledged (ibid., p. 36), it remains to describe the social mechanisms that sustain the projection of one's identity, both collective and personal, within the figure of the leader. On which bases does it operate? How do the references to the leader transmit significations participating to the construction of the self and weaving the group's fabric?

If the role of the leader is defined by the concrete set of attributes he disposes within the group, it is also maintained by symbolic features. These can be grasped through the collection of narratives involving the leader that represent as many entry-points to study the universes of signification supporting the intra-group economy and the sense of belonging of the actors. Stories as well as living memories including the character of Michel Aoun constitute heuristic matters to unfold the process of the construction of the self within the partisan frame. Clearly, by defining themselves – and by being labeled – as “*Aounists*”, FPM student activists promote a narrative identity centered on the heroic character of the leader.

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<sup>450</sup> See Chapter Three.

As for those considered in the previous chapter, the narratives presented in the following developments were mainly elicited during the second campaign of interviews conducted with photos. This methodological device aimed at encouraging the production of stories without imposing predetermined frames for the discussion. However, others came spontaneously, in the course of the conversation. It was the case with Philippe, during one of the first encounters of my fieldwork, in November 2007:

*“Mes débuts en politique si on veut, c’est depuis l’école (...). On fait des élections pour les délégués de classe...ça a commencé à propos d’une opposition à un autre parti face à nous, c’était les FL. J’avais une autre personne qui se présentait avec moi, on était un petit groupe. On avait les idées du CPL plus ou moins, on se connaissait à l’époque sous le nom ‘Aouniste’, c’est-à-dire qu’on aimait le Général Aoun. Donc on était un groupe d’amis, on a fait les élections et malheureusement on a perdu parce que mon école était à Achrafiyeh, tout près d’ici, et elle est connue pour être FL. Après quand je suis arrivée à l’université, j’ai choisi l’USJ et j’ai fait une licence en économie. Au début, je suis rentré à la faculté, elle s’appelait ‘la Forteresse’, que les Aounistes gagnaient toujours: ils avaient toujours des postes importants dans cette faculté. Ça aussi m’a aidé à plus revendiquer mon choix au CPL (...).*

*Maintenant, pourquoi j’ai choisi le CPL et pas d’autres partis politiques? Il y a un peu des souvenirs, des trucs que mes parents me racontaient: quand j’avais deux ou trois ans, en 1987, alors que le Général Michel Aoun n’était que le chef de l’armée, il avait fait un petit voyage en Algérie pour essayer de se retrouver une place dans la politique du Liban. A son retour, les rues étaient décorées avec des photos de lui. Moi, j’étais un peu fou...un enfant de 3 ans qui crie pour Michel Aoun, qui ne comprend pas encore la politique mais c’était juste l’idée de le voir [qui] me rendait heureux. Et (...) je me rappelle que vers les années 1989-1990, mes parents m’emmenaient toujours au Palais de Baabda. J’avais 4 ou 5 ans, donc je ne me rappelle pas trop du moment, mais on m’a dit qu’on allait toujours le voir au palais de Baabda...”<sup>451</sup>*

Philippe was born in 1985. At the time of the interview, he was finishing his Master in Economics and had already started to work in the sale management of a company producing sanitation products. It was our first encounter. He afterward became one of the FPMers with whom I maintained a close contact during the several years of my fieldwork. In many aspects Philippe can be identified with the Christian middle class the FPM pretends to represent. Originated from the Christian heartland of northern Mount Lebanon, he has lived from an early age in Zouk Mikael, near the

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<sup>451</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: November 14, 2007 [in French].

coastal city of Jounieh. His father works as a freelance photographer for various Lebanese newspapers while his mother is a teacher. During our encounters, Philippe used to speak openly about himself, his beliefs and feelings with a touch of freshness that was never denied. His evocation of his debut with the FPM and his first memories about Michel Aoun at the terrace of the *Water Lemon* café gives a good illustration of his comfort in discussion. His account came directly, after I only asked him to describe how he started to engage within the Party. In itself, the answer carries most of the significations that have been discussed so far in this work: the centrality of interactions within everyday life territories – the school at first, then the university – in which socio-partisan meanings are embedded; the mirror figure of the enemy embodied in the Lebanese Forces from which operates an early realization of the sense of belonging; the confirmation of the group feeling generated by the insertion within the Party's universe; and – finally – the issue of memory.

The second part of his answer, focusing on his early acquaintance with Michel Aoun and the FPM appears exemplary of the mechanisms at work in the manifestation of a collective memory. His remembrance relies on a dual temporality partially corresponding with the scales that have been introduced in the previous chapter: on the one hand, the private history of his family and, on the other, the time of the Party centered on the mythical coordinates in time and space – Baabda, 1989-1990. As he himself admitted, his “souvenir” has actually been transmitted to him, at least partly, through his parents' stories rather than as personal recollection. Here surfaces one of the central arguments developed by Maurice Halbwachs: the others help us to remember as memories are born in social groups that determine the perceptions of our thoughts (Halbwachs 1997 [1950], p. 52). The stories told by his parents have helped Philippe to stimulate his own vision of the event all the more powerfully than he remained, at the time of the interview, both a member of the FPM and sharing his daily life with his family. His ability to think “as a member of the group” thus stayed intact. This anecdote would probably have lost all meaning for him and his parents if all the three of them were not FPM supporters. Therefore, rather than resulting from this souvenir, his sense of belonging is activating his memory of the return of Michel Aoun in 1987. What is introduced as a consequence of the past – his identification with the FPM and Michel Aoun – appears more like a cause that determines the signification of this past.

Philippe's account is a story of his encounter with collective sense of belonging but even more a narrative about his present attachment to the Party. His bonds with the FPM are composed of affective ties coupled with a strong social framing and an intense rejection of the figure of the enemy impersonated by the Lebanese Forces. Not

surprisingly, in the course of our discussion, Philippe admitted that “*as a FPM member, I don’t know but I feel more at ease with other people who share the same political vision...because I consider that politics is the only way to really develop us and make us mature and dynamic individuals in our society. So when I meet someone who really belongs to the FPM, I perfectly know that this person always has the same ideas I fight for...so it is an existence [sic] that is certainly present between us*”<sup>452</sup>. The group thus appears as a joint construction of meaning and a shared space. The description of his childhood emotions in the territorial frame of his neighborhood and under the affection of his parents seems to precisely refer to his present interpretation of the signification of the group: a friendly and even familial community in which he can anchor his position in social interactions. In this picture, Michel Aoun plays the role of an icon – *stricto sensu* as he is interestingly present in the described scene only through the intermediary of his pictures displayed in the streets – mediating between the individual and the collective signification attached to the group of his followers.

Although my initial question referred to the FPM, Philippe’s reaction rather illustrated the centrality of the leader in the construction of *groupness*. Michel Aoun is introduced as the *raison d’être* of the small informal gathering he created with his school comrades. First, because at that time – the end of the 1990s – no visible organization existed. Though, as discussed in the chapter three, a first structure had emerged since 1996, it remained very limited and confined to specific milieus. Second, since the character of Michel Aoun incarnated the cause of the Lebanese sovereignty. Before the emergence of the FPM as an official party, “*Aounism*” related to a political trend composed of a multiplicity of actors stemming from heterogeneous political backgrounds. When the “*Aoun phenomenon*” emerged, his stands gathered non-politicized citizens as well as members of different organizations – most often some that had been marginalized by the rise of the militia era and the progressive hegemony imposed by the Lebanese Forces over the Christian populations – like the National Bloc, the National Liberal Party, the *Tanzîm* [the Organization], and former followers of the Kata’eb many of whom distanced themselves with the party following the numerous internal crises it as well as the LF endured in the middle of the 1980s. In such context, the figure of Michel Aoun worked as a symbol of the exclusion of the People and an incarnation of the political current fighting for the legitimacy and

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid. The original statement was in French: “[...] *en tant que membre du CPL, je ne sais pas, je me sens un peu plus à l’aise en présence de personnes qui ont la même vision politique que moi...parce que je considère que la politique est la seule chose qui peut vraiment nous former et nous rendre des personnes matures et dynamiques dans notre société. Alors quand je rencontre une personne qui appartient vraiment au CPL, je sais bien que cette personne a toujours les idées pour lesquelles je me bats...donc c’est une existence [sic] qui doit être entre nous*”.



sovereignty of the Lebanese state over its whole territory. Trumpeted cause of the Maronite elite for decades, this theme fed an array of influential political events from the formation of the state of Greater Lebanon under the French mandate in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the rejection of the Cairo agreement of 1969<sup>453</sup> and the subsequent establishment of paramilitary groups opposing the Palestinian armed presence, or the creation of the Kata'eb Party in 1936 and the attempted renovation of the state launched by General Fouad Chehab in 1958.

The exile withstood by the leader after his eviction in 1990, the experience of secret activism and repression his followers endured, and the ensuing absence of an organized movement on the field all contributed to the maintenance of the preeminence of Michel Aoun as the figure of condensation of the sense of belonging of those who participated in his fight for the liberation (*tahrîr*) of the country. Since the General's return and in spite of the affirmed will of institutionalization of the Party, his tendency to monopolize decisions and the various obstacles that impeded the functioning of the organization along the rules established at its creation<sup>454</sup> have helped to conserve the leader's symbolic significance. Nonetheless, the establishment of the Party despite all its imperfection has transformed the image of Michel Aoun and, to some extent, narrowed his potential leadership by associating him with a clearly defined organization (Abirached 2012, p. 45-46).

The focal role played by the evocation of the leader to describe the process of identification in Philippe's testimony also underlines the emotional nature of the relation to the leader. The affective dimension is strongly highlighted. Not only to "*share the ideas of the FPM*" is decrypted as "*lov[ing] Michel Aoun*", but the mention of the demonstration during Philippe childhood relies on emotion – "*I was simply happy to see him*". Obviously encouraged in his family, this emotional bond plays a key part in the construction of *groupness* and indicates the importance of the primary socialization in the activation of the process of identification with the leader. But, as Maurice Halbwachs claims, it is the affection of the present that is displayed in the horizon of the past event (Halbwachs 1997 [1950], p. 84-85). However, the emotion also comes from the shared construction of the memory. It is, Gérard Namer explains, "*the affectivity of the moment of the joint reconstruction; it is the time of the work through which my own memory is completed by the one of the others; it is essentially an affectivity of likelihood, of increasing coherence and this is precisely the feeling*

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<sup>453</sup> Signed in November 1969, it authorized the armed presence of the PLO in Lebanon. See the Introduction.

<sup>454</sup> See Chapter Three.

*that is lacking in the cross-checkings proposed by Halbwachs (...)*<sup>455</sup> (Namer 1988, p. 10). Such emotion of the *joint presence* (ibid.), of the contact between the living memory of the individual and the collective memory of the group, gives birth to the *interpretation* of the self as a member of the collectivity incarnated by the Party.

Starting from this hypothesis and building on the idea of the “arrangement of memories” corresponding to various scales of temporality discussed in the previous chapter, sometimes dating back from times preceding the advent of Michel Aoun in the late 1980s, this final part of the study intends to question the articulation between the character of the leader and the identification of the self with the group. How does the plurality of the collective memories impact the evocation of the leader voiced by the activists and how, in return, do these narratives frame the representations of Michel Aoun? Finally, and more fundamentally, how can these narratives about the relation to the leader enable to understand the nature of the leadership and the essence of the partisan bond in contemporary Lebanon?

To answer these questions, this chapter explores testimonies dealing with the figure of Michel Aoun. However, the identity of the hero of the partisan narrative only acquires its entire signification when studied against the representations of two alternative antithetical characters, thus elucidating in a dialogue with the Party’s leader the alternative faces of leadership: the antihero and Michel Aoun’s nemesis, Samir Geagea, head of the Lebanese Forces; and the reference hero, Bachir Gemayel, whose quest, comparable yet different, preceded the General’s. Although other protagonists play episodic roles, this triptych appears indivisible – Michel Aoun being united to Samir Geagea by their absolute antinomy and to Bachir Gemayel by their contradictions – as the cast of the partisan narrative interpreted by the young activists: the “Good”, the “Bad”, and the “Ugly”?

In the light of the three distinct scales of temporality indexed by the partisan storyline, the student activists’ accounts about this cast of characters disclose the horizons of significations encompassed within the relation of leadership that structure the sense of belonging to the group. My claim is that articulating the depictions of leadership figures with the multivocality of collective memory enables to characterize the affectivity of the various temporalities previously highlighted<sup>456</sup> and thus to understand the construction, at the time of the storytelling, of the *joint presence* – the

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<sup>455</sup> I translated from French: “ [...] *l’affectivité du temps de la reconstruction mutuelle; c’est le temps de travail par lequel mon souvenir se complète par celui des autres; il s’agit essentiellement d’une affectivité de la vraisemblance, de la cohérence croissante et c’est précisément ce sentiment qui manque tant dans les contre-épreuves proposées par Halbwachs (...)*.”

<sup>456</sup> See Chapter Five.

contact between the living memories and the collective memory of the Party – as well as of the concomitant performance of the *interpretation* of the self as identified with the FPM. On the basis of the social frames of collective memory, multiple processes of identification operate, sustaining *groupness*: first, the recognition of the self as member of the partisan unit mirroring the hero of the partisan narrative; then, the repulsion prompted by the figure of the enemy that unifies the group in a common disgust; finally, the deeper and ancient preoccupation of the fate of a collectivity, conceived as wider than the partisan group – the Lebanese Christians. The present chapter discusses these multifaceted dynamics stemming from the narratives evoking the character of Michel Aoun (1) before confronting them with the stories staging the alter-egos of the hero, Samir Geagea and Bachir Gemayel (2). Finally, as a theoretical opening, the consequences for the understanding of the construction and reorganization of the partisan bonds, as well as for the maintenance and reactivation of boundaries in contemporary Lebanon are explored (3).

## 1. MICHEL AOUN: (GRAND-)FATHER, HERO, AND PROPHET

Confronted to a photo<sup>457</sup> of their leader, FPM student activists produced stories constituting as many realizations of their relation to his leadership and of their sense of belonging to the Party. The systematic use of the same visual to elucidate their evocations paved the way to the collection of contrasted narratives illustrating the diversity of the situations, of the relationships to the group, and of the imaginaries invested in the collective identity attached to the FPM. Such a variety of testimonies seems nonetheless transcended by the constant call for collective memories related to a triple scale of temporality: the time of personal experience connected with the family, the mid-range time of the political cause linked with the Party as a human group, and the long-time related to the religious community. These contexts, differentiated in the previous chapter, inform the multivocality of the narratives produced by the activists and arranged along the partisan plot in the process of identification. The figure of the leader, because of both its human and symbolic dimensions, presents itself as a “*lieu de mémoire*” particularly affected by the emotions of the followers. While the identification with the leader enables the construction of the self as subject (Abirached 2012, p. 50), the feelings towards the leader participate in the construction of an existential tie with the group.

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<sup>457</sup> The photo of Michel Aoun I used is reproduced in the appendix.

May 7, 2005. After spending fourteen years in exile, Michel Aoun set foot on the Lebanese ground. Thousands of people came to greet him on the tarmac of Rafiq Hariri International Airport. A few minutes later, his convoy reached the Martyrs' Square in the center of Beirut. A gigantic crowd had gathered since the early hours of the morning. An endless sea of FPM orange and Lebanese flags turned toward the podium erected for the occasion. Even some white banners of the Lebanese Forces could be seen. Finally, behind a bulletproof window, the General appeared.

*“La première fois que j'ai entendu la phrase du Général, ça fait un frisson, ça donne la chair de poule. (...) C'était quelque chose d'incroyable. Je n'imaginai jamais que nous allions être cinq cent mille à lui souhaiter la bienvenue. C'était comme si un rêve se réalisait. Il y a une image que je garde en souvenir et qui, quand je pense que le CPL doit mieux faire, me fait garder l'espoir et me donne encore confiance dans le Général et dans le CPL: nous étions sur la place des Martyrs et quand le Général est venu et a prononcé sa phrase 'Yâ Sha'b Lubnân al-'azîm [Great People of Lebanon]', il y a eu un vieil homme devant moi, peut-être de 70 ou 80 ans, qui s'est mis à pleurer des torrents larmes. Nous, nous étions en train de crier et quand j'ai vu ça, je me suis calmé (...). J'ai ressenti quelque chose qu'aucun homme au Liban n'a pu ressentir devant aucun politicien. Cet amour...je ne sais pas comment l'exprimer. Mais j'ai toujours ce souvenir en moi, je le garde pour me dire que c'était très beau. Très beau.*

*- Quels sont tes souvenirs de ce jour?*

*J'ai commencé à me préparer une dizaine de jours à l'avance peut-être ! Nous nous sommes rassemblés, nous avons regardé qui étaient ceux qui avaient besoin de transport, de combien de T-shirts nous avions besoin, combien de drapeaux...il n'y avait pas encore de CPL en tant que tel, ce n'était encore qu'un mouvement. Il y avait encore le vieux drapeau de la résistance avec l'Omega...il fallait vivre tout cela (...).*

*[...] Je pense que son sourire sur la photo, c'est un sourire calme. Il a un regard sincère. Tu sais que c'est un homme bon. Tout ce qui est dans son cœur, il va le dire: s'il est en colère, il va jurer devant toi, mais s'il est tranquille, il sera très calme. En même temps, il est très intelligent. Il sait mettre en place des stratégies. C'est un général de l'armée, donc il s'y connaît. Ses stratégies militaires étaient des grandes stratégies, de même en politique: la stratégie de son retour et de nos alliances, c'est une des plus grandes stratégies du Moyen-Orient. (...) Il a une plus grande vision que les autres (...) à très long terme. Et il est très proche...très, très, très proche! Je pense*

*qu'il est pour moi comme un grand-père, un parrain, quelqu'un qui me protégeait.*"<sup>458</sup>

Five years later, at the table of a café near Sodeco Square, Jamil, an active member of the FPM in the USJ as well as in his home district of Achrafiyeh, counted me his souvenirs of the day. Emotions play the central role in a story highlighting the fusion within the crowd behind the figure of the General, the strength inspired by the image of the leader to continue the political struggle at the time of doubts, and the inexplicable and incommunicable communion, close to a mystic experiment as the profound feeling of love illustrates, generated by the encounter. References to the history of the FPM are many, from the Omega flag activists used to carry during the anti-Syrian demonstrations when the movement was still unstructured to the emblematic sentence the General used to pronounce in Baabda to address the crowd gathering around the "Palace of the People" [the presidential palace].

The portrait Jamil drew of Michel Aoun afterward seems more rational, but nonetheless underlines the characteristics commonly attributed to their leader by the FPM activists: an honest man incarnating a fatherly figure, an unequalled political strategist, and a visionary anticipating history and leading his people to the salvation. This triple attribute remains strongly connected with the memory of the Party and, according to me, articulates the content of the group's identity narrative around its affective dimension. Related at the same time to personal emotions and the consciousness of belonging to a same whole, the affectivity expressed toward Michel Aoun in Jamil's account seems paradigmatic of the contact between the living memory of the individual and the collective memory of the group, the *joint presence* evoked by Gérard Namer that gives ground for the interpretation of the self as attached to the group. Therefore, the evocations about the leader centered on his attributes as father, hero, and Prophet of the group, while the feelings they expressed, enable to infer the nature of the contacts between the living memories and the collective memory. From such stories, I intend to understand not only how the *joint presence* is narratively constructed but also what horizons of signification it opens for those who build their selves through this reconstruction of a collective memory.

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<sup>458</sup> Jamil, interview with the author: December 1, 2010 [in French].

## A) Michel Aoun as a (Grand-)Father: an affectivity of fusion

*“Michel Aoun c'est un symbole. On ne peut envisager [le CPL] sans le Général Aoun...Donc c'est le père du nouveau Liban, le père d'une nouvelle vision du Liban (...). [...] Mon sentiment [lors de son retour le 7 mai 2005], je compare ça un peu à un enfant qui ne se sent pas en sécurité parce que son père, ses parents ne sont pas présents...et finalement, ils rentrent à la maison. C'est un peu ça, on se sentait tout de suite en sécurité, on pensait que ce guide, ce chef était finalement parmi nous (...) et que les choses allaient mieux se passer”<sup>459</sup>*

These words, voiced under the shade of the monument dedicated to Bachir Gemayel in Achrafiyeh's Sassine Square, translate the proximity felt by a former leader of the Aounist student movement, who, at the time of our meeting, had become a FPM official in his home region of Baabda. Born in 1977 in Senegal, Bachir came to Lebanon with his family at the age of 9. Discovering the violence of the war and educated by his parents to “*hate the [Syrian] occupation*”<sup>460</sup>, Bachir narrated the rise of Michel Aoun in 1988 as the beginning of new times, the advent of political change<sup>461</sup>. Immediately identified as a symbol, Michel Aoun is presented as indispensable for the FPM's very existence. The equivalence between the Party and its leader constructed here opens the way for a classification of the social world into distinctive “families”, corresponding to the various partisan groupings represented by their respective heads. But it also introduces the members as “*children*”, irresponsible and unable to take care of themselves, needing the supervision of their father to ensure their own security and guide their path. The relief expressed here exemplifies a sense of fusion realized between the followers and the leader, all of them belonging to a same social organism: the absence of Michel Aoun being translated as the tearing of a part of the collective identity incarnated by the group. The interpretative repertoire, centered on the domestic semantic field, builds an unswerving – but in a way also involuntary – link unifying leader and partisans. The trope of the family supposes indeed a natural and organic bond, extraneous to the institutional apparatus of the Party in which Michel Aoun stands as an elected president.

As the conversation went on, I asked Bachir to describe his first encounter with Michel Aoun:

*“Je l'ai rencontré la première fois, je ne me souviens plus, ça devait être 1997, ou 1998, lors d'un voyage en France. Je me rappelle à la Haute-Maison, dans la*

<sup>459</sup> Bachir, interview with the author: May 5, 2008 [in French].

<sup>460</sup> Bachir, interview with the author: November 16, 2007 [in French].

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

*banlieue parisienne. Bien sûr, vous savez quand on est loin de quelqu'un, on a toujours cette image disons mythique de la personne. Donc le rapprochement avec une personne comme le Général Aoun change notre regard sur lui, le transforme dans un sens beaucoup plus rationnel et objectif. On garde cette admiration pour lui, on respecte une personne comme le général Aoun, mais elle est respectée, écoutée d'une manière beaucoup plus scientifique, beaucoup plus objective. Donc on est moins amoureux, dans le sens fanatique du terme, de la personne, et plus admiratif. Donc c'est vraiment ce qui a changé en moi."*<sup>462</sup>

In contrast with his spontaneous reaction when confronted with the image of Michel Aoun, Bachir tended to distance himself from the emotional dimension contained in the relation of leadership. Two interpretations, actually more complementary than exclusive of each other, seem possible. First, Bachir's comments resonate as an attempt to verbalize the cognitive mobility he experienced when inserting himself within the organization of the Party. Then, he ceased to be a follower to become part of an institution arranged along sensible objectives, undergoing a rationalization of his instinctive sense of belonging activated by the symbolic character of Michel Aoun. Second, his explanation came as if, in the interview interaction, he got carried away by his own emotional feelings toward the leader, momentarily losing his “*footing*” to use Goffman's concept (1979), before trying to go back to the interpretation of the character assigned to him in the situation, of a FPM official, driven by political motivations rather than his affects. However, it remains that some details presented in his account reflect the high emotional load of the encounter with the leader, qualified as a “*myth*” and subjected to the “*love*” of the group members.

Logically, the importance of the first encounter with the General seemed reinforced for those who became active at the time of his exile in France:

*“La première fois que j’ai rencontré le Général en face à face, c’était assez intense. Je l’ai vu pour la première fois en France où j’ai l’habitude de passer des vacances. (...) En 2004 j’ai demandé à ce qu’on me prenne un rendez-vous avec le Général et je suis allé le voir. Il habitait à Paris, pas loin de l’ambassade du Liban, à côté de l’avenue Victor Hugo et de la rue Copernic. J’étais assez ému ce jour là, la tension avant la rencontre...on m’a fait rentrer au salon et on m’a dit: ‘il va vous voir’...à l’époque c’était beaucoup plus facile que maintenant, il n’y avait pas tous ces contrôles de sécurité mais je me rappelle bien qu’il y avait deux gendarmes français en bas de l’immeuble. Quand il est arrivé, je l’ai salué, il s’est approché et m’a embrassé, il m’a dit: ‘Vous les jeunes du Liban, vous serez le seul salut du Liban’.”*<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> Bachir, interview with the author: May 5, 2008 [in French].

<sup>463</sup> Marc, interview with the author: October 31, 2007 [in French].

*“Un été, j’ai voyagé pour rendre visite à ma tante qui habite en France. Dans l’avion, j’ai rencontré onze aounistes qui se rendaient chez le général Aoun (...). Ils ont pris du vin et ils ont bu à la santé du Général. J’ai voulu leur montrer à quel point j’étais attachée au général Aoun, et j’ai vidé le verre d’un seul coup...[rires] Ça commençait à me tourner la tête ! (...) Quand je l’ai appelé la première fois, avant qu’il ne réponde j’ai raccroché, cinq ou six fois, parce que tu vois, le Général Aoun, c’est un idéal. En fin de compte, quand il m’a répondu, il m’a parlé un quart d’heure au téléphone, j’ai oublié que c’était le Général Aoun, la grande image: il m’a parlé à moi, une fille de seize ans et avec un langage simple. J’ai senti que je connais cette personne depuis très longtemps. (...) [Puis] je suis rentrée à Beyrouth et j’ai rejoint [le CPL] et (...) je compte travailler toute ma vie pour le CPL.”<sup>464</sup>*

Both stories were counted by activists, Marc and Elza, belonging to the same generation: those who joined the movement at the very beginning of the years 2000. Elza's account came spontaneously during the first instants of the interview, right after her emotional remembrance of October 13 that opened our conversation<sup>465</sup>. Marc's report, on the contrary, was elucidated by a question about the important encounters he had made in his life. However, beyond this difference in the context of their formulation, these two narratives remain remarkably similar in their form and content. The precision of the facts told with maximum amount of details defines the formal aspect of the stories. The exactitude of the accounts highlights the pivotal role allocated to the event in the tellers' presentation of their self, but also the somehow “mechanical” dimension of this narrative. Without any doubt, the encounter with the General deeply imprinted their memory and the anecdotes going with the story were probably repeated over and over in many occasions.

The signification they attach to the episode at the time of its utterance refers at the same time to their personal trajectories within the Party – possibly a prerequisite in their career or even a ritual instituting the boundary between activists and simple sympathizers – and their present situation in the internal economy of the group. Staging their encounter with the leader at the time of his exile in France immediately positions them in contrast with the late activists who joined the FPM after Michel Aoun's return. Therefore, the emotion entrenched in the narrative about the meeting illustrates the outcome of a personal move toward the collectivity as well as the affirmation of the self as “unquestionable” activist. At the moment of the encounter, the long absence of the leader granted him a kind of mythical aura. Michel Aoun was nowhere in Lebanon but, for the young activists like Marc and Elza, omnipresent – the

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<sup>464</sup> Elza, interview with the author: November 17, 2007 [in French].

<sup>465</sup> See the framing Chapter of this work.



tags on the walls declaring “*Awn râji*” [Aoun is coming back], the car-horn sound associated to the supporters of the General, the phone contacts, the underground distribution of the leaflet *al-Nashra* [the Bulletin], etc. In spite of the lack of organization of the movement and its limited – but nonetheless real – impact on the ground, the secrecy surrounding the partisan activities as well as the remoteness of the leader bestowed him the attributes of a heroic character arraying from distance the struggle for sovereignty, magnifying his actual weight in the political field. No doubt that for Marc and Elza, whose political consciousness like many activists of their generation awakened in the 1988-1990 era and its immediate aftermath, the opportunity to finally meet the hero represented an achievement as such. This encounter gave them a place in the common history of the Party, a place that they are able to mobilize as constitutive of their self in the interaction of the interview. The emphasis on the preliminary adventures (Marc's suggested journey in Paris, Elza's wine in the plane), the emotional intensity, the last-minute hesitations (Elza hanging up the phone before being able to talk), and the final proximity (Michel Aoun embraced Marc and talked in all simplicity with Elza) counted in both stories, contribute to reconstruct a process of fusion (*iltihâm*) between the self, the leader, and the group, perfectly illustrated in Elza's last words: “*I felt that I'd known this man for very long. [Then] I came back to Lebanon and I joined [the FPM], for which I will work all my life.*”

The semantic of proximity surfaces during most of my interviews. Even by those who were unable or too young to organize an encounter in France, Michel Aoun is generally described as a humble man, sharing the preoccupations of his followers. The nearness expressed in the accounts of the encounters with the leader is such that Michel Aoun tends to be systematically associated with a family figure as it was the case in Bachir's memories:

*“[Pour notre première rencontre] je suis monté à Rabieh avec mon père. On a pris un rendez-vous de 15 minutes (...) Comme je te l'avais dit, mon père le connaissait depuis le quartier [à Haret Hreik] et l'époque de Baabda (...). C'était un dialogue familial...on n'a pas parlé de politique, juste des souvenirs entre lui et mon père, de l'époque du palais.”<sup>466</sup>*

*“Vous allez chez lui, c'est comme si vous étiez chez votre grand-père. Vous n'êtes pas chez un grand chef politique confessionnel (...) vous êtes vraiment chez votre grand-père qui vous accueille.”<sup>467</sup>*

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<sup>466</sup> Jacques, interview with the author: April 30, 2008 [in French].

<sup>467</sup> Maroun, interview with the author: November 6, 2007 [in French].

*“Toujours on le voit dans les médias mais en réalité il est assez petit [rires]! Vraiment c'est comme un grand-père quand tu le vois...tu sens qu'il est proche. En général, les grands-pères sont sincères, ils ne mentent pas. Et bien lui, il est comme ça!”<sup>468</sup>*

*“[Quand je l'ai rencontré] j'ai l'impression de le connaître, d'être dans une réunion familiale. Il parle des mêmes principes dont nous parlons et veut les appliquer. En plus, il cherche toujours à écouter les jeunes et à les comprendre. Toujours il demande à propos de l'université, qu'est-ce qui se passe, comment vont les cours. Il veut savoir sur les problèmes sociaux qu'on vit, il n'y a pas que la politique. Parce qu'il veut vivre dans une société légale et juste. (...) Il est très proche des gens et il a une très bonne mémoire: il ne se rappelait pas que ma grand-mère et sa sœur étaient amies autrefois mais quand je lui ai dit, il a tout de suite retrouvé le nom de ma grand-mère!”<sup>469</sup>*

*“You know I don't have a very good relationship with my father, and even though I didn't meet General Michel Aoun so often, I think he has been very much a father figure to me. More than my own father. I consider him more like a father. When we have meetings with the School committee for instance, he does not talk about low politics, he talks about concepts, how to think, etc. (...) His talks are very nice, you can use them in life as well than [sic] in politics. (...) The first time we met was in 2008 and the last time was about 6 months ago. (...) He is very reachable, as he knows what he is talking about. He reads a lot and he is very educated. He does not only speak about politics, he can speak about everything.”<sup>470</sup>*

Beyond the multiplication of cases only suggested here to convey the recurrence of the representation of Michel Aoun as a paternal – the transition between the image of a “father” and the one of a “grand-father” deserves nonetheless to be noted – figure, the last example in particular, because of its utmost trait, exhibits many interesting developments. Jawad, whose father had left home and plunged his family in a stalemate<sup>471</sup>, had strongly connected his belonging to the FPM with his personal family situation:

*“I was hurt by the Church and I wanted to change the system in which Churches have so much importance. Because I am still a Maronite, when I get married, I may face the same problem than my parents had. And I don't want that for my kids. I want them to live in a better situation. Because here, there is no civil law for all the*

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<sup>468</sup> Jim, interview with the author: December 9, 2009 [in French].

<sup>469</sup> Layla, interview with the author: March 31, 2011 [in French].

<sup>470</sup> Jawad, interview with the author: March 31, 2011 [in English].

<sup>471</sup> See Chapter Four.

*Lebanese. If you want to get married and you are not a religious person, you cannot. There is no civil law for marriage, just religious laws. And I am definitely not going to get married under the Maronite law, because that changed my whole life.*"<sup>472</sup>

The impact of personal experience on political engagement has been described in Chapter Four. What matters to the demonstration here concerns more specifically the structure of meaning built in the account. Suggesting that someone cannot get married in Lebanon without *being* religious implies that the social existence of the individuals relies on their communal group. The *Aspektstruktur* of the Lebanese society depicted in his comment is the one of a reality dominated by religious belonging. In such a context, political parties appear as alternative groupings socially validated, both because of their indirect ties with communal structures and their influence on the everyday life of the Lebanese. Thus, the construction of the leader and his identification as a father figure supplies Jawad with the symbolic resources he needs to construct his self in a society in which the individual is legally – and often socially – defined by the sectarian affiliation of his family. The leader tends to become the necessary identificatory emblem for the definition of the personal self. As Michel Aoun becomes his substitute father, the FPM turns out as his replacement family, which offers him recognizable social existence. The political aspects of the relation of leadership are set aside to the benefit of an existential link: more than “*low politics*”, the leader communicates profound insights on life, as a father would do for his children. The fusion of the self within the group is thus operated through the mediation of the character of the leader, which provides the necessary affects in the process of identification.

The affectivity expressed toward the paternal figure of Michel Aoun appears strongly connected with the living memory of the individuals, the first scale of temporality exposed in the narratives of the activists. The characterization of the leader as a (grand-)father emerges from personal souvenirs mostly attached to short-term experiences. The connection between such individual memories and the collective sense of belonging seems therefore produced by the fusion of the self into a common family, interpreted as an organic and genealogical order dominated by the leader. It is less the narration of a shared experience of the relation of leadership that sustains the identification but rather the assertion of an extreme proximity to the leader and, as a consequence with the partisan collectivity, reaching its climax in the trope of the family. The emotions inserted within the stories attached to the character of Michel Aoun help ordering the interpretation of the self as a member of a common family.

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<sup>472</sup> Jawad, interview with the author: March 31, 2011 [in English].

The relation of leadership enters the realm of intimacy, as illustrated by the frequent exposition of photographs of the General within the house or the room of the activists<sup>473</sup>. Interestingly, this familial intimacy tends to allocate an extra legitimacy to the leader: as you cannot exchange your parents, you cannot contest your leader. The representations of Michel Aoun constructed in the student activists' narratives thus enable to better understand the low level of contestation observed within the FPM regarding the attitudes of and management by Michel Aoun.

However, this recurrent feature in the evocation of the leader should not completely obscure the plurality of the situations existing among the FPM activists and sympathizers. Limitations exist, restricting the process of fusion in the relation of leadership. Alain, although strongly implicated within the movement recalled that:

*"Je n'ai jamais eu dans ma maison ou dans ma chambre une photo de Michel Aoun (...). Je ne l'ai jamais idolâtré. Parce que c'est ce que me disait mon père: 'tous ceux qui sont avec Michel Aoun l'idolâtré' (...). Alors moi, je ne pense pas que Michel Aoun est un dieu ou quelque chose comme ça, c'est quelqu'un comme tout le monde, mais qui pense correctement."*<sup>474</sup>

The reserves expressed by Alain's father – a former Kata'eb supporter – have to be situated in their context. In 1988, his elder sons like many young people of their generation took up the cause of the General, forcing the family to leave for France, according to Alain in order to limit the involvement of one of his brothers<sup>475</sup>, who nonetheless participated in the sequestration of the Lebanese Ambassador organized by Michel Aoun's supporters in Paris on October 13, 1990 to protest against the Syrian assault on Baabda. Alain grew up in the shadow of the engagement of his brothers – *"those crazy people acted without any sense: take hostages, go and beat the policemen...Beat the CRS [security policemen], come on! I understood what the word meant ten years later, but I always had it in my mind"*<sup>476</sup> he once told me. Limiting his identification with the figure of the leader might have been a way to give his political engagement an acceptable form according to his father's criticism. It is possible to imagine that his interpretation of the role of partisan activist has been therefore shaped

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<sup>473</sup> The phenomenon exists among other partisan group. For example, Isabelle Rivoal describes the intimacy of the relation to Walid Joumblatt expressed by his followers (Rivoal 2012, p. 144).

<sup>474</sup> Alain, interview with the author: April 20, 2008 [in French].

<sup>475</sup> Alain, interview with the author: November 7, 2007 [in French].

<sup>476</sup> Alain, interview with the author: April 20, 2008. The original statement was in French: *"(...) ces fous faisaient n'importe quoi, prendre en otage, monter et casser des CRS! Mais casser des CRS quoi! J'ai compris le mot CRS après dix ans, mais en fait, j'avais toujours ce mot dans la tête"*.

in contrast with the one of his brother to gain legitimacy in his family environment. Accordingly, Alain has constructed his self on the image of a critical involvement.

Beyond the direct influence of the political beliefs within the family, the local and sectarian environment may also reduce the affectivity invested in the relation of leadership. The rise of Michel Aoun in 1988 indeed impacted most of all the population living in the predominantly Christian territories of the “Eastern regions”. For the people living outside this space, the emergence of the Aounist movement had a considerably lower impact as they continued to live under the influence of other political forces and/or militias. Tayeb, whose Shiite family originates from the Beqaa valley and who has lived his childhood between Hamra, in a neighborhood dominated by the SSNP, and Hezbollah's stronghold of the *Dâhiyeh*<sup>477</sup>, could tell me that: *“Ten years ago, I didn't know Michel Aoun. He was not famous in my environment, he was not in my political landscape (...). I was in an environment dominated by a party strongly linked with Syria...maybe I knew his name, but for sure I didn't know the movement.”*<sup>478</sup>

In his case, the attachment to the leader remains much more related to a political awaking, less emotionally loaded because deprived of any anchoring memories in his personal life. Finally, the position occupied by the individual in regard to the group at the time of the story-telling also determines the nature of the identification with the leader:

*“When I see the picture, I think about all the things we talked about. I don't care about him: I've never followed Michel Aoun as a person. I don't even agree with everything he did during the war. I've never followed Michel Aoun, I've only followed the principles of FPM. So I really don't care about him personally. I am concerned about FPM only. I think it's an old man now and he will not stay for long. (...)*

*He is a normal man after all. And in my opinion he is not the cause of FPM. He just had common views with the young people in Lebanon during his stay in France. He was not even the founder. OK they coordinate, but I don't think he was the cause. I think the situation and the people who didn't want the situation that we were having created the FPM. (...) He is a person like me and you. Sometimes he is angry,*

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<sup>477</sup> Tayeb's portrait is detailed in Chapter Four.

<sup>478</sup> Tayeb, interview with the author: November 4, 2007. The original statement was in French: *“Il y a dix ans, je ne connaissais pas Michel Aoun. Il n'était pas connu dans mon entourage, il n'était pas dans ma vision politique (...). J'étais dans un environnement dominé par un parti aux idées trop syriennes...peut-être je connaissais le nom mais en tous cas pas le mouvement.”*

*sometimes not, like anyone else. [The discussions on his personality in the media] are irrelevant.*"<sup>479</sup>

The rupture in the identification with the group experienced by Anis after the episode of the AUB student elections in 2010<sup>480</sup> apparently strongly affects his interpretation of the relation of leadership. In his repeated affirmation of the negative effect of the FPM original principles, the rejection of the leader as the incarnation of the cause enables to powerfully disconnect himself from the Party officials. The enunciation of distance is all the more possible since he was socialized in a non-politicized family and, in addition, since he grew up outside Lebanon in Brazil, reducing the impact of local interactions on the construction of the attachment with a sectarian or partisan group<sup>481</sup>.

These limitations nonetheless highlight *a contrario* the connection between the interpretation of the relation of leadership and the living memory of the individuals composed by their personal experiences: family, local implantation, and life trajectory all impact the construction of the signification attached to the character of the leader. Defining them as members of a same family, the narratives of the activists describe an organic bond unifying the leader and his followers, perpetuated across generations as the transition between the image of the father and the representation of the grand-father illustrates, the context of socialization playing a pivotal role in this process. Michel Aoun is portrayed as the head of a family, close to its members and concerned about their future. Sustained by an affectivity of fusion that even becomes a genetic thus naturalized link inseparable of the self<sup>482</sup>, the rhetoric of the family also relies on a common history in which the (grand-)father performs as the hero of the internalized partisan plot.

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<sup>479</sup> Anis, interview with the author: November 30, 2010 [in English].

<sup>480</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>481</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>482</sup> Many of the activists I met interpreted their attachment to the FPM as “*natural*” or “*normal*”. Some even go further like Khalid, born in 1985 and active in the movement since the early 2000s, who explained that: “[You don’t become a FPMer], you don’t choose, you are or you are not...it seems that I happened to be this kind of people”. Khalid, interview with the author: November 3, 2007. The original statement was in French: “[*tu ne deviens pas CPL, tu ne choisis pas, tu l’es ou tu ne l’es pas...il faut croire que j’étais cette personne.*”

## B) The Hero of the partisan cause: an affectivity of inspiration

*“Pour moi, c'est le sauveur...Michel Aoun, c'est le sauveur. Et d'ailleurs toujours on s'est posé la question : 'qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait pendant ces 15 ans, pendant son exil, pour qu'ils nous fassent oublier cet homme ?'. Rien! Il s'est avéré que tout ce que Michel Aoun a dit était juste. Il nous a dit : 'vous allez arriver dans un mur si on continue ainsi'. Et on y est arrivé. (...) Crois-moi, s'ils avaient fait de bonnes choses, le peuple l'aurait oublié ! Mais qu'est-ce qui s'est passé, le contraire ! Il a augmenté son pouvoir et les gens qui l'aimaient un peu ont commencé à l'aimer beaucoup plus ! C'est à cause de leur comportement tout ça. C'est pour cela que je pense que c'est un sauveur.*

*- Quels sont tes souvenirs de vos rencontres ?*

*C'est comme si je le voyais maintenant. C'est toujours le même sentiment : le sentiment de fierté, le sentiment d'être en face d'une personne dont l'Histoire va parler, une personne qui a écrit des pages et des pages de l'histoire moderne du Liban. Et moi, j'ai fait partie de ça...c'est un homme vraiment historique, comme toi si tu demandes à ton grand-père s'il a serré la main de Charles de Gaulle par exemple.*

*- Qu'est-ce qu'il dégage comme personne ?*

*C'est un papa, vraiment c'est un papa...vraiment si tu le connais et que tu le rencontres face à face, tu es en face d'une personne sensible et d'une personne qui pleure devant les martyrs, une personne qui pleure s'il voit une personne en train d'être mal traitée...c'est une personne vraiment pleine de sentiment, c'est pour cela qu'il s'énerve très vite, parce qu'il ne peut pas supporter l'injustice ou le mensonge !”<sup>483</sup>*

History and the political struggle are the two main components of Halim's reaction when confronted with the photo of Michel Aoun. It was shown in the previous chapter how this young man, son of one of the Party's dominant officials, incrusted his personal narrative identity in the collective memory of the group<sup>484</sup>. Here, the emotional aspect of the account focuses on the gratitude and pride expressed toward the leader, erecting him as a landmark in History in accordance with the emplotment of the FPM narrative. The comparison with former French president Charles de Gaulle is from this point of view illuminating. The frequent description of Michel Aoun as the “de Gaulle of Lebanon” makes sense at several levels in the milieu of the FPM, as the representation of the career of the French statesman is said to mirror the emplotment of

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<sup>483</sup> Halim, interview with the author: December 1, 2009 [in French].

<sup>484</sup> See Chapter Five.

the General's trajectory: the military man rejecting the defeat, the fight against occupation, the exile (actual in the case of Michel Aoun, both real – in London – and symbolic in the case of de Gaulle – “*La traversée du désert*”) followed by a triumphant return opening the way for a reform of the state – the Fifth Republic in France, the project of the Third Republic carried by the FPM in Lebanon, in particular during the 2009 elections<sup>485</sup>.

The affectivity of fusion, still noticeable at the end of the quotation, finds itself coupled with another register. The picture drawn by Halim's perception of Michel Aoun sets an emotional context in which the historical and exemplary dimensions of the character of the leader stand as the key features. Proximity built in the affectivity of fusion vanishes – before resurfacing in the last comment – to give way to the image of an unmatched heroic character who left his print in the History. Fusion appears no more possible in such conditions. Admiration and the related search for imitation become the feelings nourishing the projection of the individual self within the collective narrative. More than a father, Michel Aoun is also a Hero, the central part of the partisan plot, defending the cause of the group. Accordingly, this dimension of the relation of leadership is anchored in the memory of the partisan struggle, organized around the key events of the emplotment of History suggested in the FPM's identity narrative.

“*He is a symbol*” was Virgil's first reaction to the photograph of the General. Born in 1989, this cultured young man had supervised within the FPM's Office of Student Affairs the private universities in the region of Beirut since his graduation from AUB. After asserting that Michel Aoun represented an emblem of the resistance against the selling off of the national economy and sovereignty, he was abruptly interrupted by an old man, seating in the table next to us: “*The General will turn 76 or 77 this year, we need young people! It's not possible, we want young people!*” Virgil tried to temperate the contradiction, turned toward me and whispered: “*He wants young people, we don't!*” Then, he went on:

*(...) Depuis 1988, nous pouvons dire que le Général représente dans le pays un personnage clé. Et même durant son exil, les partisans du CPL on fait que sa présence était sentie sur le terrain. (...) Il a 75 ans aujourd'hui mais pour nous il est toujours jeune car c'est lui qui lance les initiatives les plus créatives. Pour nous, c'est un emblème, un symbole et une inspiration. Si on prend la période entre 1990 et 1995 où le silence était total entre le Général et ses partisans, ils se sont concertés et organisés illicitement en ce temps là, ils ont pris uniquement son modèle, sa figure*

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<sup>485</sup> The 2009 electoral program of the FPM was entitled: “Toward the Third Republic”.



*comme emblème, sans avoir de contact avec lui, et ils ont réussi à arriver à un point où ce qu'ils faisaient sur le terrain était ce que le Général souhaitait, sans qu'il n'ait eu à leur dire. Donc voilà, on pourrait continuer sans cesse de parler de lui...*

*- Comment décrirais-tu sa personnalité ?*

*C'est un personnage cassant. Il a un tempérament assez dur. Il est militaire en fin de compte...enfin ce n'est pas un leader politique traditionnel car les leaders politiques au Liban sont issus soit d'un héritage, soit par des milices. Que ce soit les Joumblatt qui sont leaders politiques de père en fils, ou bien Samir Geagea qui a fait sa politique par les chars et le sang. Le Général lui est un militaire qui est monté normalement dans la hiérarchie, jusqu'au moment où les circonstances ont voulu qu'il prenne le commandement, sans que lui n'ait vraiment cherché cela (...)."<sup>486</sup>*

An inspiration at the successive stages of the Party's history, Michel Aoun plays the role of the model. Incarnation of the meaning of the cause – a symbol – and stirring of the political mobilizations on the field, the leader, at first a normal individual, finds himself in the narrative projected on the front stage of History without wanting it and then demonstrates extraordinary abilities. Based on this conventional heroic plot, the story of Michel Aoun voiced by Virgil enables the construction of the process of identification with a leader defined by contrast with the conventional images of leadership existing in the Lebanese society. The relation of leadership appears remodeled to display an exchange, an interplay of mirroring will between the Hero and the followers. If the leader came to embody the cause of the people, the people – as well as the historical circumstances – imposed the heroic charge on the leader. The representation of the memory of the episode of 1989 convenes an interpretation of the relation of leadership in which the Hero creates the group and the group creates the Hero, as cited in a comment pronounced by Philippe three year earlier to describe the very existence of the FPM:

*"Le CPL est né du peuple (...) en 1989, lorsque le général était à Baabda, qu'il y avait les bombardements syriens et un million de Libanais regroupés autour du Palais (...). C'est le peuple qui a soutenu cette personne à ce moment là, cette personne qui le représente (...). Ce n'est pas quelque chose que l'on a décidé, c'était comme ça (...). Un million de personne qui se sont retrouvées au même endroit au même moment...c'est quelque chose qui ne s'est jamais passé dans l'histoire du Liban."<sup>487</sup>*

The counter-examples of Walid Joumblatt and Samir Geagea in Virgil's answer came precisely to differentiate Aoun's leadership from two models grounded in two

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<sup>486</sup> Virgil, interview with the author: October 23, 2010 [in French].

<sup>487</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: November 14, 2007 [in French].

different eras delimited by the 1975-1990 events. As demonstrated by Sune Haugbolle (2010, p. 31), the Lebanese structures of leadership have undergone strong transformations from the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The “silent Revolution” (Khalaf 2002, p. 173) introduced by modern capitalism as well as the ideologization following the emergence of political parties (Haugbolle 2010, p. 39-40) such as the Lebanese Communist Party, the Phalanges [Kata’eb], or the Syrian Socialist National Party all created in the 1920s or 1930s, deeply impacted the leadership system formerly based on a patron-client model (Höttinger 1966; Picard 2001). The order of the *zu’amâ’* [leaders], whose roots can be traced back in the feudal organization, used to organized a triple hierarchical level: at the bottom, the followers swore allegiance to the leaders, who played the role of intermediary between their community and the State and provided job opportunities. Between the two, the *qabadayât* [local tough men] were in charge of controlling the followers, mediating between them and their leader, and defending the honor of their lords (Johnson 1986, p. 134). The system existed both in the country side (Gilsenan 1996) and in the city (Johnson 1986). This *zu’amâ’* order tended to play a stabilizing role in the Lebanese fragmented society by diffusing sectarian tensions (e.g. Hudson 1968; Hanf 1993; al-Khazen 2000). But the war accelerated the erosion of the system. The irruption of armed groups that took control of the streets triggered the transfer of power from the *zu’amâ’* to the *qabadayât*: “During the clashes of 1975-1976, they [the leaders] lost the allegiance of their street. [...] The lieutenants, the *qabadayât*, rebelled and took charge of representing the localities. [...] All over Lebanon, young men ascended to high positions on the credential of being the defenders of the community.” (Haugbolle 2010, p. 51) Whereas Joubblatt, at the same time heir of a feudal landlord family and leader of the PSP militia during the war, incarnate the transition between the two modes of representations, Samir Geagea, also mentioned in the account, clearly refers to the second model, the one of “gang” members who became dominant through the use of violence. Michel Aoun is on the contrary depicted as another kind of leader, different from both examples, a providential man coming from the national Army – thus incarnating patriotism and legality – who rebelled against the established order without falling into the indiscriminate violence of the militias.

The FPM narrative about the war works as a legitimizing mechanism in the present all the more since most of the political groups remain dominated by leaders who emerged from the order of the militias. In that context, Michel Aoun's irruption on the political field presents the aspects of a “founding event” in the sense of Mannheim for a generation born and raised during the war, the “*Jil 'Awn* [Generation Aoun]” for whom the General became the embodiment of a revolt against the war system.

Presented as the symbol of the hope for a return to the legal order, an alternative to the militias, the rise of the Hero introduced a radical shift reflected in the narratives of the activists who experienced this period. For example, Khalil, Patrice, and Paula, all born in the middle of the 1970s, all told me about the rise of Michel Aoun as the motive of their political engagement:

*“[A cause de la guerre] notre famille est partie en Afrique. J’avais neuf ou dix ans. (...) Puis il y a eu l’époque du Général Aoun, qui était pour nous un espoir. Quand le Général est arrivé au pouvoir en septembre 1988, tout le monde était déboussolé, il y avait la guerre civile qui durait, le règne des milices...et le Général Aoun est arrivé, c’était un espoir ! On a rebroussé chemin et on est revenus au Liban.”<sup>488</sup>*

*“Je fais partie de cette jeunesse qui a été fortement imprégnée dans les années 1988-1989, lorsqu’il y a eu ce mouvement populaire à Baabda, autour du général Aoun. C’est vrai que j’étais assez jeune, quatorze ou quinze ans, mais c’est une période où on a compris que cette personne est différente des autres politiciens au Liban.”<sup>489</sup>*

*“En 1988-1989, mon père était soldat. Il a vécu toutes les batailles au Liban (...). Ça a nourri en nous une sorte de révolte, sur la guerre, sur tout ce qui se passe, sur ce qui nous arrive. On s’est révoltés... je me suis révoltée contre ça et j’ai trouvé le Général, avec cet esprit de révolte et cette volonté de libérer tous les Libanais. Ça m’a donné l’enthousiasme pour me plonger dans l’action militante. (...) Il y a eu un mouvement contre cette guerre que l’on subissait (...). J’étais encore très jeune, et j’ai foncé. J’ai participé à plusieurs camps [organisés] pour les jeunes. Il y avait une sorte de mobilisation des jeunes, pour savoir un peu où est-ce que l’on va, avec qui on traite, quelles sont les idées de Michel Aoun, comment pouvoir faire sortir les Syriens du Liban, comment réclamer notre liberté, ne pas céder à la terreur des bombes. Donc c’était une sorte de réponse à ce que nous attendions en tant que jeunes qui avaient vécu une guerre difficile et qui attendaient la libération du Liban et la libération de la patrie.”<sup>490</sup>*

The inflection of personal trajectories generated by the popular enthusiasm that accompanied the episode of 1989 tends to figure a milestone in both the collective and the individual memory. Paula, who took in charge the formation of the FPM members in Zahleh after 2005, situates in the story of her motives the character of the General as the impulse, the inspiration explaining her engagement, past and present. A military – like her father – Michel Aoun played the role of a catalyst. The affirmation of a shared intention to put an end to the war works as the unifying device in the horizon of the

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<sup>488</sup> Khalil, interview with the author: November 15, 2007 [in French].

<sup>489</sup> Patrice, interview with the author: November 14, 2007 [in French].

<sup>490</sup> Paula, interview with the author: May 4, 2008 [in French].

memory of the partisan cause. The emotions involved in this projection into the past refer to the rebellion, inspired by the leader, against the *status quo*, that is still presented as the justification of the quest of the FPM today.

Anchoring the relation of leadership in the events of 1989-1990 and their aftermaths functions in the same manner for Virgil, Khalil, Patrice, and Paula as a device to actualize the meaning of their link to Michel Aoun and thus to the FPM. As the General inspired the mass movement in 1989, he still represents the model for political action today. Not only the recourse to memory enables the present refoundation of the significations of Michel Aoun's role by extending the temporal limits of his heroic advent, it also regenerates the horizon in which political action within the FPM is interpreted opposing the militias' chaotic order to the virtue of the Aounist cause. Their stories therefore also contribute to the reaffirmation of intergroup boundaries.

*“La première image que j’ai vue de Michel Aoun était sur une revue du PSNS, qui s’appelait al-Binâ, ‘la construction’. Les Syriens avaient bombardé le quartier de l’Unesco, avec des canons de 240 mm et ils ont accusé le général Aoun d’en être le responsable et d’avoir causé des victimes civiles. Le journal titrait ‘Michel Bacha al-Jazzâr’. ‘Jazzâr’ en Arabe signifie ‘boucher’. C’était en référence à Ahmad Bacha al-Jazzâr, un gouverneur ottoman de Akka [Acre] au 18<sup>e</sup> siècle, qui était très sanguinaire. C’est pourquoi, je n’ai pas accepté cette image du général Aoun. Et je me souviens en 1989, à cette époque, d’un seul coup les bombardements s’étaient accentués et un obus était tombé au pied de notre maison (...). Nous avons subi les événements et bien sûr soutenu l’armée libanaise (...). Bon, moi j’étais avec mes parents, j’étais encore petit, je n’avais pas de conscience claire, mais avec le temps, j’ai continué à lire les journaux, lire des livres à propos de la guerre libanaise ou du général Michel Aoun. J’ai notamment énormément lu en cette année 1998-1999 (...) et j’ai trouvé que la politique du général Michel Aoun est la meilleure – meilleure que les autres. C’est celle qui représente mes sentiments, mes ambitions, mes principes pour le Liban : libérer le Liban, établir un Etat juste et fort, un Liban laïc également, où l’on n’est pas emprisonné entre Chrétiens seulement. Le discours était national, il se destinait à tous (...). Puis le 13 octobre est arrivé (...). C’était très dur...c’était la fin, notre défaite. Et je pense que cette date là, tu as dû le voir en interrogeant mes collègues, elle est très importante pour nous, ça a été un motif pour continuer dans le militantisme pour le CPL, continuer dans notre activité politique. Il faut voir l’influence de cette date dans notre conscience politique.”<sup>491</sup>*

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<sup>491</sup> Michel, interview with the author: April 30, 2008 [in French].

Beyond his nomination as a Prime minister, it is more the starting of the "Liberation war" – depicted in the account with the episode of the bombing of West Beirut – against the Syrian troops that marked the irruption of General Aoun on the front stage of the Lebanese wars. Born in 1981, Michel presents here a specific version of the history highlighting his position as a FPM member today. The exoneration for the responsibility of the bombing of West Beirut mirrors an oriented version of the past<sup>492</sup> that realizes Michel's present belonging. By anchoring his self in this particular narrative, he makes an act of will – the rejection of Michel Aoun's negative image – that presents his own positioning in the current Lebanese political field. Comparably, the reference to a state "not confined to Christians" aims once again at pointing the difference between Michel Aoun's cause and the project of the Lebanese Forces, accused of favoring the division of Lebanon into sectarian cantons. The broken chronology of his story – Michel said he acquired a better political consciousness in the late 1990s but reflected this state of mind on the events of 1989-1990 as if it enabled him to improve his understanding of the events at the time of their progress – illustrates the narrative reconstruction of signification mobilized to interpret his own trajectory and reinsert his self against the horizon shaped by the partisan emplotment of History. Michel's *a priori* rejection of the image of Michel Aoun as a "butcher" shows how present meaning is injected into past memories. While the reference to Ahmad Bacha tends to inscribe Michel Aoun in a longer temporality, it is above all the time of the political action initiated in 1989, prolonged during the 1990s, and continued after 2005 that supports the inspirational dimension of the quest of the Hero.

The narrative dimension of the collective memory sustains the affective identification including for those who do not carry any personal experience of the past period. Presented with the word "Baabda", Malek, born in 1988, organized his comments on the personality of Michel Aoun, his extraordinary fate, and his faculty to inspire the cause to the people:

*"In 1989, for once in our history, a person came who really, at least, was speaking the mind of the people. He was saying that we want a free Lebanon. Lebanon for Christians, Muslims and everyone. (...) This was a speech that every Lebanese felt. It brings the nationalism out of you. Even if you are a sectarian person, you would still find a little amount of nationalism. He is a leader! He is a great leader. The way he speaks...he convinces you! You want to go out and shout: 'This is our country, leave us alone!'. He has a way, he is a very convincing man. Because what he says is what you think but cannot express. This is what brought the people back then and this is what still brings the people in the FPM now.*

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<sup>492</sup> On the narrative and counter-narrative about the Lebanese wars, see Chapters Three and Five.

- *And what is your definition of a leader?*

*Well, there are a lot of definitions for a leader. But I can tell my own definition: it is a person, a charismatic person of course, who can take tough decisions when he has to. A person who does the right thing even if that means losing his own benefit. That is what did general Aoun when he went to Syria before the elections [in 2009]. Many Christians, more or less hate the Syrians. When general Aoun went to Syria right before the elections, many thought that the people will turn right against him. (...) We were in a big meeting and he was there, and he said: 'I said in 1989, when I started the war against the Syrian that once Syria is out, I will go there to build up the friendship between the Lebanese and the Syrians, if the Syrians agree'. A guy jumped out of seat and shouted: 'You could have waited after the elections, you did not have to go now, we will lose a lot of votes, especially in the Christian sects'. General Aoun answered: 'If you think that what you are doing is right, then you have to do it, no matter of the timing. If I go after the elections, that would be lying to the people'. This is a leader! He really doesn't care about the consequences as long as what he is doing is the right thing (...).*

*[After I showed him the picture of Michel Aoun]*

*(...) He is a revolutionary you know. For example I went once on fight with the Majlis al-Tullâb, which is above me in the hierarchy of the party. We had a problem about alliances in AUB. So I went to him. (...) He yelled at me: 'you do what you think is right and no one can tell you otherwise!'. I said: 'But the Majlis al-Tullâb told me otherwise...'. He interrupted me: 'I am your president [in the Party], and I am telling you to do what you want!'. He is a really revolutionary!"<sup>493</sup>*

The rhetoric of “Free” and “Rebel” Lebanon popularized during the 1988-1990<sup>494</sup> era is unsurprisingly at the heart of the construction of reality produced in Malek's story. It is used here as a framing device in order to shed light on the present meaning he attributes to the FPM today. Michel Aoun's ability to speak in the name of the people, to express their thoughts and inspire their actions, unite the people within the Party. The capacity to explicit the ideas of the people and to translate them into political action relates to the conventional definition of the *za'îm* [leader] in the Lebanese context: the verb “*za'ama*” meaning “claim” or “demand”, the *za'îm* embodies the one demanding in the name of his support group, but also the mediator in intergroup relations (Picard 2001, p. 160). Although most of the FPM followers repudiate to define Michel Aoun according to the traditional model of leadership (Abirached 2012, p. 42), associated with feudal and patron-client relations that do not

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<sup>493</sup> Malek, interview with the author: October 26, 2010 [in English].

<sup>494</sup> See Chapter Three.

match the heroic plot organizing the identity narrative of the Party, it remains that the leader within the internal economy of the group occupies a position characterized by the identification and delegation. Beyond being a political strategist, Michel Aoun incarnates the FPM and stands as the “interface” between the in- and the out-group.

The paradox between the apparent rejection of the system of the *zu'amâ'* and the internalization of some of its features has however more to do with the transformations of the role of the leader imposed by the evolution of the socio-political structures. The long march toward the individualization of the society driven by the alterations of the labor market and the economic trends (Gilsenan 1996, p. 267), the weight of the war elite in the political field (Haugbolle 2010, p. 50-52), as well as the more recent polarization of the arena since 2005, all seem to have generated an inflection of both the functioning and representation of the societal power structures. Local intermediary figures, which used to play a pivotal political and social role before the war, have declined, in particular in the wake of the paramilitary organization. However to some extent, between 1990 and 2005, they benefited, along with the militia leaders, from the Syrian domination, which tended to rely on trusted local political men to ensure the election of a docile Parliament. It was especially the case in the Christian populated areas due to the decomposition of the Christian leadership: Michel Aoun and the former President and Kata'eb leader Amin Gemayel were in exile in France, Samir Geagea in jail since 1994. By contrast, after the Syrian withdrawal, the growing political opposition between March 14 on the one hand and the trio Amal-Hezbollah-FPM on the other has favored the domination of nation-wide parties and leaders, undermining the influence of former local key figures as demonstrated by Myriam Catusse and Jamil Moawad during the 2009 elections in Jbeil (Catusse & Moawad 2011, p. 59-60). The cases of Michel Murr in the Metn region or the Skaff family in Zahleh give other sound illustrations of this trend: if they continued to exercise powerful influence in their respective strongholds, they nonetheless tended to form public alliances with national political parties and thus to partly rely on their labels to maintain their own positions.

Malek's description of the leader as “*charismatic*” also carries a reciprocal dimension as it suggests an interplay of “reception and identification” constructed by the followers rather than objective attributes of the leader (Abirached 2012, p. 38). The charisma refers more to the ability invested in the figure of the leader by his partisans to activate social boundaries and symbolically incarnate the collectivity. Finally, the two episodes he related aim at providing actualization of the revolutionary attributes of the leader. The reproduction of the inspirational affectivity in present political context contains the affirmation of continuity between the founding moments in which the

Hero emerged, but also the translation of his qualities in Malek's everyday activism. It is through the inspirational figure of the leader that Malek connects his self as activist with the memory of the FPM and more particularly with the main episode of 1988-1990 that he could not experience personally. Thus the narrative construction of the collective memory of the group also relies on an affectivity of inspiration emanating from the souvenir of the founding era of the FPM.

The convergence between the representations of the leader of a popular Hero in reference to the horizon of interpretation framed by the 1988-1990 events carries the mark of the partisan emplotment of History, which organizes the common codes and enables the projection of the self within a shared narrative about an inspirational leader. The anchoring of the present representations of Michel Aoun into the collective memory of the FPM tends to highlight the continuation of the group, its ability to go back in time to look constantly for the trail it left (Halbwachs 1997 [1950], p.192). The sense of continuity constitutes precisely the dimension that reflects a third layer attached to the memory of the leadership: beyond being a (grand-)father and a hero, Michel Aoun finally surfaces as a prophet.

### **C) Aoun, prophet of the “Christian refusal”: an affectivity of communion**

*“Je me rappelle encore très bien les voitures et les convois qui passaient en bas de ma maison et qui montaient à Baabda au Palais du Peuple...et je me rappelle encore très bien un événement de la chute du général Aoun. Ce jour là, il y avait dans mon immeuble une militante qui avait commencé à pleurer et qui a dit: “tu verras Samir Geagea, tu verras Walid Joumblatt, tu verras Rafiq Hariri, vous verrez tous qu’il avait raison et que la Syrie ne partira jamais du Liban et que vous serez tous sous le joug syrien”. Avec le temps qui passait, je me rappelais de cette phrase et je me rappelais qu’en fin de compte ce monsieur [Michel Aoun] ça faisait cinq ans, puis huit ans, puis quinze ans, qu’il avait raison (...). C’est quelqu’un qui en fin de compte représente pour nous un idéal.”<sup>495</sup>*

In this scene, narrated by Marc during our first encounter to describe his first memories about Michel Aoun, the storyteller introduces an additional dimension: the History of the Party becomes a prophecy, and Michel Aoun is defined by contrast with the other political leaders, a prophet. As such, his character reveals a double transcendental capability: the one to foresee the Future and the one to guide his people accordingly, in a quasi-mystical quest for salvation. These attributes confer a religious aura to the leader, underlining his Christianity.

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<sup>495</sup> Marc, interview with the author: October 31, 2007 [in French].



*“He is the best man for me. He has a good personality, he is a good leader. He think for forty years in advance. But people don't know, they can't think of what will happen to Christians in one or two years...It's not only my thinking, the facts show that the way he took his decisions, after two years or more, that decision prove to be the best decision. Other took decisions and end[ed] up in prison. (...) The first time I saw him, I was so happy. I think he was a grand-father to us. He fills the role that the Maronite Patriarch should play. Michel Aoun is our Patriarch. Now we are waiting for the change, to have a better Patriarch who will unify the Christians. Because I am with unifying the Christians in Lebanon.*

*[...] I don't support the [anti-sectarian] movement. Maybe some of their ideas are good, but I am scared of the future. If you look forward for fifty years, the Muslims will be far more numerous. [Pause] I am scared of that. It would be a matter of time before there is no Christians left (...).”<sup>496</sup>*

In front of the picture of Michel Aoun, Nader draws a parallel between the leader of the FPM and the Maronite Patriarch. Michel Aoun remains a paternal figure as well as a source of inspiration, but he moreover incarnates a religious duty. His visionary decisions grant him a role of protector for his people, here defined beyond the sole FPM to refer to all the Lebanese Christians. Again, the account constructs the leader by contrast with his potential alter-egos, here Samir Geagea evoked allusively by the reference to imprisonment. Unlike the “*Hakîm*”, unable to predict what would happen even to himself, Michel Aoun foresaw the threat menacing the Christians. More precisely, the remark finds its roots in the memory of the opposition between the Lebanese Forces and the national Army led by Michel Aoun, when Samir Geagea decided to support the Taef Agreement and rank side with the Syrian plans in Lebanon. Though this move enabled him to join the first postwar government in 1991, the leader of the LF was rapidly eliminated from the political equation and jailed after a questionable trial in 1994.

Asserting that Michel Aoun fulfills the role of the Patriarch raises the issue of the communal aspect of leadership in a party like the FPM populated mainly by Christians. While the individualization of the relation to spiritual belief tends, as previously discussed, to soften the delimitation between sects within the Christianity experienced by the youth<sup>497</sup>, it remains that the religious labels surface as central in the process of self identification, especially in the political arena. Nader's perception of Michel Aoun as “*our Patriarch*”, and his claim that he will unify the Christians explicitly express a shift in the group of reference considered. The boundaries of

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<sup>496</sup> Nader, interview with the author: March 9, 2011 [in English].

<sup>497</sup> See Chapter Four.

partisan belonging seem to loosen to encompass the Christian community. The temporal scale here mobilized thus corresponds to the long time and re-situates the Party in a wider dimension in which Michel Aoun is at the same time positioned in a lineage – the Patriarchate – and in contrast with the actual Maronite Patriarch, then Mgr. Nasrallah Sfeir. A double translation in meaning thus appears: from the FPM to the Christians, from the Christians to the Maronites. The claim of the Maronite elite to represent all the Christian sects in Lebanon, sustained by the demographic and political domination of their community, has been vivace since the creation of the Lebanese state (Salibi 1989 [1988]). Nader being himself a Maronite, he endorses this perception all the easier to call up the character of Michel Aoun as a figure of realization of his own religious identity in the political field.

Michel Aoun and the FPM also strongly contribute to this trend. Beyond the “christianization” of the Party's positions in the political arena<sup>498</sup>, the FPM deploys symbolic resources to maintain a privileged bond with the Christian populations. Defining himself as “*Patriarch of the Street*”<sup>499</sup> the leader propagates his image as a religious reference. The shift from religion to politics echoes the paradigm of the *âmmiyyât*<sup>500</sup>, which interprets the dynamics of the Christian political field on the basis of the evolution of the power relations between a triangle constituted by the Maronite religious authority, the political leaders from within the community, and the masses (Picard 1996, p. 10-11). Historically, the Patriarch's pursuit of temporal power nurtured the rivalry with the secular elite. A rivalry that escalated after the establishment of the French Mandate that triggered a decrease of the Church political authority (McCallum 2012, p. 354). In the light of this conceptual vision, the opposition between the figure of Michel Aoun and the Patriarch acquires more significations. Indeed, from 1988, the General has maintained troubled relations with the religious leadership of the Maronites. The Patriarch Sfeir exhibited much reservation toward the popular movement that emerged in Baabda. The mutual mistrust between the two poles reached its climax on November 5, 1989, when sympathizers of Michel Aoun molested the Patriarch in front of his residence of

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<sup>498</sup> See Chapters Three and Four.

<sup>499</sup> These words were pronounced by Michel Aoun himself during a TV interview: November 25, 2007.

<sup>500</sup> This concept derives from the notion of *‘amma* (plebs) referring here to a series of popular uprisings among Maronite peasants between 1830 and 1860. Those rebellions were directed against the main feudal families and triggered a rearticulation of the power structure within the Maronite community between three poles: the secular aristocracy, the Church that has traditionally played the role of mediator between the elite and the mass, and the people whose demands were in some occasions directly carried by popular leaders from the plebs, the most famous example being Tanios Shahine (Picard 1996, p. 10-11).

Bkerkeh, enraged by the support for the Taef agreement expressed by the Church (ibid., p. 360; Davie 1991, p. 158). When presented with a picture of the Patriarch Sfeir, Student activists still expose the memory of this antagonism:

*"[Notre mouvement] était limité par l'Église. Pas par les prêtres, qui en majorité aiment beaucoup le Général, mais par le patriarche. Il ne l'aime pas (...). Je pense que c'est parce qu'il a peur qu'il est en train de prendre sa place."*<sup>501</sup>

*"Depuis toujours, le patriarche libanais, et le patriarche Sfeir précisément, a toujours été contre Michel Aoun. Depuis toujours. Il a bien soutenu Samir Geagea et tous les autres qui sont passés, mais pas Michel Aoun. Il a toujours été contre. Au Liban, on l'accuse – on ne l'accuse pas vraiment mais on le surnomme 'Abu Samir', ce qui veut dire le père de Samir Geagea. Je ne sais pas...mais le patriarche Sfeir n'est pas en train d'être le chef ou le père de tous les chrétiens. Il est un père, mais c'est comme un père qui n'aime qu'un seul de ses fils et pas du tout l'autre, ou bien, il le néglige. Alors quand un fils pense que son père le néglige, comment il va réagir ?"*<sup>502</sup>

*"Nous, nous l'appelons 'Abu Samir', le père de Samir [Geagea]. Il avait des problèmes personnels avec Michel Aoun, il ne l'aimait pas. Il devait jouer un autre rôle, pas s'engager dans la politique. (...) Je crois que la famille Hariri avait beaucoup d'influence, y compris financière, sur le Patriarche. Maintenant, il a décidé, enfin, de se retirer. On espère que son successeur sera plus correct. (...) Sous son mandat, la situation des Chrétiens n'a fait que se dégrader. En 1990, il aurait pu arrêter la guerre entre Chrétiens, mais il ne l'a pas fait. Quand il y avait tous ces problèmes financiers durant ces quinze dernières années, l'Église a beaucoup d'argent, beaucoup de terres, beaucoup d'écoles...ils pouvaient aider les Chrétiens. (...)"*<sup>503</sup>

These comments illustrate how the legitimization of their political leader relies on the delegitimization of the other pole. Affirming its attachment to the FPM is also to feel in close communion with its leader by presenting him as the benefactor of the Christians. Patriarch Sfeir, clearly positioned in a competition with Michel Aoun, is deprived of his status of representative through a double repertoire. First, his achievements are criticized, mainly his incapacity to improve the Christian socio-political situation. Second, his character is symbolically denied its religious dimension through attacks on his personal behavior. On the one hand, in reference to his alleged corrupt nature that transformed him into a tool in the hand of the Hariri family –

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<sup>501</sup> Paul, interview with the author: November 21, 2007 [in French].

<sup>502</sup> Caroline, interview with the author: March 13, 2009 [in French].

<sup>503</sup> Tino, interview with the author: March 12, 2011 [in French].

incarnation of the Sunni threat. On the other hand, and even more powerfully, through the reference to rumors attributing to the Patriarch the paternity of Samir Geagea<sup>504</sup>. Interestingly, these rumors surfaced more often during the last period of my fieldwork once Mgr. Sfeir had announced his renouncement to his charge, highlighting the persistence of a downgraded moral respect toward the Patriarch in spite of a strong aversion toward his character. By suggesting that the Patriarch was also the secret father of Samir Geagea, the FPM activists depreciate at the same time both rivals of Michel Aoun.

The Christian dimension encompassed in the relation of leadership has been underlined since 2010 by the Party itself by mean of organization of religious pilgrimage in Syria at the occasion of the Day of Saint Maroun. The founding father of a Maronite monastic order, Saint Maroun is allegedly buried in Brad, in Northern Syria. His followers later took refuge in Mount Lebanon. In an attempt to capture a Christian legitimacy and to mark his progressive rapprochement with the Syrian regime, Michel Aoun decided to celebrate the birth of the founding Saint in his supposed burial place. The journey associates a political aspect – Michel Aoun is greeted by the Syrian President Bachar al-Assad – and a religious/communal dimension. Some of the activists I met participated in this event:

*"[The FPM] organized a trip there. Last month. Every year they organize a trip. Last year, around 2,000 went and this year around 12,000 people. We went in buses, it was wonderful. It was a religious trip, not a political trip. (...) This trip, just one day, united all the Christians in Lebanon and all the Christians in Lebanon and Syria. That is what I was talking about. The leader brings people together (...) and the media showed that Michel Aoun did what Samir Geagea cannot do."*<sup>505</sup>

*"I went with him in Syria [laughs]! (...) We went with my mother and father with my uncle too. Many wanted to come...most of them went by buses but I even went in the plane! It was very nice. People there were greeting us. It was like he was a president. All the roads were closed so we passed with the police before us. It was great to go in a country that occupied us and now which is treating us like kings and queens. It was an honour to go to Syria. (...) Many went to Mar Maroun. We had a Mass there. Most of the time we visited...in the airport, they didn't even check us (...). It was nice to go because it is going to our ancestor's place. Everyone was doubting about Michel Aoun's Christianity, so to see how many Christians he brought with him, there is no doubt that he has the majority. (...) We showed them that we are*

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<sup>504</sup> This rumor asserts more precisely that Samir Geagea's mother was working in one of the Patriarch residence before the birth of her son, clearly implying the sin of the Patriarch.

<sup>505</sup> Aida, interview with the author: March 5, 2011 [in English].

*Christians and we are Maronites and we are proud of it, and we are with Michel Aoun. Syria respects us more than any others. At that time, Bachar al-Asaad was not ready to meet Saad Hariri or any other when he met General (...)."*<sup>506</sup>

*"Neuf mille personnes sont allés avec lui en Syrie ! Cette vision me donne de l'espoir que oui, il est toujours aussi fort. Et il essaie d'envoyer un message aux chrétiens du Liban : 'Nous ne sommes pas étrangers, we belong to here [said in English]!'. Avant, on pensait avant tout que nous étions chrétiens, on regardait vers la France ou vers l'Amérique, on ne veut pas du Moyen-Orient qui est pour les Musulmans. L'idée qu'il veut faire passer est que oui, nous sommes des Chrétiens mais nous sommes ici chez nous."*<sup>507</sup>

The main thematic concerns the capability of the leader to unite the Christian people and to ensure their presence in the Middle Eastern region. As always defined in opposition with Samir Geagea, the role of Michel Aoun is interpreted as the one of a Messenger, thus a prophet (*rasûl* in Arabic) guiding the Christians on a new path that would enable their survival on their own land. As such his mission goes beyond the partisan struggle and his stature has no equivalent, even within the FPM.

*"Michel Aoun, comme je l'ai déjà dit, c'est l'espoir. C'est le seul homme en qui j'ai confiance pour construire le Liban dont les jeunes rêvent: un Liban pour les Libanais, un Liban dont les jeunes sont fiers (...). C'est le seul, même au CPL, qui peut donner la confiance pour la préservation des traditions libanaises et la préservation des Libanais, pour que le Liban ne soit pas un pays de réfugiés palestiniens."*<sup>508</sup>

The tendency to trust only the leader confirms the shift of scale in the interpretation of the relation of leadership. The reference to the national identity is here particularly fascinating. Deprived of any religious or communal connotation, it seems to match the Party's secular project. However, the last line mentioning "a country for Palestinian refugees" bears heavy significations. First, it underlines the fear of minorization of the Christians within an environment dominated by Sunni Muslims as most of the 400,000 Palestinians officially living in Lebanon belong to that sect. In addition, the Palestinian threat immediately convokes the memory of the civil war, and more particularly its beginning when Christian nationalists – *Lebanonists* – opposed the increasing influence of the PLO in the country. Michel Aoun, who had himself affinities with the Lebanonists and fought against the Palestinian armed groups with the Army, becomes the heir of a more ancient struggle dominated by the idea of the possible extinction of

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<sup>506</sup> Lea, interview with the author: November 30, 2010 [in English].

<sup>507</sup> Tino, interview with the author: March 12, 2011 [in French].

<sup>508</sup> Jacques, interview with the author: April 30, 2008 [in French].

the Christian presence in Lebanon. The nationalism proclaimed here appears thus to be an actualized version of the Lebanese national project as it was implemented under the French Mandate: a project dominated by the Christian – and more precisely Maronite – horizon of representation and intrinsically linked with the threatening perception of the Muslim environment by the Maronite elite (Salibi 1989 [1988]). In that context, Michel Aoun embodies a visionary<sup>509</sup> prophesying the continuance of the Christian heritage in Lebanon, perpetuating the confusion between the communal group and the nation (Davie 1991, p. 179). Among FPM activists, the memory of the common quest finds itself invested with the signification of an existential struggle for survival. A FPM official from Northern Lebanon once told me:

*“J’ai participé à quelques meetings internes pour choisir les candidats du CPL dans la région du Nord, pour savoir avec quelles personnes faire les alliances (lors des élections de 2005). A l’époque, nous avions deux choix : une alliance avec le Courant du Futur ou bien se rapprocher de quelques figures pro-syriennes. J’ai dit au Général que je ne veux pas d’une alliance avec des pro-syriens mais il a dit une phrase – à ce moment là, j’ai cru que le Général est vraiment un fou, mais après un an, j’ai vu qu’il avait raison dans ce qu’il m’avait dit: ‘on n’a pas le choix: ou bien on fait des alliances avec ces personnalités ou bien le Courant du Futur va gagner et dans ce cas, les islamistes pro-saoudiens vont faire ce qu’ils veulent au Liban d’ici un an’. Et un an plus tard exactement les combats de Nahr el-Bared ont commencé. Il a une vision à long terme et c’est pour cela que je suis très fier d’être un partisan du général Aoun. Il prévoit les choses, il sait ce qui va se passer et pour cela il prend les bonnes décisions.”*<sup>510</sup>

Michel Aoun is therefore characterized by his gift of prophecy, a capability to read History, which he uses to ensure a better political representation for a deprived Christian community:

*“Lors de la formation du gouvernement en 2009, ils ont d’abord éliminé les chrétiens et ont voulu donner au Général les postes que eux avaient choisi pour les chrétiens. Mais le Général a refusé (...). Il a réussi à imposer sa volonté, il a su redonner un certain rôle aux chrétiens. (...) Pour moi, c’est le sauveur...Michel Aoun, c’est le sauveur.”*<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> The Party powerfully participates in the construction of this image. For example, during the 2009 Parliamentary election campaign, a gigantic poster of Michel Aoun proclaimed : “What I said happened [*illî qultu sâr*]”.

<sup>510</sup> Walid, interview with the author: November 15, 2007 [in French].

<sup>511</sup> Halim, Interview with the author: December 1, 2009 [in French].

*“Michel Aoun, c'est la dernière chance des chrétiens. Moi je pense que c'est pour ça que tout le monde l'empêche d'appliquer son programme: ils ne veulent pas que les chrétiens redeviennent forts, ou que les chrétiens aient l'égalité au Liban. (...) Imagine que les chrétiens reprennent le pouvoir ! Ils ne veulent pas car maintenant dans le monde, il n'y a plus de pays chrétiens. Il y a des pays musulmans, comme l'Arabie Saoudite. Les Américains prennent le pétrole des Saoudiens et leur donnent le Liban. Mais si le pays redevient chrétien, à qui vont-ils le vendre ?”<sup>512</sup>*

The last chance of the Christians, Michel Aoun is inscribed by the constructions of meaning operated by FPM members in the History of the long time. The idea – paralleled by an adhesion to an obscure conspiracy theory – that Christians might take their control on Lebanon “back” clearly embeds the project of the FPM in a recursive opposition between Muslims and Christians, whose last development was constituted by the “defeat” conceded by the Christians during the civil wars and the subsequent transfer of most of the powers devoted to the Maronite elite via the position of the President of the Republic to the Prime minister selected among the Sunni Muslim sect. With the establishment of the Second Republic, the Maronite elite lost the grip it had on Lebanon since its creation in 1920. Michel Aoun arises as the only hope to restore the Christian rights. The character of the leader is thus constructed by his followers as a rampart against the threat of minorization that has resurfaced on several occasions since independence<sup>513</sup>. The recourse to such a repertoire of interpretation situates fully *Aounism* within the modern political history of the Lebanese Christians, understood as a social group sharing some common cultural references and perceptions of its own position in regard to its environment. The FPM is thus re-inserted into a “Christian” political path.

Born in 1988, the movement incarnated by Michel Aoun was intimately centered on Christian segments of the population already sharing a collective memory accumulated since ancient times. Beyond the persistent social and sectarian diversity of the religious group, the Lebanese Christians share nonetheless a definition of history inciting them to assure their security in front of a dominant Muslim environment perceived as hostile (Picard 1996, p. 5). Alimented by the memory of the massacres of 1840 and 1860, this search for survival enables to understand the insistence of the Christian elites on insuring the imbrication of the Lebanese national

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<sup>512</sup> Jim, interview with the author: December 9, 2009 [in French].

<sup>513</sup> In particular during the 1958 crisis under the image of the pan-Arab Nasserist project, since 1969 with the legalization of the Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon by the Cairo agreement, in 1983 after the Lebanese Forces' defeat in the Mountain war against the Druzes of the PSP, in 1989 with the Taef agreement that redistributed the political powers in favor of the Muslim communities, and the inter-Christian war.

project (i.e. the construction of the State, and the definition of the Lebanese identity) with the exigence of their own political domination (Salibi 1989 [1988]). Though the tendency inherited from History to perceive the Christians as a threatened minority should not be naturalized, as it originates from historical experience of inter-communal violence as well as from politically built representations aiming at encouraging French interventionism to support the hegemony project carried by the Maronite elite, it nonetheless springs the understanding of a shared – and precarious – fate. Some of the narratives circulating within the FPM milieu as well as the quest for sovereignty embodied by Michel Aoun's political fight have to be decrypted taking into consideration this heritage. The memory of the Taef agreement, symbol of the lost political influence of the Christians unwraps such interpretation of History and of the role of Michel Aoun as the Prophet of the Christian revival: "*Christians perceive Aoun as a providential man who came to save the country, a Messiah (...)*" (Davie 1991, p. 161)

*"L'accord de Taëf, il s'appelle 'l'accord contre les chrétiens' (...). Ils ont enlevé tous les pouvoirs du président (...). Dans la réunion du Conseil des ministres, il ne peut même pas voter (...). C'est un secrétaire. C'est le rôle des chrétiens: être un secrétaire (...). Donc c'est un accord uniquement contre les chrétiens, fait par l'Arabie Saoudite à Taëf...mais des [hommes politiques] chrétiens et le Patriarche ont accepté, c'est ça le problème."*<sup>514</sup>

*"L'accord de Taëf, c'est la déception chrétienne. (...) On a dépossédé le président de la République de toute autorité, et tout a été mis entre les mains du gouvernement. Le Premier ministre est musulman pour parler en terme de religion...même si moi je suis laïc et j'aspire à un Liban laïc. Mais ils ont enlevé tous les pouvoirs qui étaient auparavant entre les mains du président maronite pour les transférer au gouvernement, c'est-à-dire au Premier ministre qui est sunnite, et au chef du parlement qui est chiite. Alors pourquoi est-ce que ce ne sont uniquement que les maronites qui ont vu leur pouvoir réduit ? Est-ce qu'ils étaient les déclencheurs de la guerre ? Est-ce que se sont eux uniquement qui doivent payer pour la guerre ? Pourquoi les a-t-on punis ?"*<sup>515</sup>

*"Taëf, c'est le désastre des chrétiens...je dis des chrétiens et nous sommes un parti laïc, mais nous sommes dans un pays communautaire en fin de compte. Et toutes les communautés ont pris un morceau du gâteau de Taëf, sauf les chrétiens qui n'ont plus rien, surtout le président. Maintenant, il n'a aucun pouvoir entre les mains."*<sup>516</sup>

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<sup>514</sup> Jim, interview with the author: December 9, 2009 [in French].

<sup>515</sup> Halim, interview with the author: December 1, 2009 [in French].

<sup>516</sup> Jacques, interview with the author: April 30, 2008 [in French].



The representations of the Taef agreement sketch the accelerated deterioration of the situation of the Christians during the civil wars. Historically, the war period led to a triple crisis (Picard 1996, p. 16-17): demographic first, due to the differential of natural growth with the Muslim populations and the increase of Christian emigration<sup>517</sup>; an erosion of their economic domination then, formerly based on a communal division of labor set under the Ottoman rule and reinforced during the French Mandate; finally, the fall of their political influence with the constitutional reforms imposed by the Taef agreement. Stripped of the guarantees represented by the former presidential prerogatives, the Christian elite perceived themselves as isolated, thus vulnerable. The Syrian domination over Lebanon between 1990 and 2005 aggravated their political alienation as the main Christian parties were kept apart as illustrated by Michel Aoun's exile in France from 1991, the Lebanese Forces' dissolution after Samir Geagea's arrest in 1994, and the division of the Kata'eb into a pro-Syrian branch presided by Karim Pakradouni and an opposition led by Amin Gemayel himself exiled in Paris. In 2005, in spite of the withdrawal of the Syrian troops, the return of Michel Aoun and the liberation of Samir Geagea, the political arena witnessed what was described as an “attempt at re-marginalization” of the Christians (Labaki 2008): the alliance in the Summer 2005 of the four main political organizations representing the Muslim segments of the population – the PSP for the Druze, the Future Movement for the Sunni, Amal and Hezbollah for the Shiites. An electoral coalition that is perceived by many FPM activists as directed against the Christians:

*“[Lors des élections de 2005] il y a eu une alliance de tous les pouvoirs islamiques au Liban [le Courant du Futur chez les sunnites, Amal et le Hezbollah chez les chiites et le Parti Socialiste Progressiste chez les druzes] qui ont exclu les chrétiens et ont exigé que le Général Aoun ne soit représenté que par huit députés (...). Donc à cette époque, les chrétiens libanais ont été mis hors de l'équation politique par cette alliance quadripartite.”<sup>518</sup>*

*“Le jour où le Général est revenu, la première chose qu'a dite Walid Joumblatt est que ce n'est pas un tsunami chrétien qui a libéré le Liban. C'est la première chose qu'il a dite! Là, j'ai commencé à voir qu'il avait un plan pour s'assurer les votes aounistes mais sans le Général (...). Au Mont Liban, il ne doit pas y avoir un leader autre que Joumblatt (...). C'est un complexe "joumblattien" depuis Kamal Joumblatt avec les chrétiens. (...) Ensuite il y a eu les élections et ils ont voulu faire les listes électorales dans les régions chrétiennes sans l'avis du Général ! Alors Joumblatt et*

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<sup>517</sup> For figures, see Labaki 2008, p. 97 and 99.

<sup>518</sup> Marc, interview with the author: October 31, 2007 [in French].

*Hariri se réservent 30 ou 40 députés, mais nous les chrétiens devons être divisés entre trois ou quatre groupes, pourquoi? Moi je suis laïc, mais je dis juste quel était leur plan.*<sup>519</sup>

The memory of past conflicts for gaining the upper-hand in the inter-sectarian power relations is highlighted through these various comments. The character of the leader is in this context mobilized as a figurehead of the Christian community, an interface realizing the symbolic reunion of all the Christians under his guidance to face the Other, here incarnated by the Muslim. The political antagonism is taken as a continuation of the conflicts that emerged during the era of the Lebanese wars (1975-1990) and beyond, as the reference to the Druzo-Christian opposition in Mount Lebanon acknowledges. However, it is important not to give in to the effects of reality produced by the stories. The objective in these accounts remains to stage the political conflicts at the time of their enunciation. Denouncing Taef and the role of Saudi Arabia refers to the intense competition between the FPM and the Future Movement of the Hariri family. The opposition is political – for example, the anti-corruption campaign launched by the FPM targets primarily the financial legacy of Rafiq Hariri. Jim's statement about the Council of Ministers dated from 2009, a period in which the FPM and the FM cohabited within a national unity government. The vice-Prime minister, Issam Abu Jamra the former deputy president of the FPM, engaged at that time a harsh struggle with Saad Hariri to extend the prerogatives of the vice-Prime minister and institutionalize his position<sup>520</sup>. Beyond, the theme of the strong man, coming from the military institution, echoes the call for a strong State in a plea for order seen as a requirement for equality between citizens.

The references to Taef have to be contextualized in the moment of their enunciation. In 1989 as well as during the Syrian rule in Lebanon, the critics addressed to the agreement were mainly that it legitimized the Syrian occupation of Lebanon and neglected the aspiration of important segments of the population who voiced their refusal of the agreement (Davie 1991, p. 159; Lombardo 2005, p. 33-34; Rondeau 1991, p. 15). At that time the questions of political reforms were secondary for the General: on September 26, 1989, a few days before the meeting scheduled in Taef, Michel Aoun gathered the members of Parliament – 23 Christian and 3 Muslims MPs were present – and claimed that the question of the withdrawal was the absolute

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<sup>519</sup> Khalid, interview with the author: November 3, 2007 [in French].

<sup>520</sup> Related in the Lebanese national press at that time, the reality of the conflict was confirmed to me by Issam Abu Jamra himself, after his rupture with Michel Aoun. General Abu Jamra regretted that he engaged that fight for the sake of the FPM without obtaining afterwards any benefit from his action. Interview with the author: April 29, 2010 [in French].

priority (Naoum n.d., p. 109). The issue of the Presidential prerogatives became dominant only after the Syrian withdrawal, when the FPM entered the political arena. In the same manner, when Khalid recalled in 2007 Walid Joumblatt's declarations about Michel Aoun's return and mentioned the past antagonism resented toward the Christians by the Joumblatt clan, he did it in a context of extreme political tension: the end of term of President Emile Lahoud was approaching and no agreement was possible to designate his successor. Walid Joumblatt was at that time at the forefront of the March 14 governmental coalition fighting against Hezbollah's influence in the country. The conflict between Joumblatt and the opposition including the FPM was at its climax. The interpretation of what *Aounism* is about is thus also submitted to changes depending on the circumstances of the present.

As the allusion to Kamal Joumblatt's "complex" toward the Christians in Mount Lebanon illustrates, those present conflicts are recomposed by the activists through the memory of past antagonisms. Nawaf Salam demonstrated from Kamal Joumblatt's memoirs to which extent the Druze leader conceived his self in a historical and familial continuance and in a strict opposition with the image of the Maronites. According to Salam, the communal perception of history noticeable in Joumblatt's writing refers to memory of the 1860 events but is nonetheless constructed in 1976, in a time of open war between his political coalition of the Lebanese National Movement, advocating the reform of the Lebanese system and allied with the Palestinian armed groups, and the main Maronite forces united within the Lebanese Front (Salam 1981, p. 774 and 782). The weight of history is thus mobilized to translate the present strife. For the FPM student activists, the construction of a collective memory attached to a perceived Christian experience functions as well as the horizon of signification of the political competition they experience, and provides the repertoire of interpretation of their attachment to the Party as well as of the relation of leadership built with Michel Aoun.

Although the official stand of the FPM advocates a secular state, the perception of Michel Aoun as a leader nevertheless incorporates the image of a guide and protector for the Christian community beyond the partisan group as such. The ambiguity of this situation places the activists at odds. Whereas the inspirational emotion toward the leader incites them to invest their self in a political quest for secularism, the affectivity of communion erected with the guide calls for the memory of the religious community. Salvatore Lombardo, a French journalist who embraced the cause of Michel Aoun in 1989 described the popular movement as a "*secular communion*" (Lombardo 2005, p. 11) and a "*democratic liturgy*" (ibid., p. 117). This ambivalence could be found in many occurrences during my encounters with the activists, leading to the frequent

usage of vocal devices aiming at conciliating both aspects: “*I am secular but I am just telling you what are their plans*” or “*the Prime minister is Muslim, if we are to talk in terms of religion...although I am secular and in favor of a secular state*”. Such common paradox should be understood not as manifestation of hypocrisy, but rather the cohabitation of repertoires of interpretation alimented by competing collective memories. Besides, from the Christian perspective, the rhetoric of the strong state may appear as the solution to protect the community perceived more and more as a minority in the Middle Eastern environment.

In front of what is interpreted as an organized “plan” or “conspiracy”, the role of the leader is to ensure the survival of his people. It is logical thus that the alliance tied between the FPM and Hezbollah takes the signification of a defense agreement protecting the Christian minority – or even of a coalition of minorities to face the Sunni domination:

*“Personnellement, comme je vois les choses, en face du risque de l’implantation des Palestiniens ou pour faire face aux groupuscules proches d’al-Qaida, qui sont en général sunnites, le Hezbollah est, pour moi en tant que chrétien, une garantie. Une garantie contre les milices palestiniennes et contre ces groupuscules terroristes sunnites financés par les pétro-dollars. Donc c’est pour ça que je considère le Hezbollah chiite comme une garantie pour les chrétiens (...) parce qu’ils ont une force militaire qui peut barrer la route à ces groupes.”*<sup>521</sup>

*“Michel Aoun, c’est un homme! Je ne sais pas comment il peut penser à tout ça, vraiment, je ne sais pas comment il fait. [Grâce à lui] avec le Document d’Entente, il n’y a plus de frontières et tous ceux qui vivent dans les régions mixtes voient ça comme un jour glorieux...c’est un jour qui doit être dans les livres d’Histoire, vraiment. Et [la rencontre] eut lieu dans une église, et dans la banlieue sud ! (...) Ils te disent : ‘toi le chrétien tu es présent et tu vas rester’. C’est ça, ce n’est pas un lieu neutre, non! C’est une église, Mar Mikhaïl!”*<sup>522</sup>

These commentaries denote a political economy of the sectarian groups inspired by a memory of conflict sustaining a perception of a danger for the Christian survival in Lebanon. The reference to the Palestinian issue echoes the past conflict between Lebanonists – mainly recruited among Christians – and the PLO from the end of the 1960s. It also instigates confusion between the Palestinian refugees and the radical militant groups advocating fundamentalist Islam as their cause. Politically, the target remains the Future Movement of Saad Hariri, both for its national and regional stands

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<sup>521</sup> Bachir, interview with the author: May 4, 2008 [in French].

<sup>522</sup> Jim, interview with the author: December 9, 2009 [in French].

against the “Axis of the Resistance” endorsed by the FPM since the signature of the document with Hezbollah. The social map drawn here opposes the reconciliation and life in common with the Shiites to the Sunni threat. The agreement with Hezbollah thus meant to alleviate the Christians' fear in front of a hostile environment, including through the help of Hezbollah's military capacity transformed in Bachir's comments into the armed wing of the Christian community.

The reference to Mar Mikhaïl's church is particularly symbolic. Situated in a Southern Suburb of Beirut, it is precisely located on the demarcation line between the Shiite neighborhood of Chiyah and the Christian district of Ayn al-Rummaneh, marking what was known as “the Green line” during the wartime: a fighting interface between two spatial bastions held by rival forces – Amal and Hezbollah on the Shiite side, the Lebanese Forces and latter Aoun's Army in Ayn al-Rummaneh. By choosing this location, Hezbollah and the FPM played on the symbolic of reconciliation and coexistence, with all the more success since the previous day, on February 5, 2006, a demonstration organized by Sunni Islamic forces with the support of the Future Movement among others turned into a violent riot. The rally, aiming at the Danish Embassy to protest against the of caricatures the Prophet published earlier that year, rapidly deteriorated, causing mayhem in the Christian regions of Achrafiyeh and Gemayzeh bordering the building. In particular, a church was partially vandalized. These events generated much emotion among the Christian population of the area. The FPM did not fail to underline the contrast between the two episodes. As recently as 2013, seven years after the events, the Party sent a video by mail<sup>523</sup> to commemorate the “invasion of Achrafiyeh”, entitled *Dhikra Âhdâth 5 Shbât – Ghazwat al-Âshrafiyyah* [Memory of the February 5 events – the invasion of Achrafiyeh]. Posted on *You Tube* under the name of Ziad Abbas, a FPM official who participated in the negotiation with Hezbollah, the video opened with the portrait of Bachir Gemayel and staged violent images of the demonstration but also footage of Samir Geagea's interview on TV in which he called his followers not to intervene. The political ties between the LF and the Future Movement explain Geagea's move: he did not want to weaken a profitable political alliance. The clip particularly insisted on the pictures of the attacked church, reinforcing the idea of a Sunni threat. The message clearly conveys the idea of an incursion of barbaric hordes within Christian territory. But the montage went further by integrating images of the fighting between the Lebanese Army and militant Islamic groups in the region of Dennyeh in 2000 and in the

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<sup>523</sup> I do not know exactly the networks mobilized to circulate the video but I personally received it in my email box.

Palestinian camp of Nahr el-Bared in 2007, punctuated with testimonies of the parents of soldiers killed during the battles<sup>524</sup>.

For many among the FPM students, the Christians are facing a “Wahhabite conspiracy” orchestrated by Saudi Arabia and implemented by its Lebanese proxy, the Hariri “clan”. The thematic of conspiracy and double-face of Harirism – a “modern” superficial outlook covering a fundamentalist project – circulates widely in the FPM social networks. A Party's official, also professor in the Lebanese University, published in 1998 a book investigating *Radio Orient*, a radio station based in Paris and owned by the Hariris. He argues that the ambivalence of the broadcast, especially playing on language shifts between French and Arabic, dissimulates Wahhabi proselytizing. In one of our conversations, he additionally linked his study to the Lebanese demographic trend, highlighting what he called a Syrian plan to conquer economically the country while encouraging the expulsion of the Christians<sup>525</sup>. Likewise, I found during one of my fieldwork trip a small book written by Lyna Elias, a Syrian born Christian activist who became during the 1970s a close adviser of Bachir Gemayel before joining the Aounism movement in 1989. In 1983, she founded the CEROC – Centre d'Études et de Recherches sur l'Orient Chrétien – a research center specialized in the Christian issue in the Middle East. Published in 2007, the book in question, emphatically entitled *The Lebanese Christians threatened of disappearance or the plan for the Islamization of Lebanon has started*<sup>526</sup> was circulating among the FPM networks. Costing the modest amount of 3\$ (4,500 Lebanese Pounds), the book intends to re-situate the current political position of the Christians into an historical perspective, to demonstrate a conspiracy orchestrated by the Saudis in cooperation of the United States to ensure the implantation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon at the expense of the Christians. Aoun is portrayed as the only solution accessible to the Christians, because of his politics of cohabitation and inter-religious dialogue defended by the Vatican and implemented in the signing of the Document of Understanding with Hezbollah. Interestingly, in this book, the role of Syria in the Taef agreement appears reduced in comparison to a Saudi strategy organized by Rafiq Hariri (Elias 2007, p. 18). It is worth noticing that more serious analyses echo the growing influence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon (Corm 2003, p. 319-320).

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<sup>524</sup> The video was accessible on the Internet: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfNe56uScgg> [April 2013]

<sup>525</sup> BH, interview with the author: October 31, 2007 [in French].

<sup>526</sup> The book was published in French and entitled: *Les chrétiens libanais menacés de disparition ou le plan d'islamisation du Liban est en marche*. Beirut, Éditions Libanaises, 2007.

The Document of Understanding thus embodies a politics of coexistence, as underlined in many of the students' reaction to the picture presenting the signing of the agreement:

*"This picture reminds me that we lived in Fanar and next to us is Roueissat. Roueissat is a region where Shiites live in. Before this meeting, we used to be scared of them. If I had to go there, I was afraid. I used to take a longer road to go around Roueissat. And after the meeting, I went there and I saw pictures of Michel Aoun and Hasan Nasrallah. In was in 2007 and this really made me comfortable. It was written under the pictures: "This is how leaders should be". And I loved this picture. This reminds me of that."<sup>527</sup>*

*"The first time I went to West Beirut, yes...and when we say West Beirut, it is in fact mainly Dâhiyeh. (...) The first time I went there, I was 15 or 16 years old. I was very afraid. True, afraid of being kidnapped, being robbed or even being killed. I didn't say my name, because here in Lebanon "Joe" sounds very Christian. I was afraid and didn't say my name. But after a while, when I was here at the university, I met some people from there, I started talking to them and they told me no, there is nothing wrong there, we don't do anything to Christians, there are Christians who live there, etc. They told me "don't do anything wrong and it will be OK, they are not waiting for you to see your ID card" (...). Even if you go with a girl and have fun with a girl, or curse somebody's mother, they won't like you. But act like a normal person, a decent person, and no one will matter about you. You can do whatever you wish. And I went there another time, told that my name is Joe, they didn't make any kind of reaction, of course. But you know (...) I was raised in that idea. I didn't like it first because of what I told you about the background I have. And in 2006, it was just after 2005 where we were all demonstrating against the Syrian on March 14, and Hezbollah made another demonstration on March 8 to say "Syria Stay", you know how? So, we had not a very good image of Hezbollah. But after, when we worked with the Shiite committee from Hadath, it disappeared. As I told, we all had pre-assumptions. (...) Once, I got lost on the road, going to see my friend. When I saw that I was in Dâhiyeh, because I saw the sign Dâhiyeh Janûbiyyeh, I was relieved. I had no stress. Because I was in Dâhiyeh, I knew we were politically allied so I went to ask for direction, I stopped the first person I met and told him: "my name is Joe!" You could see a big smile on his face. So I told him: "I am Joe Aoun, I would like to go to Mathaf". Just by saying that I am Joe Aoun, he knew I was Christian, you know how? So he took us to Mathaf."<sup>528</sup>*

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<sup>527</sup> Jawad, interview with the author: March 31, 2011 [in English].

<sup>528</sup> Joe, interview with the author: March 29, 2011 [in English].

The themes of coexistence and territory constitute the main construction of meaning in these two testimonies. Michel Aoun, through the agreement he signed with the Shiites, gave security and serenity to his people, enabling the opening toward the other, thus the reconstruction of the coexistence on the Lebanese territory. This coexistence functions on mutual esteem and respect of the spatial anchoring of each group. The activists' fight against their own assumptions underlines the process of cognitive mobility triggered by the identification with the leader and the group. It also refers to the FPM slogan: “from liberation to emancipation [*mîn al-tahrîr ila al-taharrûr*]”. After liberating the national territory, the Hero becomes a Prophet to guide the people toward emancipation from fear and sectarian hostilities. Space seems to play a pivotal role in the defense of the Christian rights in Lebanon, echoing a meaningful anecdote that Malek, the coordinator of the FPM in AUB, told me twice, during each of our two encounters:

*In May 2010: “I am originally from the South. My family moved [their legal inscription] to Achrafiyeh but I am the only one in my family who stayed registered in the South. That is because General Michel Aoun told us to. Once we went with many other people from the South who wanted to change their inscription before the elections to General Aoun's place and a student told him: “I want to move to Metn, my vote will be more important”. General Michel Aoun shouted at him: “I am trying to get you all back to your land, and you are trying to leave it?!” I will never forget this.”<sup>529</sup>*

*In October 2010: “There is something I remember the most. Well, there are plenty of things but I will tell you one because I like it. I was with a group of people. It was before the first elections in 2009. Some of the people were from the South. They asked him: ‘Do you want us to change our registration so our votes will count more?’ General Michel Aoun stood up and yelled at them: ‘I am trying to take you all back to your homeland and you want to leave it!’”<sup>530</sup>*

The last in the political lineage of the Christian refusal (Davie 1991, p. 147), the General incarnates the strength and pride of the Christians. Capable to secure the future of the community, to guide it to the renewal of its national project, he illuminates the path Malek is following to construct his self: “*My home village is half Christian, half Shiite. But unfortunately (...) Christians don't live there anymore. (...) I have a land there that I am trying to plant. I am thinking about some exotic fruits*

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<sup>529</sup> Malek, interview with the author: May 26, 2010 [in English].

<sup>530</sup> Malek, interview with the author: October 26, 2010 [in English].



*maybe. I want to have something to do with my land.*”<sup>531</sup> Source of communion, Michel Aoun is the Prophet of the land, anchoring his followers to the roots of their ancestors.

From the narratives focusing on Michel Aoun, three affective contexts – three modes of linking individual memories to the collective memory – emerge. In the temporality of the family, the General surfaces as a Father, or a Grand-Father, designing an affectivity of fusion i.e. a joint presence built in a genealogical order centered on the interior of the group. The process of interpretation (in the double meaning of allocation of signification and interpretation of a social position) sustains a perception of the group as an inseparable organic bond in which the role of the activists is to perpetuate the work of their predecessors.

In the temporality of the political quest, the affectivity is inspirational. The joint construction of meaning between the self and the collectivity relies on the imitation and the mutual legitimation between the leaders and the followers. The memory of the Hero supports the definition of the self as a reflection mirroring the heroic example of Michel Aoun and builds boundaries in regard to the out-group. The signification attached to the leader is the one of a model and thus the role of the activists is to imitate his sacrifices to continue his struggle.

Finally the long-term temporality of the religious group harbors an affectivity of communion i.e. a joint construction in a community of destiny, envisaged as a context reappearing at different stages of history under different forms, following Halbwachs' conception about streams of collective thoughts (Namer 1988, p. 14). The process of interpretation of the relation of leadership here refers to the guidance of a Prophet. The position allocated to the activists is therefore framed by an injunction to believe and to follow – as well as to indicate to the others – the path the leader elucidates.

## **2. SAMIR GEAGEA AND BACHIR GEMAYEL: THE ALTERNATIVE FIGURES OF LEADERSHIP**

The three affective dimensions injected in the character of the leader – fusion, inspiration, communion – arise similarly in the evocation of two other figures, omnipresent in the cast of the narrative plots elucidated by the FPM activists, which give all its meaning to the relation of leadership in a discursive dialectic: first, Samir Geagea, constructed as a negative duplicate of Michel Aoun; second, Bachir Gemayel,

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<sup>531</sup> Malek, interview with the author: May 26, 2010 [in English].

whose image supports contrasted interpretative moves and enables the insertion of Michel Aoun and the FPM into long term History. Both characters confirm the role of memory in the construction of the narratives sustaining the identification of the self with the group.

### **A) Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea: two rival brothers in the same house**

*“Que dire ? Gare aux chrétiens s’il devient leur leader, il va tout nous prendre...ils disent que Michel Aoun veut le pouvoir, qu’il s’entête depuis l’époque de Baabda, mais je ne crois pas. Je crois que s’il n’y a pas Michel Aoun, il n’y a pas Samir Geagea. Je crois que Samir Geagea a un complexe parce que le peuple aime Michel Aoun, un complexe face aux idées de Michel Aoun. Il essaie de l’imiter. (...) Avec Taëf, il a fait rentrer les chrétiens dans un tunnel noir. C’est un criminel, que dire de plus ?”<sup>532</sup>*

Jacques’s comments on Samir Geagea's picture mobilize the same registers employed to describe Michel Aoun, but in a negative form. Samir Geagea emerges as the counter-type , a negative image like the negative in the photographic processing. According to him, the very existence of the head of the Lebanese Forces depends on the presence of Michel Aoun. Hated by the population, inspiring repulsion rather than intimate affection, he moreover leads the Christian community to its loss. Whereas Michel Aoun enlightens the destiny of the Lebanese Christians, Samir Geagea darkens their future and threatens their existence. The reference to Taef once again anchors the depiction of the enemy in the core of the FPM's narrative and in the memory of the violent opposition between the two leaders. However, if Samir Geagea only acquires significance in relation to Michel Aoun, the reciprocal perception seems equally true. Both characters mirror each other, in a mutual dependency.

During my interviews, the rejection caused by the former militia chief was obvious. Many were the activists expressing their discomfort. Only the presentation of the photo caused strong reactions: some covering the image, others asking me to hide it. The words did not come easily in many instances. Those who spoke strongly voiced their disgust: *“He is a vermin (...). He is a negative, a denier who has nothing to offer but hatred and resentment (...). He is pathetic.”*<sup>533</sup> flared up a FPM official. The mechanisms producing such speech acts of revulsion are embedded in narratives about the past, in which the character of Samir Geagea activates an affectivity of rejection

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<sup>532</sup> Jacques, interview with the author: April 30, 2008 [in French].

<sup>533</sup> BH, interview with the author: March 7, 2009. The original statement was in French: *“C’est une vermine (...). C’est quelqu’un de négatif, un négateur, il n’a rien à apporter, il rumine sa haine et sa rancœur (...). C’est un minable.”*

constitutive of the construction of the social boundary differentiating the two groups in strict opposition.

*“Il représente peut-être l’opposé de ce que nous pensons. En économie et dans le gouvernement, notre vrai rival est Hariri. Mais au niveau des principes, en politique, c’est lui. Parce que nous voulons un Liban uni, lui et son parti, même s’ils ne le disent pas toujours aujourd’hui, ils travaillent pour un Liban divisé, pour des cantons. Il représente aussi une série de mensonges, des années de mensonges envers les gens, envers nous, et même envers ses propres supporters. (...) Il suit une politique du mensonge. Mentir sans cesse afin de convaincre les gens peut-être. Il représente une figure très négative pour moi dans la politique libanaise.”<sup>534</sup>*

The differentiation between the two kinds of rivalry maintained between the FPM and its opponents delimitates two interpretative spheres of the belonging to a political group. In spite of the terms used by Issam, the description he gave of the competition with Hariri and the Lebanese Forces reflects distinct horizons of signification. The opposition to the Future Movement, although labeled as “*economic*” and “*within the government*” relates to a strategic discrepancy over the guidance of state policies. In that sense, it is in the end a political disagreement. The discord with Samir Geagea on the contrary, delineated as “*political*,” seems associated with an existential division. Indeed, the main disagreement staged in Issam’s comments concerns the “unity” vs. the “partition” of Lebanon, which directly convokes the memory of the struggle between the militia and the national Army led by Michel Aoun between 1989 and 1990. Similarly, the insistence on the falsification of History informs the centrality of the narrative about the past in the process of identification as well as the competition between divergent views on History. As a partisan group comparable in nature to the FPM, the LF proposes to its members its own version of the past events, its own identity narrative. The followers of the former militia thus adopt a different emplotment of the various episodes marking out the recent times.

*“Before I went to the University, I was with the Lebanese Forces, like my father in the past.*

*- Why did you change then?*

*First because of Samir Geagea...he came out of prison, his ideas and politics didn't interest me. I don't like his allies, Hariri and Jomblatt. I think he is a murderer, for this I don't like him. I think he is a Christian terrorist. I knew nothing about Samir Geagea before he came out but when he was released, his ideas didn't convinced me, from the Christian perspective (...). He is very narrow-minded, fighting everybody*

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<sup>534</sup> Issam, interview with the author: October 29, 2010 [in French].

*though we are, the Lebanese Christians, a minority. We cannot oppose everybody. Here, we the Christians in this region, should be in good terms with all the others (...). The LF work [is] based on a false propaganda. They lie! I was with them at school, so I know they lie. They talk to people who don't know history so they can give them a fake idea about history. But me, I love history so they cannot make me believe what they want. Their propaganda is based on a fake truth.*"<sup>535</sup>

Educated in a school influenced by the Lebanese Forces<sup>536</sup>, Nader, whose father fought in the militia during the early stages of the Lebanese wars, considered himself as a supporter of the LF. However, his arrival in the Lebanese University at Karm el-Zeitoun in Achrafiyeh opened the horizon of possible partisan identifications. He progressively integrated the FPM<sup>537</sup>. This change produced a cognitive mobility: the truth of yesterday became propaganda and his perception of history evolved accordingly. The character of Samir Geagea functions as the interface to symbolize his rejection of the LF identification, which, according to Nader's life story, took place only at his entrance in the LU in 2008. It thus seems that the figure of the enemy mediates the meaning of the shift between the two successive partisan positions lived by Nader. It corresponds in the narrative to a symbolic device used to translate and substantiate the signification of a rejection that rather took the form of a gradual process triggered by the change in the social environment of the young man. Similarly, the shift from history to propaganda to describe LF's militant work echoes a transformation of the repertoire of interpretation mobilized by the actor to make sense of his present self through the attribution of meaning to the past.

In both Issam's and Nader's words, more than historical controversy, the political discord since 1989 delineates an existential discord on collective memory. Sune Haugbolle demonstrated the coexistence of what he coined as "sectarian memories" within the various Lebanese social segments. Based on the spatial demarcation created by the use of visual devices, his study suggests that "throughout the war the social fragmentation of Beirut was mirrored in symbolic form by various spatial practices. Popular clandestine expressions of allegiance and identity such as graffiti as well as orchestrated propaganda such as political posters and monuments were deployed in the contest over urban space." (Haugbolle 2010, p. 161) The signs and symbols dividing the space, he argues, reflect religion-based memory cultures and their overlapping narratives about the war (ibid, p. 171). Starting from the observation of the Christian

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<sup>535</sup> Nader, interview with the author: December 4, 2010 [in English].

<sup>536</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>537</sup> Nader's trajectory is presented in Chapter Four.

heartland of Achrafiyeh in Beirut, he isolates the main components of the Christian memory by contrast with the elements constituting the symbolic landscape in Muslim parts of the city. If his analysis enables to point out the permanence of the boundaries erected during the war and persistence of the “combative memory” (ibid., p. 183), it tends nonetheless to homogenize the perception of the collective memory within the communal ensembles, mainly because it undermines political variances. The religious dimension of the collective memory within the social groups represents, as demonstrated in this work, only one voice of a system articulating polyphonic narratives. The inter-partisan cleavages in the perception of memory remain in my opinion as crucial as the sectarian shifts as acknowledged in Nader's testimony. A comparable situation derives from the past conflict that opposed Amal and Hezbollah in the same period – the late 1980s. In spite of their present political alliance and their shared confessional identity, the two movements evolve in distinctive and rival memory horizons (Lamloum 2010, p. 4). Focusing on Achrafiyeh and thus logically on the dominant symbolic role played by the figure of Bachir Gemayel in this territory inclines to euphemize the antagonism between the LF and the FPM that arose years after the assassination of the elected President of the Republic. Yet, this factional distinction, indeed inseparable of the inter-religious differentiation, plays today the determinant role in the formation of *groupness* among the Lebanese students I met. The diversity of sectarian memories is thus coupled with the coexistence between rival partisan memories.

The contrasts drawn between the characters of Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea actualize an affectivity of conflict and distinction that finds its origins in the violent competition between the political projects of the two movements and especially in the *Harb al-Ilghâ*<sup>538</sup> as presented by Nader:

*“I watched some documentaries about that war between the Army and the LF (...) I knew that they were telling lies, and for that, I am not with them (...). For that war, I blame the LF because they started it and no one should start a war against the Lebanese Army.”*<sup>539</sup>

In a way, the two leaders represent incarnation of rival institutional orders that position their followers into specific “zones of socially objectified knowledge” (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 94). Their characters are entry doors toward opposite universes of signification. As a result, in the eyes of most of FPM activists, Samir Geagea

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<sup>538</sup> See Chapters Three and Five.

<sup>539</sup> Nader, interview with the author: December 4, 2010 [in English].

incarnates Evil. “*He is a criminal and a liar. He has all the attributes of the demon*”<sup>540</sup>. The features associated to his figure are the absolute counterpoints of the representations of the ideal leadership:

*“Je pense que c’est une personne qui a prouvé qu’il n’avait pas de vision politique, le terme en anglais c’est ‘short-sighted’. Donc je pense qu’il a commis beaucoup d’erreurs qui ont coûté cher aux Chrétiens et au Liban en général. La première erreur était en 1989, lorsqu’il a accepté Taëf qui est un accord qui a limité l’influence chrétienne au Liban. Et c’est une personne qui a fait confiance aux Américains et aux Syriens, qui a divisé le camp chrétien, pour finalement se retrouver en prison. Le Général Aoun a été en exil mais le Dr. Geagea a été en prison. Il n’a pas vu à long terme la communauté chrétienne. Je ne parle pas des Chrétiens religieusement, mais sur le plan politique. On a assisté à un déclin inexorable. Et aujourd’hui il est en train de répéter les mêmes erreurs (...). Il joue le rôle qui lui a été assigné par les Américains: affaiblir le général Aoun (...)”<sup>541</sup>*

*“Samir Geagea, psychologiquement, c’est une personnalité complexée...il est dangereux et il est complexe: il vient d’une famille très pauvre, il a pu réorganiser les FL, mais il a brisé toutes les institutions de la société chrétienne quand il a pris le pouvoir (...). Certains disent qu’il a résisté aux Syriens, mais il est très dangereux, très sanguinaire (...). Bien sûr, on était dans le même combat contre les Syriens, mais quel résultat tu as obtenu quand tu as accepté Taëf pour te débarrasser de Michel Aoun, qu’est-ce que tu as gagné, toi, Samir Geagea ? Quelle est ta stratégie ? Et maintenant ? Tu combats Michel Aoun avec Hariri, pour aller où ?”<sup>542</sup>*

Deprived of a political vision, Samir Geagea is presented as unable to conduct the community. Because he refused in 1989 to join Michel Aoun's project, which, according to the FPM members today, represented the chance for a renewal, he incarnates the division of the Christians. While Michel Aoun invents his own destiny in communion with the people, Samir Geagea implements plans formulated by external actors, either the Americans, the Syrians, or the Saudis via their proxy in Lebanon, the Hariri family. Interestingly, from the perspective of the Lebanese Forces, the perfect opposition mentioned by FPM members is equally present. While Geagea is considered as a model of religious devotion and a faithful ally of the Patriarch, Michel Aoun is labelled as “*dajjâl*”, the Antichrist, dividing the Christians and leading them to their fall (Aubin-Boltanski 2012, p. 70).

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<sup>540</sup> Philippe, interview with the author: November 4, 2007. The original statement was in French: “*C’est un criminel et un menteur. Il a tous les défauts et toutes les caractéristiques du démon en lui.*”

<sup>541</sup> Bachir, interview with the author: May 5, 2008 [in French].

<sup>542</sup> Michel, interview with the author: March 6, 2009 [in French].

Ironically, drawing a parallel between the trajectories of the two leaders only gives more impact to their irreconcilable differences. Both are from modest origins but come from opposite environments. Son of a butcher, Michel Aoun was born in the village of Haret Hreik, now part of the Southern Suburb of Beirut, and populated by Christians and Shiites at that time. Samir Geagea also came from a humble family (his father was a Corporal, and his mother a house cleaner), but Bcharri, his village, is situated in the remote Northern part of the Lebanese Mountain. Bcharri, known as the homeland of the writer Khalil Gibran, is situated in the heart of the Maronite spiritual center in Lebanon. It dominates the holy valley of the Qadisha, which fosters innumerable monasteries, convents, and churches. While Michel Aoun joined the Army in 1954 and slowly climbed the hierarchical ladder, Samir Geagea medical studies in AUB were interrupted by the war. According to the legend, he worked as a shepherd before joining the Kata'eb's militia (Aubin-Boltanski 2012). His ascension within the paramilitary group was meteoric. Due to their social origins, both rejected the rule of the elite families and their clientele. In many aspects, Samir Geagea even appears as a revolutionary fighting against the notables. Although the *Hakîm* remained a close collaborator of Bachir Gemayel until his death in 1982, he nonetheless had difficult relations with the Gemayels, a family of notables (shaykh-s) since the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. On March 12, 1985, a trio formed by Geagea, Elie Hobeika and Karim Pakradouni led an insurrection in the Christian Eastern areas with the Lebanese Forces in order to “secure the independence of the militia from the Gemayel's Kata'eb” (Aubin-Boltanski 2012, p. 66). The 1985 *Intifada* is sometimes related as the revenge of the Mountain herdsmen against the notables. A social cleavage that still nourishes the representations voiced by FPM members about the LF identity:

*“They act like monkeys, but not all of them are bad. They are Christians...but there are categories in the LF (...), differences between (...) the “North Lebanon” category, people coming from Bcharri or Deir al-Ahmar: they are more rigid, bornés [in French]. I don't like these people.”<sup>543</sup>*

The regional implantation of Samir Geagea who populated the LF with men originating from his home region of Bcharri constitutes a strong differentiation with the FPM. Because of its conditions of emergence – the nomination of Michel Aoun, head of the national Army, as Prime minister – the *Aounist* movement did not exhibit such a narrow regional implantation. If it influenced in priority the population living in the “Eastern areas”, it has carried from the beginning a national project fundamentally different from the LF's wartime plans to establish communal cantons. Besides, the

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<sup>543</sup> Nader, interview with the author: December 4, 2010 [in English].

social basis of the FPM, in majority associated with the urban or peri-urban middle-class, marks an impervious boundary with the people from the countryside, mainly because of the role played by the latter in the formation and the rise of the militia during the 1980s. While Michel Aoun occupied the Presidential Palace in Baabda, center of the political power in Lebanon, Geagea had established his head quarters in suburban (Quarantina) or Mountain (Mayfuq) areas. The LF leader thus embodies a dual opposition between the city and the Mountain, and between the State and the autonomy of the periphery (Beyhum 1988).

The distinction made by Nader may however also originate in an intention of separating the negative image of the LF members associated with Samir Geagea from those who joined the militia during the first episodes of the 1975-1990 wars, including his own father. Here arises one of the paradoxes of the multivocal memory internalized by the individuals: family heritage, partisan emplotment, and communal sense of belonging often carry antagonist meanings. Many were the fathers of today's FPM activists who participated in the fighting, either locally in the defense of their home village or town, or in the ranks of political parties and militias like the Kata'eb, the LF, the NLP, or the *Tanzîm*. This contravenes the Party's ideology strongly connected with an anti-militia stand, but at the same time belongs to the memory of the Christian populations among whom those movements exercised a strong influence. Thus the isolation of a specific social category to embody the negative dimensions of the militiamen may enable to conciliate the lifestory of his father with the FPM position opposing the LF without cutting the line of the Christian political heritage. Accordingly, the trajectory of his father within the militia is reconstructed:

*"Before the 1988 war, my father was with the LF, at the time of Bachir Gemayel. He worked in the Middle East Airlines, at the airport. [...] He didn't stay for long, when Bachir Gemayel died, he left. [...]"*

*- Why did your father leave after Bachir's death?*

*My father departed [from] the LF first because they fought each other. And my father doesn't like Samir Geagea. He killed many Christians. He is like a dictator, a murderer. He massacred Christians and Muslims. He is not a leader, not a Christian leader. so my father doesn't like him and he left the LF."<sup>544</sup>*

The timing of the leaving of Nader's father remains unclear. At first, the student said that his father was with the militia before the 1988 war – the war opposing the LF to Aoun's Army – but then stated that his departure was right after Bachir Gemayel's

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<sup>544</sup> Ibid.



death in September 1982. Finally, he explains his resignation from the movement by his opposition to internal fighting, in reference to the struggle for the leadership that raged between March 1985 and January 1986. Ousting his former ally Elie Hobeika, Samir Geagea took control of the militia since that date. The time-line of the events designed in the account proceeds from an intentional disassociation from the LF of Samir Geagea, which represent the nemesis of the FPM after the 1990 “elimination war”. The character of Bachir Gemayel on the contrary plays a role of legitimization of the initial LF project by linking it to the Christian political history. Nader's narration of his father trajectory thus aims at cutting all link between his own family and the figure of Samir Geagea. During my fieldwork, I encountered similar descriptions. It was for example the case with Fouad, a second-year student in AUB:

*“My father stayed [in the LF] from 1975 to 1983. He stopped after the assassination of Bachir Gemayel. When Samir Geagea came into the commandment, he left. He said that Samir Geagea removed all the friends of Bachir Gemayel and put in charge people from his home town Bcharri. That's why he left.”<sup>545</sup>*

Again, a gap of several years surfaces in the explanation. Bachir Gemayel's assassination dates back to September 1982. It was not before 1985 that the *Hakîm* reached the direction of the group, firstly along with Elie Hobeika. As Nader did, Fouad strongly marked the distinction between the LF of Bachir Gemayel from the people of Samir Geagea, originating from Bcharri. He equally broke the line linking his family with today's LF. . In that matter, the character of Samir Geagea plays a repulsive role. Contrary to Michel Aoun, whose symbolic attributes support the construction of an intimate fusion between the individual and the group, the image of Samir Geagea dissolves family trajectory to implement a separation materialized in 1989 and still organizing the signification of being a FPM activist in the present.

According to Sune Haugbolle, Geagea's ascension incarnates the turn in the structure of leadership between the traditional *zu'amâ'* and the new militia leaders imposed by the war, as his “legion of Northern Maronites was introduced onto the streets of East Beirut where they were met with suspicion and scorn. (...) The ascent of the rural Maronites (...) might have, momentarily, evened out a centuries-old social imbalance, but it also meant the end to the LF as a representative movement.” (Haugbolle 2010, p. 53) A rupture between the militia and the population well illustrated by the attitudes of dissociation employed by the students to describe the trajectory of their fathers.

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<sup>545</sup> Fouad, interview with the author: May 24, 2010 [in English].

The mirroring trajectories of the two leaders have continued during the Syrian domination in Lebanon – Michel Aoun's “external” exile and Samir Geagea internal exile after his imprisonment – perfectly exemplifying the counter-type model. The internal retreat of Geagea during his imprisonment nourished an image of radical asceticism, inspired by the model of Saint Charbel – a Lebanese monk (1828-1898) canonized by the Catholic Church in 1977. In the context of the war, the Saint symbolizes the “fighting Saint of the Mountain” (Boltanski 2012, p. 73; Heyberger 2002, p. 148 and sq) mirroring the future attributes allocated to Geagea by his followers (Aubin-Boltanski 2012, p. 71 and 73). While Michel Aoun embodies a prophet, leading the people by his verb, the *Hakîm* rather incarnates a Mystic, keeping a posture of spiritual contemplation.

The affectivity of distinction alimented by the character of Samir Geagea among FPM members – incapable of instigating intimacy, inspiration, nor communion – implies that the head of the Lebanese Forces is denied the qualification of “leader”:

*“Il a toujours essayé d'être un leader, mais il n'a jamais réussi. Quand Bachir Gemayel est mort, il a pris le contrôle des FL qui étaient elles-mêmes divisées: il y avait Hobeika et Fouad Abu-Nader [rivals of Samir Geagea within the LF]. Il y avait des conflits entre eux. Et jusqu'à aujourd'hui, il essaie d'être un leader mais il n'a jamais pris une décision très importante pour le Liban. (...) Ses paroles sont démenties par les faits historiques. Depuis qu'il a pris les FL, il y a eu une guerre inter-chrétienne. Bien qu'ils prétendaient défendre les chrétiens, ils les ont tués, ils les ont affamés (...). Les femmes chrétiennes ont été violées, ils ont tué leurs propres frères. Si tu veux un exemple, il y avait une fois un milicien des FL. (...) Il était drogué et il a tué son frère. Son véritable frère, né d'un même père et d'une même mère, qui était soldat dans l'armée (...).*

*- Où est-ce que tu as entendu cette histoire des deux frères ?*

*Ce sont mes parents qui me l'ont racontée. Ils connaissaient les familles du village et ils ont su que dans une famille, il y avait un fils dans les FL et un dans l'armée. Ce n'était bien sûr pas le cas dans une seule famille, il y en avait plusieurs, ça arrivait. Mais ils connaissaient cette famille et le milicien a tué son frère. Et même, si tu regardes les archives de Télé-Liban [la chaîne publique] tu peux voir que l'armée a capturé plusieurs miliciens des FL qui étaient drogués. (...) Ils ont été capturés et l'armée a saisi des grandes quantités de drogue. C'était dans le journal.*

*- Pourquoi cette barrière existe-t-elle toujours entre FL et aounistes ?*

*C'est à cause des leaders : il y avait un grand conflit entre les deux leaders. Michel Aoun avait demandé à Samir Geagea de rendre ses armes, il n'a pas accepté et il y a eu une lutte pour la domination. C'est comme un sentiment de trahison que tu ne*

*peux pas oublier. (...) Ce ne sont pas des choses que nous avons inventées, par exemple quand je te parle du milicien qui a tué son frère. (...) Ce sont des choses qui ont existé, qui ont eu lieu dans l'histoire (...).*"<sup>546</sup>

Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea, because of their continuing political rivalry, nurture the distinction and sustain the signification of the memory of the “Elimination war” in the construction of the partisan affiliation. The souvenir of the violence committed by the armed group claiming to protect the population but which morphed into a apparatus of domination (Picard 1994) supports the horizon of identification for those rejecting such practices as well as the repertoire of legitimization elaborated by the FPM as a political competitor in the Lebanese sectarian system. The treason is impossible to forget as it still has currency for the delimitation of the social groups coexisting in the same political and symbolic milieu. The unfinished nature of the Lebanese wars, the system of amnesia imposed by the public authorities on the violent episodes, particularly through the 1991 law of amnesty, favor the maintenance of private traumatic memories (Haugbolle 2005, p. 194) as exemplified in Kamal's account. Consequently, concurrent narratives emerge and acquire the status of historical truth. During the LF-Army war, each side had, for instance, its own media report. The *Télé-Liban* documentaries evoked by Kamal refer to the public broadcasting company, which was under control of the government led by the General. The absence of a officially acknowledged History encourages the recourse to memories sustaining exclusive narratives that continually fuel the controversy about the past.

The trope of the intra-family fighting, central in Kamal's story, soundly discloses the signification of the distinction. The murder of the soldier by the militiaman – and not the contrary – connotes the disloyalty of Geagea and his men suspected by Aoun's supporters. The “Elimination war” is still interpreted today as a betrayal coming from inside the same “house”, the Christian political realm. The inter-Christian fighting, one of the bloodiest phases of the war (Picard 1993, p. 155), effectively torn families and separated neighbors, and remains a traumatic event in the memory of the population living in the contested area. “*With the LF, we cannot be reunited back, some tried but it's not possible because of the war. If I killed your father, you will never go back with me (...). On the contrary, between us and Hezbollah, there is no blood*”<sup>547</sup> once told me Lea, a AUB student. The wartime strife is thus difficult to heal all the more since historically and politically, Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea, the FPM and the LF are

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<sup>546</sup> Kamal, interview with the author: March 21, 2011 [in French].

<sup>547</sup> Lea, interview with the author: November 30, 2010 [in English].

still in competition for the same territorial and symbolic space. The social representations sustaining the opposition construct a reality that “in turn serves as the basis for their verification.” (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 199) The original opposition turned into a founding myth – the murder of a brother is a repeated trope in founding myth, like in the Ancient Testament with the story of Abel and Cain, or Romulus and Remus in the Ancient Rome – justifying the present boundary.

For the FPM sympathizers, the LF leader consequently exemplifies the archetype of the enemy from within, as another recurrent metaphor employed to comment his photo perfectly demonstrates:

*“[Silence] C'est le cancer de la société...je n'en dirais pas plus, c'est le cancer de la société. Pour moi, c'est un assassin, un criminel, il ne mérite pas que je m'arrête davantage sur lui...c'est le cancer de la société.”*<sup>548</sup>

*“Je ne sais pas quoi dire...c'est un cancer. Comme le cancer, il s'infiltré dans ton corps sans que tu ne le saches, puis quand tu le sens, c'est trop tard, c'est fini...C'est pareil avec lui et ses partisans. (...) Ils s'immiscent dans toutes les familles, comme le cancer.”*<sup>549</sup>

The three contexts of affectivity of the multi-layered collective memory are all mobilized to denounce the image of Samir Geagea as a repulsive symbol. The repertoires of the family, of the partisan cause, and of the Christian community work together in the rejection of a character that incarnates the figure of the enemy from within, a negative but pivotal role in the process of construction of the groups<sup>550</sup> – the “reassurance of fratricide” evoked by Benedict Anderson (1991, p. 199). Here again, the comparison with the conflict opposing Amal and Hezbollah in 1988 offers sound similarities. The local communities living in the areas disputed between the two organizations constructed a strong sense of exclusive belonging:

*“Au village [pour nous les enfants], il y avait deux organisations de scouts. Il y avait des gens qui étaient avec celui-ci et d'autres avec celui-là. (...) C'était une différence politique [rires]. Il y avait un groupe pour Hezbollah et un pour Amal...le fait d'envoyer les enfants dans l'un ou l'autre était un choix politique (...). Mon père n'avait pas de préférence politique affirmée, au contraire (...). Mais nous, je veux dire les enfants, nous avons fait un choix (...) si on peut dire (...) depuis toujours, avec les sentiments. (...) Dans le village il y avait toujours des problèmes [entre les*

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<sup>548</sup> Halim, interview with the author: December 1, 2009 [in French].

<sup>549</sup> Tino, interview with the author: March 12, 2011 [in French].

<sup>550</sup> The role of the figure of the enemy in the unification of the groups has been widely discussed in the sociology of intergroup relations. For a standard example: Simmel 1994 (1908), p. 199-205.

*deux partis], telle famille dit du mal de telle autre, et surtout quand il y avait des membres d'une même famille qui étaient Hezbollah et d'autres Amal (...). Socialement et même politiquement, ce problème entre Amal et Hezbollah revenait toujours..."<sup>551</sup>*

## **B) The equivocal heritage of Bachir Gemayel**

Unlike the perceptions created around the character of Samir Geagea, which design a negative double of the leader whose outlines match the exact opposite of the attributes associated with Michel Aoun, Bachir Gemayel is mobilized in the FPM activists' narratives alternatively to point out crucial differences and, on the contrary, to re-situate the General in a symbolic line. The name of the former President of the Republic, assassinated in September 1982 only three weeks after his election, elucidates speech acts in which the memory is convoked either to claim a heritage, or to mark a boundary. His figure splits the various components of the collective memory in use in the FPM, generating differences and contradictions.

*"Bachir Gemayel c'est un personnage assez difficile dans l'histoire du Liban. Il représente beaucoup de choses pour beaucoup de gens. Il n'y a pas une opinion tranchée sur sa période, que se soit au sein du CPL ou dans les autres partis. Personnellement, il représente quelque chose de négatif dans l'histoire du pays. Pour d'autres, non. Peut-être il serait bon d'arriver à un point où nous soyons d'accord sur l'évaluation de son action, mais je pense que ce n'est pas possible avant d'avoir revu toute la période de l'histoire du pays. (...) Certains aiment à dire qu'il a été un mal nécessaire...je ne crois pas. (...) Pour certains il représente l'Etat chrétien fort, la volonté d'un peuple à ne pas se soumettre...mais enfin son père a demandé aux Syriens d'intervenir au Liban en 1976, avant d'entrer en conflit avec eux puis de collaborer avec les Israéliens, il a bâti sa popularité avec le sang. Donc ce ne sont pas des choses positives. Pour moi, il représente le summum du maronitisme politique, qui cherche à prolonger sa mainmise sur l'Etat (...) alors même que le maronitisme politique n'a pas eu d'effets positifs.*

*- Il semble y avoir une nostalgie du personnage, y compris au CPL?*

*Cette nostalgie diffère en fonction des gens et ce phénomène n'est pas localisé au sein d'un parti. Cela dépend de l'histoire personnelle des gens, de leur position au début de la guerre. Certains disent qu'il aurait pu faire un changement. D'autres disent que non (...). Bachir Gemayel est monté sur le trône de son père, il a gagné sa position par le sang, il a été un proche collaborateur des Israéliens, il a détruit l'infrastructure politique du parti du Front Libanais pour prouver sa légitimité à lui*

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<sup>551</sup> Bouchra, interview with the author: October 30, 2007 [in French].

*seul, il a barré la route de Dany Chamoun par exemple, et il a été le responsable du massacre de Ehden. Ce sont des choses qu'un militaire, un fonctionnaire de l'Etat comme Michel Aoun n'accepterait jamais. (...) La vision de l'Etat de Bachir Gemayel, un Etat chrétien fort, n'est pas une vision que nous partageons. Nous voulons un Etat fort, c'est vrai, mais un Etat laïc (...).*"<sup>552</sup>

Virgil's comments acknowledge the ambivalence of the character of Bachir Gemayel. Again, as he himself points out, the absence of a recognized history of the past opens the way for the profusion of antithetic memories. His embarrassment when he draws a clear portrait of the “martyred President” underlines the lack of consensus within the FPM itself to assign a coherent image to this essential character in the recent Lebanese history. While the internalization of the FPM identity narrative produced an alignment of the various components of the collective memory mobilized to interpret the signification allocated to Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea, the process seems unable to create a similar articulation with Bachir Gemayel. Far from generating the projection of the individual into the group through the joint construction of collective meaning among Party's members, the character of Bachir divides.

The specific trajectory of the LF commander calls forth divergent evaluations. Son of the Kata'eb's founder Pierre Gemayel, Bachir originated in a notable family from Bikfaya (Metn) and inherited the political leadership of his father. Born in 1947 in Achrafiyeh, he joined the Phalanges during his twelfth year before leading the student branch of the party in the Saint Joseph University between 1965 and 1971. His personal career exemplifies the militarization of the Kata'eb since the end of 1960s (Favier 2004, p. 214). After creating his own battalion in the military wing of the movement, he was named commander of the newly created Lebanese Forces, an organization supposed to federate the various paramilitary groups of the Lebanese Front: the Kata'eb regular Forces, the *Numûr* [Tigers] of the Liberal National Party, the *Tanzîm*, the Marada, and the Guardians of the Cedar, a Christian ultra-nationalist group created by Etienne Sakr. His position as one of the political and military leaders of the “Lebanese Resistance [*al-Muqâwamah al-Lubnâniyyah*]” as they called themselves against the Palestinian and Leftist organizations, earned him the ambiguous nature mentioned by Virgil. For some, he symbolizes the refusal of Palestinian domination over Lebanon, the fight for the safeguarding and the strengthening of the State dominated by the Christians and the Maronites in particular. For others, like Virgil, his actions at the head of the militia revealed a criminal nature and typified the political blindness and extremism of the Maronite elite, who did not

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<sup>552</sup> Virgil, interview with the author: October 23, 2010 [in French].

hesitate to ally successively the Syrians and the Israelis to fight against the Palestinian presence and the reforms proposed by the Lebanese Left. Virgil, born in a Greek-catholic family from a peripheral region – Akkar – and himself openly atheist, thus associated Bachir Gemayel with the domination of the conservative Maronite notables from the center.

As commander of the LF militia, Bachir Gemayel engaged in collaboration with Israel to train and arm his militants. He was also instrumental in the inter-Christian fighting that broke out between the various components of the Lebanese Front since 1978. Under the pretext of “unify the struggle [*Tawhîd al-Bunduqiyyah* – literally the “unification of the riffle”]”, Bachir Gemayel violently imposed his leadership over the other components of the Lebanese Front. In June 1978, he launched his men against the Franjiyeh. A commando, led by Samir Geagea – who was injured during the battle – attacked the mansion of Toni Franjiyeh, leader of the military wing of the Marada. Toni, his wife, their daughter and some forty people were massacred. Two years later, the LF assaulted the LNP of the Chamoun family and committed another bloodshed in the *Aqua Marina* hotel in Safra – 20 kilometers North of Beirut. The memory of these events fully participates in drawing the negative image of Bachir Gemayel presented by Virgil. During our first encounter, the young man had expressed his personal opinion on the character even more explicitly, although conscious of its marginality in the Party:

*“Bachir Gemayel, certains l'appellent allègrement 'le petit nazi'. (...) Enfin, pour moi il est pire que les nazis, mais bon...ce n'est pas quelque chose de très commun dans les rangs du CPL. (...) Pour moi, Bachir Gemayel, c'est quelqu'un qui est sanguinaire, un criminel mais surtout c'est quelqu'un qui a fait que toute une partie de la population libanaise soit assimilée à la criminalité. Peut-être que ça a été la cause de tous les problèmes survenus après 1982, après sa mort. (...) Il a d'une façon ou d'une autre créé cette aberration qu'a été la progression de la guerre civile et l'Etat monstrueux de Taëf (...).”<sup>553</sup>*

Virgil pointed out Bachir's growing power and the impunity of his militiamen. An influence that enabled him to be elected President of the Republic in August 1982, but also opened the way for the omnipotence of the militia organizations in Lebanon and the nearly total dismantling of the State. However, Bachir's assassination on September 14, even before his official installation conferred a quasi mythical aura to his character (Haugbolle 2010, p. 179-180) all the more since the LF leader adopted in the weeks preceding his election and in the subsequent days a renewed posture,

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<sup>553</sup> Virgil, interview with the author: May 14, 2010 [in French].

insisting on the unity of Lebanon, the sovereignty of the State over its entire territory – the famous slogan “10452” in reference to the total area of the country – and euphemizing his Christian attitude to encourage reconciliation with the Lebanese Muslims.

*“C'est une perte pour le Liban, lorsqu'il a été assassiné. (...) C'était vraiment un chef qui a pu réunir tous les partisans, toutes les constituantes du Liban, Musulmans et Chrétiens. Il avait une vision pour le Liban, mais on l'a perdu. On a pleuré lorsqu'il a été élu président parce qu'entre 1975 et 1982 c'était vraiment sept années noires et il était un des chefs de cette guerre, considéré aussi comme un criminel (...). Mais quand il a été élu président, il a su comment réunir les gens, il a interdit [à] tous ses miliciens de marcher dans la rue avec leurs armes, il a interdit les bagarres dans les écoles et à l'université (...). Il a commencé à essayer de remettre le Liban dans le droit chemin, d'arrêter la guerre. Mais malheureusement il n'a pas pu, il a été assassiné. [Donc on ne l'aimait pas] avant qu'il soit président, en tant que chef des Phalanges ! Parce que nous, à Jbeil surtout, on a été beaucoup maltraités par les Phalanges. Mais après qu'il a été élu président, après son nouveau discours, nous avons changé notre point de vue. (...) On a pleuré quand il a été élu président puis on a pleuré parce qu'il a été assassiné (...)”<sup>554</sup>*

The dual image of Bachir Gemayel, head of a violent militia and President of the Republic carrying the hope of renewal in a dark era is patent. Notwithstanding, the symbol of the Presidency seems to emerge from Halim's description. The focalization on the last moments of Bachir Gemayel's era stands for me as an attempt to integrate a pivotal character in the socio-political horizon of the Lebanese Christians by singling out his final unitarian stand, liberated from the atrocities of his trajectory as a militiaman as well as from his status of heir of a notable family. All these latter elements appear incompatible with the FPM political project. However, the character of Bachir is granted such a part in the memory of the 1975-1990 events that it is impossible to neglect. Interestingly, this tendency to highlight the last phase of Bachir's career is also found in the Christian society more globally. Decrypting the cult of Bachir Gemayel in Achrafiyeh, Sune Haugbolle argues that “the insistence on a specific point in time (September 1982) can be seen as an attempt to immortalise a moment in the history of the Maronites and the quarter when it looked like they were going to dominate Lebanon.” (Haugbolle 2010, p. 180-181). “Death of a leader, birth of a myth” wrote Karim Pakradouni, a Phalangist official, in his war memoirs (Pakradouni 1984, p. 251).

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<sup>554</sup> Halim, interview with the author: December 1, 2009 [in French].



The image of Bachir thus appears to be fixed in a mythical time referring to a political climax for Christian politics in the country. A distortion of memory that logically impacts specifically the new generations that carry no direct memories of the whole of Bachir's trajectory. This hypothesis was underlined by several of the FPM officials, especially those who personally rejected the heritage of the first LF commander. For example, a former Party's representative in the region of Baabda, born in 1972, who cheated on his age to join the Aoun's Army in 1989, asserted that:

*“Je n’ai pas une vision positive de Bachir Gemayel. Bon, aujourd’hui, la jeunesse libanaise est attirée par ce grand chef qu’elle n’a pas connu. Mais il y a eu des atrocités qui ont été commises sous Bachir Gemayel que tout homme, quelle que soit son histoire, quelles que soient ses opinions politiques, ne peut pas admettre. Bachir Gemayel, (...) c’est cet homme qui a appris aux Chrétiens à utiliser les armes entre eux, et ça, c’est malheureusement un défaut dont ils ne pourront jamais sortir.”<sup>555</sup>*

Like in Virgil's words, Bachir appears here staged as the precursor of the troubled time that would prevail in Lebanon during the 1980s and culminate with the inter-Christian war of 1990. Undoubtedly, the memory of Bachir today is inextricable from the war period and its tormented circumstances. His character consequently also reflects the threat against the very existence of Lebanon, especially felt among the Christian populations:

*“Bachir Gemayel, c’est le défunt...c’est un martyr du Liban. C’est quelqu’un de courageux qui a défendu son pays à une époque où il le fallait, mais qui, à ce qu’on dit, a aussi tué beaucoup et commis de nombreuses erreurs. Je blâme ceux qui l’ont appuyé et non pas lui, parce qu’il n’avait que 34 ans, il était sans expérience. C’est à ce peuple que je reproche de l’avoir suivi à l’époque alors qu’il aurait pu soutenir quelqu’un de plus expérimenté, quelqu’un avec un vécu de la guerre, qui ne vienne pas d’une grande famille politique aristocratique.”<sup>556</sup>*

Maroun tries to conciliate the image of Bachir as a Hero defending his people with the main critics enounced against him in the FPM milieu: his belonging to an elite family and his violent actions during various episodes of the war. However, the memory of the threat perceived from the Palestinians – unmentioned namely but transpiring from his words and the allusion he made earlier in the interview to 1969 as the beginning of the struggle for the sovereignty in reference to the signing of the Cairo Agreement authorizing the armed presence of the PLO guerillas in Lebanon. According to this perspective, Bachir Gemayel, beyond his despicable misbehavior,

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<sup>555</sup> Albert, interview with the author: November 20, 2007 [in French].

<sup>556</sup> Maroun, interview with the author: November 6, 2007 [in French].

embodies the stand- of the Lebanonist ideology defended by the Lebanese Front. The excesses of Bachir are imputed to the necessary struggle for the protection of Lebanon as it existed at that time, i.e. under the political, social, and economical domination of the Maronite elite:

*“Je crois que le peuple avait besoin d’un Bachir Gemayel. S’il n’y avait pas Bachir Gemayel, on l’aurait créé certainement. Chez les Chrétiens, on a créé un Bachir Gemayel pour hausser la voix, et il l’a fait. Certainement il a commis des erreurs, mais c’est un homme courageux et il a défendu la cause très noblement, jusqu’au bout, il est devenu un martyr. (...) Tu avais Abdel Nasser, tu avais les Syriens, tu avais les Palestiniens alors il fallait obligatoirement en contrepartie que tu aies Bachir Gemayel. Il fallait un Chrétien fort, capable de parler avec les Arabes sans avoir peur. (...) C’était un homme militaire qui pouvait assurer la survie aux chrétiens du Liban (...). Aujourd’hui de nombreux militants du CPL aiment Bachir Gemayel et adhèrent au courant de Bachir. Et ce n’était [pas] parce qu’il venait de la famille Gemayel (...). C’était le fait que nous les Chrétiens, nous puissions vivre non pas seulement au Liban, mais dans cette région, en liberté, dans un pays qui est non confessionnel (...). C’est un homme fort qui va nous mettre au cœur de la région, à égalité avec les autres.”<sup>557</sup>*

The portrait worked out by Khalid draws a clear parallel between the role attributed within the FPM to Michel Aoun and the memory of Bachir Gemayel's heritage. The actions of the former LF commander are reinterpreted to match the signification of the present political posture of the FPM and Michel Aoun, which hence, in Khalid's terms, becomes the continuation of a longer struggle waged by the Christians for their survival in a hostile environment. Bachir Gemayel and Michel Aoun are meant to incarnate different stages of a same battle for existence. A political filiation explained in other reactions to the picture of Bachir. Assaf, a Shiite activist whose grand-father established links with the Gemayel family<sup>558</sup>, explained:

*“Sometimes his acts make you feel that he did what he did for the sake of the country. But sometimes you feel that what he did caused the country to collapse. Of course he was the leader, in the beginning. He was the first one to raise the issue of rights, the issue of resistance, but maybe he did it the wrong way. That is what I am blaming him for. He defended his country but the wrong way: against the Palestinians he brought the Syrians, against the Syrians he brought the Israelis. (...) General Michel Aoun was maybe fighting a lost war [against the Syrians] while Bachir Gemayel was fighting a war that he won, but the way he obtained victory*

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<sup>557</sup> Khalid, interview with the author: November 6, 2007 [in French].

<sup>558</sup> See Chapter Four.

*caused us much more than Michel Aoun's loss. Of course, I think he is the father of all... I mean the father of Samir Geagea, Michel Aoun, and all of them. He was the head, the mind, of all.”<sup>559</sup>*

The Phalangist hero is sketched as the inspiration of a model of Christian leader. In fact, both Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea were close collaborators of Bachir Gemayel. The former participated in the group constituted to prepare Bachir's election at the Presidency in 1982 (Ménargues 2004) while the latter played an important role in the military operations of the LF. In many aspects, the characters of Michel Aoun and Bachir Gemayel are comparable. The Lebanese historian Fawwaz Traboulsi even labeled Aoun a “Bachir II” due to “his quest to monopolize Christian representation, his military methods, and his identification of ‘Lebanese’ with ‘Christian’.” (Traboulsi 2007, p. 240) It remains that the FPM identity narrative contradicts in several points Bachir’s heritage: the use of violence against the community as well as the alliance with external powers explain that, in spite of his importance within wartime and postwar Christian politics, Bachir Gemayel cannot play a positive role in the integration of the various contexts inspiring the collective memories constructed by FPM young activists. Nonetheless, the fact that the students do not experienced personally the time of Bachir introduces a distance and even a mythic dimension that impacts their narrations and contrasts them from the stories of the elder members.

However, rather than being a purely generational matter, the assessment of the legacy of the assassinated President as well as the comparison between him and Michel Aoun seems determined by the familial memory attached to the character of Bachir Gemayel, and by the local implantation of the activists. For example, Alain, whose father was formerly a Phalangist and happened to be Bachir's cousin spells out the equivalence between the two leaders:

*“C’est quelqu’un qui a commis beaucoup d’erreurs...c’est un martyr et c’est quelqu’un qui a créé un rêve, comme Michel Aoun, pour beaucoup de gens, même des musulmans (...). Le rêve d’un Liban libre ! (...) Pour moi, Bachir Gemayel, c’est Bachir 1982, pas 1977 ou 1978...qui a dit non pas représenter les Forces Libanaises mais tout le Liban, chrétiens et musulmans. Il a pensé qu’on ne veut pas un Liban fédéral mais on veut un Liban 10452km, c’est ça qui est important et c’est ça que je respecte chez Bachir Gemayel. En plus c’est un cousin germain de mon père...mais je déteste tous les Gemayel, sauf Bachir (...). Mon père qui est ingénieur m’a raconté*

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<sup>559</sup> Assaf, interview with the author: October 30, 2010 [in English].

*qu'il n'y avait que deux époques où les gens n'étaient pas corrompus: en 1982 après l'élection de Bachir Gemayel et en 1988 avec l'arrivée de Michel Aoun.*"<sup>560</sup>

The deep insertion within the FPM contradicts this view and obliges Alain to specify once again that the memory he mobilizes to interpret the character of Bachir Gemayel refers specifically to his 1982 Presidential stands. The contradictions remaining between the FPM identity narrative and the figure of Bachir Gemayel prompt activists like Alain to craft coherence in their own representations of the character, either by justifying his mistakes, or by insisting on a specific dimension of his heritage. The repertoire of interpretation forged within the Party more than often contradicts the primary socialization and urges Alain to focus on Bachir as "President". On the contrary, Patrick, whose family used to support the National Liberal Party of Camille Chamoun before joining the Aounist movement in 1988 explained, clearly referring to the battle for the "unification of the struggle":

*"Moi, je n'aime pas cette personne. Avant il était dans le parti phalangiste, les Kata'eb. Il y avait des problèmes avec le parti des Ahrâr. Il y a eu des combats entre les phalangistes et les Ahrâr, et mon grand-père est mort dans ces combats. Politiquement, il a lutté contre les chrétiens, pour être le seul dirigeant [contrôleur] des chrétiens. C'était mauvais pour les chrétiens, je crois, d'avoir un seul chef."*<sup>561</sup>

Thus, the family political heritage plays a crucial role in the construction of the signification of character of Bachir and in the way it is mobilized to stress a personal and collective identity. Local memory appears equally pivotal as these examples of three activists originating from the Eastern city of Zahleh and belonging to three successive generations demonstrate:

*"Bachir, quand il est mort, j'étais la première à hanter les rues [dans les manifestations qui avaient lieu] de Beyrouth à Zahleh, avec des bougies (...). On avait confiance en lui pour sauver le Liban. (...). Ces deux là [Bachir Gemayel et Michel Aoun], c'est la foi dans le Liban (...). Bachir, c'était notre révolte...la révolte des jeunes de notre génération (...) et c'était l'espoir surtout pour les Chrétiens, et pour les Libanais. Il nous a donné l'espoir en nous en tant que jeunes. (...) On sait très bien que Bachir n'était pas pur (...), il était en relation avec Israël. Mais il avait ses raisons, principalement sa préoccupation de lutter contre la présence palestinienne...et il a été tué par Israël aussi (...). Il a traité avec le diable [Israël] pour sauver le Liban (...). Le général Aoun, c'est l'image de Bachir, c'est le négatif (...) mais qui a pu être développé. [C'est] le développement du rêve, de cette*

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<sup>560</sup> Alain, interview with the author: April 20, 2008 [in French].

<sup>561</sup> Patrick, interview with the author: March 4, 2011 [in French].

*conviction, de ces idées, de cette vision [nationale et patriotique](...). On se souvient de Bachir à travers le Général (...)."<sup>562</sup>*

In this account, Paula asserts the equivalence between the projects and the affectivity inspired by the two leaders. Michel Aoun represents an extension of Bachir's project, but in an improved development, an accomplished variant. The ambivalence of Bachir, who "was not pure", is transcended by Michel Aoun's continuation of his "dream". In this perspective, Aoun's success reflects on Bachir's image, granting him an acceptable portrait. For activists like Paula, deeply marked by the rise of Bachir in the troubles of the wars, it is difficult to renounce to the character of Bachir. Constructing a link between the two figures thus enables to maintain the contribution of Gemayel in the construction of her self without contradicting her present identification with Michel Aoun and notwithstanding the consciousness of the mistakes committed by the "martyr". Her narrative therefore is a bridge between two stages of her life, two moments of identification pivotal in the process of construction of her self.

*"C'est une personnalité qui a sa place dans le Tayyâr (CPL)...on le critique parfois dans le Parti (...) parce qu'il a utilisé les armes à l'intérieur, parce que c'était un milicien. Mais c'est un leader qui a donné un rêve pour le peuple libanais et surtout pour les chrétiens, pour le retrait des troupes étrangères, pour bâtir un Liban fort et égalitaire]. (...) Je l'aime, j'ai des critiques, il a joué le jeu du sang, mais c'est quelqu'un qui avait de grandes ambitions pour le Liban. Et je pense que les vrais Bachiriens sont aujourd'hui aounistes...c'est mon avis. Par exemple, Bachir, quand il résistait contre les Syriens, il parlait comme s'il était un prophète, il disait que la défaite n'était pas que les Syriens entrent dans nos régions, à Bikfaya ou à Jounieh, la base des chrétiens du Mont-Liban (...), mais que la vraie défaite c'est à l'intérieur de nous...la défaite c'est quand nous sommes vaincus à l'intérieur de nos âmes si tu veux (...). Et bien ces paroles là, tu les retrouves après le 13 octobre 1990. Nous ne sommes pas vaincus, les troupes syriennes étaient dans nos régions, mais nous ne sommes pas vaincus, nous n'avons pas sorti le drapeau blanc. Nous avons résisté et nous avons réussi et je pense que c'est un grand résistant, un grand militant chrétien (...). Ma famille essentiellement est phalangiste, Kata'eb...le parti de Bachir. Pour nous, c'est un héros...il y avait des photos de lui chez nous, et même maintenant, mon frère en a une...et moi aussi (...): j'ai une photo de Bachir Gemayel et une de Michel Aoun (...). [A propos de] Bachir, il y a une chanson qui disait : 'on n'a pas oublié depuis l'époque du terrain de football' (...), dans cette chanson, Bachir Gemayel apparaît comme quelqu'un qui est parti mais dont on va continuer le chemin. Elle a une très forte image poétique cette chanson, elle s'appelle 'Min hek*

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<sup>562</sup> Paula, interview with the author: May 4, 2008 [in French].

*al-mal'ab mâ nasînâ' (...). Parfois on me dit : 'Mais tu es un Phalangiste, comment tu peux être avec nous ?' Mais arrêtons ça...il y a quelque temps, j'ai préparé un article : "qui sont les Bachiriens ?", ceux de sa famille ou de son Parti ? Non, ceux qui partagent sa vision ! Michel Aoun et Bachir Gemayel sont les deux leaders chrétiens forts qui ont eu une grande popularité."<sup>563</sup>*

In a comparable manner, Michel claims the legitimacy of the heritage of Bachir within the FPM. Son a Phalangist activist, he incorporates both Bachir and the General in his interpretation of political activist and his sense of partisan belonging. Because of the memory of his family, marked at the same time by his socialization within the Kata'eb Party, as illustrated by his intimate knowledge about Bachir's speeches and partisan songs, and by the strength of his local roots in the city of Zahleh, Michel insists on similar episodes and on the allegedly shared vision of both leaders to overcome the differences in their trajectory. By doing so, he claims a legitimate position as a FPM activist in spite of his “Bachirian” identity.

*“À l'époque, il y avait les Palestiniens aussi qui étaient rentrés à Zahleh et mon père m'a raconté des choses vraiment dégueulasses qu'ils avaient faites. Les Palestiniens tuaient d'une façon horrible. Juste devant sa maison et [là] où il travaillait, il y avait des batailles avec les Palestiniens. Ensuite, les Syriens sont venus et ont voulu entrer à Zahleh. Là, il s'est engagé avec les hommes de Zahleh pour défendre la ville, avec l'aide et le financement des FL de Bachir Gemayel. (...) Malgré le nombre et l'armement plus important de la Syrie, ils l'ont emporté. Bachir Gemayel a dit que c'est la victoire de Zahleh qui l'a aidé à devenir Président. Quand il a été élu, mon père m'a raconté que toutes les églises du Liban, y compris à Zahleh, ont fait sonner leurs cloches. C'était comme la plus grande victoire des chrétiens du Liban. (...) Mais il est mort après 21 jours seulement.”<sup>564</sup>*

The three testimonies have in common to be voiced by FPM activists raised in families from the city of Zahleh. Paula was born in the early 1970s, Michel in 1981, and Emile, the last interviewee, seven years later. They belong to successive generations and the political environments of their families were slightly different: Paula's father was in the Army, Michel's family was engaged in the Kata'eb Party, while Emile's father fought with the LF in the 1975-1977 war before participating in the fighting in Zahleh. The battle in this Eastern town situated near the Beirut-Damascus road was instrumental in the political ascent of Bachir Gemayel. In December 1980 and April 1981, the city was besieged and underwent violent assaults

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<sup>563</sup> Michel, interview with the author: March 6, 2009 [in French].

<sup>564</sup> Emile, interview with the author: November 12, 2007 [in French].

from the Syrian Army. Zahleh's LF militants and Kata'eb members organized the resistance. Bachir Gemayel sent Lyna Elias, one of his consultants, to boost their moral (Elias 2009, p. 6), and, at the climax of the tension on April 11, 1981 addressed a phone call to the besieged militiamen and exhorted them to resist, "to defend the Lebanese Beqaa, and the Christian Lebanon" (Pakradouni 1984, p. 230).

In fact, the episode was deeply inserted into a wider regional crisis. Syria had installed missiles in the Beqaa and Bachir probably infiltrated LF fighters in Zahleh in order to force an Israeli intervention in the conflict. Eventually, Tsahal destroyed Syrian helicopters in Mount Sannine, the highest mountain in Lebanon, overlooking Zahleh. To diffuse the growing tension between Israel and Syria, the American special envoy, Philip Habib, negotiated a deal. The LF fighters were authorized to leave Zahleh while the Syrians dismantled their missiles. The episode was transformed into a victory by Bachir Gemayel and composed a central part in the heroic narrative built around his character. This mythified story credited Bachir and the LF of a great prestige, and beyond constituted a major event in the recent history of the town, strongly inspiring a glorious perception of Bachir.

The affectivity of the memory of Bachir is shattered. Contrary to Michel Aoun, Bachir Gemayel does not integrate uniformly the various frames of collective memory. On the contrary, his character divides within the FPM according to the different repertoires: familial, local, partisan, generational, etc. Personal acquaintance, supported by the combination of experiences and horizons, determines how the character of Bachir is used as an interface with the collective identity narrative of the FPM, sometimes through fusion, inspiration, communion, or sometimes through repulsion. The parallels and contrasts constructed between Michel Aoun and Bachir Gemayel function as tool for the activists to internalize, personify, and publicize their own interpretation of their self as FPM members, in relation to a specific allocation of meaning to their familial, partisan, and communal memories. When confronted to the photo of the assassinated president, Malek, whose identification with Michel Aoun was particularly strong, told me a story about his personal political socialization:

*"I don't like him. My parents and grand-parents were with Bachir Gemayel. But myself, I don't like him. For many reasons: he was a murderer, he killed many people. If you listen to my father, he would say that he was obliged...whatever the reasons. General Michel Aoun at some point had to, but didn't. When you show me the picture of a leader, I always compare with Michel Aoun. To me, he is special until now. He really is. Of course, maybe not 100% perfect but at least the best until now. Why I don't like him in general? You know, I read a lot. Sometimes it's a curse. I read a lot about politics. I am more a leftist than a rightist. When I was a kid, at a certain age, I used to like the Communists. But it only lasted for maybe half a year.*

*Then, I was with the Arab Union. But it lasted for maybe one year...then I was in favor of the Syrian Union, yes! My mother wanted to kill me or to throw me out of the house when I told her about it. So I am more in favor of the Left parties than of the Right parties. Maybe this is why I don't like this guy (...). Although most of the people in the FPM like him and some of his followers became FPMers later. But I don't like him because of his actions: to me he is a murdered, a liar...he killed many people and he lied. At some point he was with Israel and then he tried to be a national leader...I don't believe that! You are either a real man or not. You are either a real leader or not. You are either a national leader or not. You can't be something and then when you arrive to some point you claim to be something else. If you have lied once, you will lie twice.”<sup>565</sup>*

From his words, it is possible to understand how partisan labels, ideologies, and above all leaders work as markers, interfaces between personal identity and collective belonging. They allow, or even generate, contrasted identification: the individual positions his/her self in a conversation with these characters and their stories, in a dialogue with the plurality of memories they give access to, in order to assert a personal interpretation of the group membership. This allocation of meaning is realized through an affective investment variable in its content. It also remains deeply impacted by the previous interpretations and as such offers an entry into the trajectory of the actor's universe of signification. The characters of the leaders can thus be considered as markers of the processes of identification.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

The character of the leader and the representation of the relation of leadership were mobilized as accesses to the affectivity of the multi-vocal collective memory narratively constructed by FPM activists. From there, it was possible to isolate three concomitant modes of constructing the attachment of the individual to the group elucidated by the figure of Michel Aoun. The leader is first interpreted as a father, building an intimate relation to the collective; then as a Hero, generating an inspirational admiration; and finally as a Prophet, translating the political bonds in a religious dimension. It was also demonstrated that the figures of the leader enable the process of the identification as well as the markers of the process of internalization and personalization of collective narrative identities mainly relying on social memories.

The characteristics of the relation of leadership give precious indications about the nature of *groupness* as it is internalized by the FPM youth. The trope of the family

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<sup>565</sup> Malek, interview with the author: October 26, 2010 [in English].



reveals an organic, thus naturalized and link, difficult to question. The image of the Hero tends to closely associate the character of the leader with the partisan cause, minimizing the search for alternative leadership within the Party. Finally, the metaphor of the Prophet grants a religious and communal dimension to the leader, offering him a transcendental legitimacy. All this explains the scarcity of the criticism offered by young activists. Those who do question the authority of the leader are those who actually already distended their relation to the group and experienced a rupture in their identification with the FPM, as the example of Anis from AUB illustrates. Unlike the youth of Lebanese Communist Party and of the Kata'eb in the 1960 studied by Agnès Favier (2004), no internal contestation has arisen among the FPM students during my fieldwork period. It was on the contrary the old guard who rebelled against the autocracy of the leader, as exemplified by the Abu Jamra episode<sup>566</sup>. This reality of today seems to be shared by most of the main political parties, at the exception of the LCP in which the generational cleavage between the hierarchy and the youth still produces conflicts. The continuous political crisis raging since 2005 certainly offers some explanation. However, this phenomenon has also to do with the attendant transformation of the leadership toward a reinforcement of the national and partisan leaderships at the expense of more local dominations (Catusse & Moawad 2011).

The process may look paradoxical. Logically, the growing strength of nation-wide parties could shift the political bonds toward ideological or at least strategical debates, as instanced by the opposition between March 14 – in line with the Saudi politics and the American project in the Middle East – and March 8 – aligned with the Iranian-Syrian axis. However this evolution also reinforces the sectarian dimension of Lebanese politics. Thus, the reinforcement of the sectarianism observed by several analysts since 2005 may be linked to the politicization of the Lebanese scene that accompanied the end of the Syrian domination. Between 1990 and 2005, Damascus' control over Lebanon tended to freeze political processes, which were released after the collapse of the Syrian apparatus in the country.

The communal repertoire invested in the figure of the leader, and more generally the articulation of a sectarian or religious collective memory by partisan identity narratives, ensure that the sense of belonging to a political party sustains the sense of belonging to a sectarian or a religious group, including in parties that advocate secularism like the FPM. This contradiction stems from the social centrality of the experience of inter-sectarian relations in politics imposed by the Lebanese political system. All seem to work as if, like it has for example been demonstrated in

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<sup>566</sup> See Chapter Three.

Yugoslavia under Tito's regime, people dissociate between their daily life's perception in which alterity is experienced in terms of interdependence or mutual respect – the famous *'aîsh mushtarak* [the shared life] in the Lebanese context – and a political discrimination between the communities dominated by fear, competition, and conflict (Bougarel 1995, p. 98). Sense of belonging to a political group thus exacerbates the perception of rivalry between communal groups and transmits the memory of such socio-political religious distinctions through the internalization of the multi-vocal narrative identity in use within the Party.

Again, a detour by the character of the leader is interesting. The extra-legitimacy granted to Michel Aoun because of his paternal and communal role raises the question of his succession. If most of the interviewed activists had difficulties to evoke the possibility of the replacement of the leader, the perspective of his inevitable death forced a reflexion on that matter. I found out that most of the student activists privileged the option of an outsider rather than someone from the Party to take the succession of the General. The most cited and desired scenario was a fusion between the FPM and its ally of the Marada, and the designation of Sleiman Franjieh, son of the assassinated leader Toni Franjieh and grand-son of the former President Sleiman Franjieh, as the head of the new group. What is the meaning of such a scenario – whose veracity was confirmed by a former FPM minister although it was never publicized and only alluded to – if not the permanence of the inscription of the partisan group within a triple line drawn by familial, political, and communal memories?



# Conclusions

*“Salomon saith. There is no new thing upon earth. So that as Plato had an imagination, that all knowledge was but remembrance; so Salomon giveth his sentence, that all novelty is but oblivion”*

Francis Bacon (1625, LVIII)

This study started from the words of young Lebanese students engaged in a political party. The narration of their adhesion and sense of belonging opened paths for the understanding of attachment and social bonds in a plural environment. Though limited, the case of student partisanship in the Free Patriotic Movement provided valuable insights. The study of figures – i.e. portraits of students and the stories they elaborated, their “figures of speech” – highlighted the prevalence of the interactional narrative construction of identification in the process of insertion in a social group. Reaching the end of the analysis, it is now possible to explore the main implications of the theses discussed throughout this work.

What does being Aounist today refer to? What does belonging to a partisan group means, in this case in Lebanon? What is a party for who intends to study *groupness* in a plural society? Starting from these questions and drawing on the observation of interactions before progressively deepening the analysis of adhesion, I tried to disclose the mechanisms constituting the partisan group into a community of interpretation, understood in a cognitive and performative perspective. Being engaged in a partisan group has a triple meaning, each dimension underlining a specific process of socialization and a distinct social function of attachment, all relying on a narrative core: mediation, incorporation, and integration.

## ***Partisan group as a community of mediation***

The study of student interactions in university settings suggests that adhesion first means to position one's self in interaction. The partisan group is an identity that can be mobilized in human relations. In that sense, the group stands out as a community of mediation, i.e. a gathering that serves as an interface in social encounters and situational settings. This group is unified by the storyline sustaining its positioning. It is through the mediation of the group and its narrative storyline that committed individuals engage in interactions.

## Conclusions

The Lebanese university scene, because of its pluralistic tradition in education and its sensitivity to political and partisan fragmentation, provides a favorable setting for the highlighting of party-based positions, in particular in times of political mobilization like student elections. The mechanism of positioning, at work in every social encounter, underlines the dominant storylines available in interactions. The situation of political crisis only gives more accessibility to the partisan storylines in a society already characterized by a strong fragmentation. The result is the scarcity of alternative positioning in the public arena. Political parties remain omnipresent in the mediation of the individuals' relations to the others, to social groups, and to the State. Paradoxically, the autonomy allocated by constitutional and legal dispositions to each constituent of the society, such as in the sector of education, entails the transposition of intergroup political conflicts into other fields, thus generating a situation of general de-sectoralization of the Lebanese society, characteristic of the contexts of crisis (Dobry 1986). The primacy of partisan politics as the interpretative framework of public interactions ensures the sharing of knowledge and repertoires connected with partisan belonging. It entails the non-limitation of the perception of partisan identity to the political sphere.

In that sense, one does not need to be an activist to mobilize and perpetuate partisan storylines in public settings. It is thus possible to understand the paradox of the existence of a minority of politically active students along the dominance of partisan lines in the social representations. These students are the vectors of socially omnipresent theories about the reality. Therefore the strength of political parties in Lebanon can only be understood through a detour by the micro-level interactions, and not by the approaches usually mobilized in plural contexts starting from macro societal entities. Comparatively, the decline of conventional political engagement among the youth in western societies echoes the decrease of the relevance of partisan storylines in public interactions. This perspective hence also addresses the issue of politicization. A systematic comparative approach could provide glimpses to understand both the resilience of strong political divisions in specific settings and the decline of political engagement in other societies. Already some stimulating studies have tackled this question of individual politicization in varying environments (Aït-Aoudia, Bennani-Chraïbi, & Contamin 2011). More of such projects could advantageously be conducted to understand the plurality of paths toward political engagement.

In-group socialization refers to the internalization of the interpretation of a position, i.e. learning the mobilization of a storyline and its enactment as a mode of recognition of the self and assignation of the other. Hence perception of alterity is pivotal in the process. However, such perception is possible only in presence of

publicly available narratives allocating social identities to individuals. To recognize the other and to be recognized, one recites a partition delimiting bonds and boundaries and offering their justifications. In that sense, partisan storylines provide visibility to the actors. They ensure that they are seen and identified upon a label they actively constructed – a central element to bear in mind in a society dominated by assignments. Such an interpretation covers more situations as immersion into the group increases. Collective symbolic practices – rituals – contribute to the institution of party-based social positions and to give them preeminence. Yet, the nature of ideology does not seem to play the crucial part in that process, which surfaced in comparable manner during the course of my fieldwork in the cases of the FPM, Hezbollah, and the Lebanese Communist Party alike. A more systematized analysis between various parties could confirm this significant finding in the case of Lebanon.

### ***Partisan group as a community of incorporation***

Belonging to a partisan group then means to participate in a community of incorporation, i.e. of immersion within a culture, a system of shared beliefs and codes. A party “earns its credibility from what it believes and makes believe of its references (...) or enemy” (de Certeau 1980, p. 315). Socialization here refers to its classical definition focusing on the mechanisms of learning and appropriation of a specific culture. Again, narrative plays a prominent part in this process. The construction of a system of beliefs and the incorporation of practices and norms are realized in reference to a master narrative representing the identity of the group. As is political socialization in general (Percheron 1985, p. 182), the elaboration of this dominant narrative upon which membership is defined and its internalization by the actors share common features.

First, the composition of the narrative and its appropriation are situated in time. The succession of historical episodes in which the grouping has evolved strongly impacts the definition of its public narrative. Similarly, the context of entry sets the manner individuals appropriate the collective identity forged in the group. Important changes in the circumstances of political action hence represent a threat for the party as they may introduce a gap between the master narrative and the experience of the members. To avoid this, an organization composes sequential stories aiming at binding the different eras of its history, to build the illusion of continuity. Therefore, one understands better the generational effect as different generations correspond to concurrent narratives for the definition of the group identity.

Second, the creation and incorporation of the public identity narrative are objects of conflicts. The filtering of reality operated through the socialization is determined by

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internal power relations. The emergence of a specific group style relying on a master narrative depends upon a collective agreement. Thus, it is submitted to the balance of power existing among members. Likewise, individuals' attributes and relations to the group and its dominant identity narrative allow them more or less margin of maneuver to publicly interpret membership. Mastering biographical experiences that echo the dominant discourse on identity logically gives a position of authorship and the related authority within the symbolic economy of the group. Moreover, one can suggest that contexts of crisis limit the possibility of dissociation from the master narrative without being subjected to collective pressure. Beyond, by moving the focus from the bonds to their representation and staging in interactional settings, the narrative perspective on group solidarity could provide ground for reconsidering the prevalence of the sole primary bonds *stricto sensu* in the understanding of the social ties in the Arab worlds and thus enhancing the opportunities for the circulation of concepts between different areas of study.

Third, both the collective elaboration and the individual internalization require a fertile ground. Partisan groups cannot create a reality *ex nihilo*. Being a secondary socialization, the incorporation of a partisan identity narrative is realized by already socialized members. An identity that would not correspond to the biographical experiences of the members might not last. The example of the early stages of Hezbollah, during which the Lebanese Shiite population remained reserved vis-à-vis the practices directly imported from Iran, offers a sound illustration (Fawaz 1998). In turn, without the "partition" imposed by the organization, a collective identity cannot arise from the multiplicity of individual components of the group (Lavabre 1994, p. 288). Combination between the predispositions acquired during primary socialization and the concrete presence of the group entails the constitution of an affective community. Indeed, the group is not an abstraction but exists in the daily life of the members. In the case presented here, the echoes of primary socialization, the surrounding of the university territories, and the insertion within students' sociability all contribute to the attachment of the actor to the collectivity. The affective dimension of adhesion is even stronger when the primary mode of encounter and interaction with the universe of signification of the group is mediated by significant others, the parents, the friends, or the teachers of the youth, etc. This inference could explain the persistence of partisan culture in spite of the parties' loss of political influence for organizations with powerful societal anchoring. The case of the strong imprint of the Communist party in countries like Italy provides in this regard a good potential comparison with the societal nature of political groups in Lebanon. Further, one could ask when, in these conditions, a party understood as a social group may eventually

disappear completely. In which circumstances, also, a newly formed structure may be in position to appropriate the heritage of a past political grouping. This double interrogation, central from the perspective of social political history, would require more investigation with specific methodological and theoretical devices.

Incorporation implies a re-interpretation of the reality according to the partisan frames. The modalities of adhesion, the paths leading to the group, are multiple. To define attachment as incorporation also supposes the distinction between various degrees of adhesion. It remains that the mechanisms of internalization of the group's definition of its own purpose and boundaries, in a word its group style, are comparable and generate a relative homogenization of the horizons of signification in which adherents are inscribed. This homogenization is all the stronger since boundaries *vis-à-vis* the out-group are marked. The social representations of those defining themselves as members are convergent in particular in the definition of the out-group. In post-conflict societies, the association of alterity with a traumatic past and a potential threat deeply reinforces the sense of community of destiny. Within such self-centered affective community, the notion of heritage acquires a prominent weight. Memory emerges as the core of the identity narrative.

### ***Partisan group as a community of integration***

Finally, adhesion means constructing the self against the horizon of a polyphonic collective memory. In that sense, the party becomes a community of integration because attachment entails the integration of a plurality of memories inherited from the various social groups in which the actors are evolving into a common plot. Narrative works here as an integrative concept, allowing the insertion of divergent experiences into a shared representation of the past organized around an emplotment that gives sense not only to the past, but also to the present and the future. Accordingly, members compose their own story to stage an identity they have already incorporated. They are, to that concern, figures of an identity foretold.

The socialization within the group consists in the integration of memories inherited from multiple temporalities into the group's identity narrative. Collective memory is constructed in the interplay generated by the confrontation between the organizational definition of the past and the living memories of the actors. Starting from individual stories enables to understand how narration concretely operates this dialectic, thus producing the synthesis between the social and the individual. This interaction is mediated by affective dispositions, which anchor the definition of the self into the social identity of the group. The sense of belonging to a same community arises from a feeling of fusion, inspiration, and communion with the collective. Of course, here



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again the intentionality of the group to forge a collective memory should not be overlooked: individual narrative memories are not perfect enactments of the public narrative produced in the organization. The more the individual is inserted into the party, the more the collective plot is mobilized to account for personal experiences.

The articulation of social times enabled by the activation of this affectivity makes the partisan group the depositary of social frames inherited from alternative groupings. Hence partisan group becomes the space of expression of the multiple social inscriptions of the individual. In Lebanon, many were the parties before the FPM that claimed their intention to break traditional modes of organizations and forge new ties between people, based on class (Lebanese Communist Party) or national (Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party, Kata'eb, etc.) interest. Like the FPM today, they were all communities of attachment, built around a space of *entre-soi* constructed through the positioning of identity boundaries. This feature may originate not in the preeminence of lasting familial and sectarian bonds, but rather in the transformations of these bonds and their integration within the partisan narrative identities.

In plural societies in general, and in postwar settings in particular, the sense of alienation and the existence of traumas resulting from fragmentation and internal conflicts urge the actors to construct interpretations of divisions and violence. To do so, they draw from the available stock of social knowledge, which integrates confessional distinctions, family ties, and territorial cleavages. By hosting the sense of belonging of the actors, the parties become incarnations of these explanations. Their ambition to sketch a new future remains consequently deeply connected with the mobilization of memory as did in Europe, the Communist parties which, although advocating the emergence of a new man, have constructed comprehensive representations of history that incorporated the living memories of social and local conflicts. In such contexts, partisan affiliations become the incarnation of social distinctions, so that it is sometimes through adhesion to a political group that past conflicts are rediscovered, in actualized forms. The fragmented social structure hence appears as the same time the cause and the consequence of partisan rivalries. As if all knowledge was but remembrance.

Mediation, incorporation, and integration sustain identification with the group. The constant duality between *ipseity* and *alterity* they construct reminds that otherness is but the condition of the self (Ricoeur 1990). It entails the paradoxical situation of fragmented societies and factional conflicts in particular. The other is the condition of recognition, thus of existence of the self, yet it may also be perceived as and eventually become a threat. Coexistence is the cause of periodic eruption of intergroup conflicts, but at the same time the very condition of being of the groups and of the

individuals who compose them. As such, factional conflict is an aporia as the hypothetical destruction of one term of the opposition would mean the disappearance of the second. In the last lines of a short story, Borges wrote that the orthodox and the heretic, the one who hates and the one being hated, the prosecutor and the victim are the same person (1967 [1962], p. 37). In Lebanon as anywhere else, living together is our destiny.



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*Al-Akhabâr*, Beirut [Arabic].

*Al-Diyâr*, Beirut [Arabic].

*Al-Nahâr*, Beirut [Arabic].

*Al-Safîr*, Beirut [Arabic].

*L’Orient le Jour*, Beirut [French].

*The Daily Star*, Beirut [English].

*La Croix*, Paris [French].

*Le Monde*, Paris [French].

### **Internet sites (main sources)**

[www.mplbelgique.wordpress.com](http://www.mplbelgique.wordpress.com) (Mouvement Pour le Liban, Belgium, affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement)

[www.aub.edu.lb](http://www.aub.edu.lb) (American University of Beirut)

[www.liberty05.com](http://www.liberty05.com) (Memory of violence, affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement)

[www.oroom.org](http://www.oroom.org) (Discussion forum, affiliated with the FPM)

[www.rplfrance.org](http://www.rplfrance.org) (Rassemblement Pour le Liban, France, affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement)

[www.tayyar.org](http://www.tayyar.org) (Free Patriotic Movement)

[www.ul.edu.lb](http://www.ul.edu.lb) (Lebanese University)

[www.usj.edu.lb](http://www.usj.edu.lb) (Saint-Joseph University)

[www.vcoderz.com](http://www.vcoderz.com) (Database, songs, speeches and videos, affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement)

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Video database)

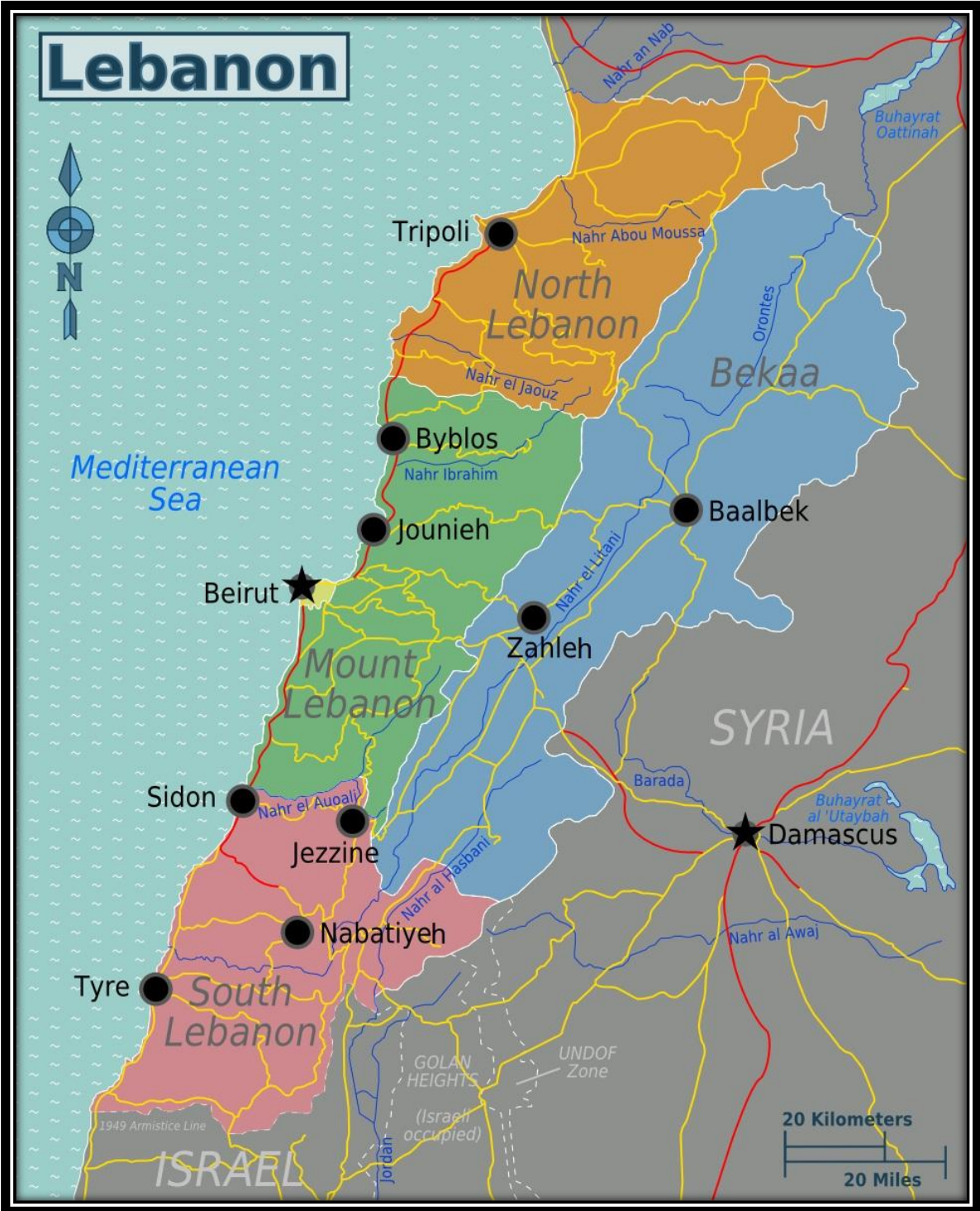






# Appendix

## Appendix 1 – The map of Lebanon



Source: [http://www.worldofmaps.net/uploads/pics/Lebanon\\_region\\_map.png](http://www.worldofmaps.net/uploads/pics/Lebanon_region_map.png) [August 2013]

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## Appendix 2 – List of the most important interviews

### (A) Core sample

- Saint Joseph University

#### 1) Alain:

- November 7, 2007, “Boulevard” mall, Habtoor Tower Complex, Sin el-Fil [in French].
- April 20, 2008, FPM office, Queen’s Palza, Jdeydeh [in French].

#### 2) Caroline:

- October 31, 2008, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].
- March 13, 2009, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

#### 3) Doni:

- March 16, 2009, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

#### 4) Elza:

- November 10, 2007, *Columbus* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].
- April 24, 2008, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].
- April 14, 2010, *Columbus* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

#### 5) Emile:

- November 12, 2007, *Water Lemon* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

#### 6) Farid:

- November 10, 2007, *Water Lemon* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

#### 7) Jamil:

- May 1, 2010, USJ, Damascus Street, Beirut [in French].
- December 1, 2010, *Dunkin’ Donuts* café, Sodeco district, Beirut [in French].

#### 8) Khalid:

- November 3, 2007, *Water Lemon* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

- November 6, 2007, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

9) Jacques:

- March 2, 2006, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

- November 3, 2007, *Water Lemon* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

- April 30, 2008, *Water Lemon* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

10) Jim:

- March 17, 2009, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

- December 9, 2009, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

11) Karl:

- May 1, 2008, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

- October 23, 2008, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

- October 29, 2008, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

12) Laure:

- November 14, 2008, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

- March 18, 2009, *Columbus* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

13) Marc:

- October 31, 2007, café *Najjar*, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

- May 3, 2008, *Columbus* café, “City Mall”, Dbayeh [in French].

14) Maroun:

- November 6, 2007, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

15) Paul:

- November 21, 2007, *Water Lemon* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

16) Philippe:

- November 14, 2007, *Water Lemon* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

- April 25, 2008, *Water Lemon* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

- October 30, 2008, FPM office, Queen'sPalza, Jdeydeh [in French].

- December 1, 2009, *Water Lemon* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

17) Tayeb:

- November 4, 2007, *Starbucks* café, Sassine Square, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

- American University of Beirut

1) Anis:

- May 25, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].

- November 30, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].

2) Assaf:

- May 22, 2010, *Krispy Crème* café, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].

- October 30, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].

3) Fouad:

- May 24, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].

- October 8, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].

4) Issam:

- May 26, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

- October 29, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

- December 5, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

5) Karam:

- May 15, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English and French].

6) Layla:

- March 25, 2011, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

- March 31, 2011, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

7) Lea:

- November 30, 2011, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].

8) Malek:

- May 26, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].

- October 26, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].

9) Mario:

- December 2, 2009, FPM office, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in English].

10) Nassim:

- May 18, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

- October 27, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

- December 2, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

- March 14, 2011, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

11) Robert:

- May 17, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

12) Silvio:

- October 26, 2010, *Krispy Crème* café, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

- December 13, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].

13) Tino:

- May 21, 2010, *Costa* café, Sassine Square, Beirut [in French].

- March 12, 2011, *Starbucks* café, Sassine Square, Beirut [in French].

14) Virgil:

- May 14, 2010, FPM office, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in French].

- October 23, 2010, *Costa* café, Hamra Street, Beirut [in French].

- Lebanese University

1) Aida:

- December 9, 2010, *Sawt al-Mada* radio station, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in English].

- March 5, 2011, *Sawt al-Mada* radio station, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in English].

2) Elie:

- December 8, 2010, FPM office, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in French].
  - March 13, 2011, *Starbucks* café, Sassine Square, Beirut [in French].
- 3) Halim:
- March 14, 2009, Centre Culturel Français, Damascus Street, Beirut [in French].
  - December 1, 2009, Centre Culturel Français, Damascus Street, Beirut [in French].
- 4) Jawad:
- March 31, 2011, FPM office, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in English].
- 5) Joe:
- March 29, 2011, LU Faculty of Sciences, Fanar [in English].
- 6) Joseph:
- March 16, 2011, LU Faculty of Engineering, Roumieh [in French].
  - March 19, 2011 in *Burger King*, Zalqa [in French].
- 7) Justine:
- October 24, 2007, *Pain d'Or*, Sin el-Fil [in French].
- 8) Kamal:
- December 6, 2010, *Dunkin' Donuts* café, Sodeco, Beirut [in French].
  - March 8, 2011, café *Younes*, Sodeco Square, Beirut [in French].
  - March 21, 2011, café *Younes*, Sodeco Square, Beirut [in French].
- 9) Michel:
- April 30, 2008, *al-nabâr* newspaper, Beirut [in French].
  - March 6, 2009, Issam Fares Center, Sin el-Fil [in French].
- 10) Nader:
- December 4, 2010, FPM office, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in English, French, and Arabic].
  - March 9, 2011, FPM office, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in English, French, and Arabic].

11) Patrick:

- December 5, 2010, *Leil w Nbar* café, Charles Malek Street, Beirut [in French].
- March 4, 2011, *Water Lemon* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].

12) Safa:

- December 14, 2010, *Sant al-Mada* radio station, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in Arabic].

13) Sami:

- March 28, 2011, LU Faculty of Sciences, Fanar [in French].

(B) Other noticeable interviews with FPM Students:

1) Antun (LU):

- December 2, 2009, FPM office, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in French].

2) Elyssar (LU):

- March 16, 2011, LU Faculty of Management, Karm el-Zeitun, Beirut [in French and Arabic].

3) Ilyas (AUB):

- May 25, 2010, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].

4) Jad (USJ):

- April 15, 2010, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

5) Jay (USJ):

- October 21, 2008, FPM office, Queen's Palza, Jdeydeh [in French].

6) Josif (LAU):

- April 17, 2008, *le Grand café*, Raoucheh, Beirut [in French].

7) Marko (USJ):

- October 27, 2008, FPM office, Queen's Palza, Jdeydeh [in French].

8) Saad (USJ):

- October 30, 2008, FPM office, Queen's Palza, Jdeydeh [in French].

(C) FPM Officials and former activists:

1) General Issam Abu Jamra (Former Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, 1988-1990 and 2008-2009. Former Vice-President of the FPM):

- April 29, 2010, private house, Baabda [in French].

2) Adonis Aqra (Member of the executive council. Head of the Committee of Studies):

- December 15, 2010, FPM office, Mirna Chalouhi Center, Sin el-Fil [in French].

3) Albert (Former activist, volunteer in the Army in 1989. Former president of the Rassemblement Pour le Liban (RPL), France. Former coordinator for the Baabda region):

- November 20, 2007, working office, Dawra [in French].

4) Bachir (Former coordinator of the FPM Student Affairs (2002-2005). Official for the region of Baabda):

- November 16, 2007, Sassine Square, Beirut [in French].

- May 5, 2008, Sassine Square, Beirut [in French].

5) B.H. (Head of the Committee for Political Education. Member of the Executive Council):

- April 27, 2008, private house, Byblos [in French].

- October 21, 2008, private house, Byblos [in French].

- March 7, 2009, private house, Byblos [in French].

- April 17, 2010, private house, Byblos [in French].

- March 7, 2011, LU Institute of Social Sciences, Rabieh [in French].

6) Carole (Former activist):

- April 21, 2010, Centre Culturel Français, Damascus Street, Beirut [in French].

- March 8, 2011, USJ, Damascus Street, Beirut [in French].

7) Dominique (Expert, adviser for the FPM):

- April 26, 2010, Gemmayzeh Street, Beirut [in French].

8) Georges (Official in the region of Zahleh):

- May 4, 2008, private house, Zahleh [in French].
- 9) Khalil (Former activist. Member of the Constitutive Council):
- November 15, 2007, *Columbus* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].
- 10) Patrice (Former activist. Executive in OTV):
- November 14, 2007, working place, Mkalles [in French].
- 11) Paula (Former activist. Responsible for political education in the region of Zahleh):
- May 4, 2008, private house, Zahleh [in French].
- 12) Tanios (Former activist and volunteer in the Army. Former official in the Student Affairs 1994-2001 and coordinator of the Student Affairs 2001-2005. Member of the Executive Council):
- May 2, 2008, Sodeco Square, Beirut [in French].
  - March 9, 2009, Sodeco Square, Beirut [in French].
  - March 10, 2009, Sodeco Square, Beirut [in French].
- 13) Walid (Former activist. Official in the region of Tripoli):
- November 15, 2007, *Columbus* café, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].
- (D) Other Students:
- 1) Adonis (AUB – Coordinator of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party):
- February 21, 2006, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].
- 2) Ahmad (USJ – Not affiliated):
- October 23, 2008, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].
- 3) Ali (LU – President of the Student Council in Rafiq Hariri's campus – Hezbollah):
- February 22, 2006, LU main campus, Hadath [in English and Arabic].
  - February 28, 2006, LU main campus, Hadath [in English and Arabic].
- 4) Atallah (LAU – Head of the Lebanese Communist Party Student Section):
- December 5, 2009, *Regusto* café, Hamra Street, Beirut [in English].
  - February 10, 2010, *Regusto* café, Hamra Street, Beirut [in English].



- 5) Bouchra (LU/USJ – Hezbollah):
  - February 17, 2006, Haret Hreik [in French].
  - October 30, 2007, Haret Hreik [in French].
- 6) Christine (LU – Lebanese Communist Party):
  - November 2, 2008, Unesco district, Beirut [in English].
- 7) Fadi (AUB – No Frontiers group):
  - November, 2004, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English]
- 8) Fadia (LU – Hezbollah):
  - February 27, 2006, LU faculty of Literature, Unesco district, Beirut [in English].
- 9) Faysal (USJ – Coordinator of the Lebanese Communist Party in Huvelin):
  - November 3, 2008, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].
  - December 5, 2009, café *Younes*, Sodeco Square, Beirut [in French].
  - December 11, 2009, *Dunkin' Donuts* café, Sodeco, Beirut [in French].
  - March 12, 2010, *Dunkin' Donuts* café, Sodeco, Beirut [in French].
- 10) Gamal (LAU – not affiliated):
  - February 25, 2006, LAU, Beirut [in French].
- 11) Gina (USJ – Democratic Left):
  - February 4, 2006, Sassine Square, Beirut [in French].
- 12) Hamad (LAU – Amal):
  - March 3, 2006, LAU, Beirut [in English].
- 13) Hamid (LU – not affiliated):
  - October 25, 2008, LU main campus, Hadath [in Arabic].
- 14) Husayn (LAU – Hezbollah):
  - February 23, 2006, Ghobeyri [in English].
- 15) Imad (LAU – Hezbollah):
  - February 22, 2006, Ghobeyri [in English].

- 16) Jacques (USJ – Coordinator of the National Liberal Party in Huvelin):  
- October 30, 2008, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].
- 17) Jamal (LU – Hezbollah):  
- October 20, 2008, LU main campus, Hadath [in Arabic]. Interview conducted with Khalyla Aude Coeffic.
- 18) Hasan (AUB – Hezbollah supporter):  
- February 21, 2006, Bliss Street, Beirut [in English].
- 19) Leal (LU – Hezbollah):  
- February 20, 2006, Hezbollah's *al-ta'bia al-tarbaniyya* office, Haret Hreik [in French].
- 20) Malak (LU – not partisan):  
- February 24, 2006, LU main campus, Hadath [in French].
- 21) Mehdi (USJ Head of pro-Resistance group in Huvelin):  
- February 3, 2006, Tayouneh, Beirut [in French].  
  
- February 18, 2006, ABC mall, Achrafiyeh, Beirut [in French].
- 22) Mohamad (LAU – Amal):  
- March 3, 2006, LAU, Beirut [in English].
- 23) Omar (USJ – LF supporter):  
- October 29, 2008, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].
- 24) Paulo (AUB – LF)  
- May, 2004, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].  
  
- May, 2004, Bliss Street, Beirut [in French].
- 25) Phil (USJ – Former independent candidate, backed by the FPM, for the presidency of the Institute of Political Science, Huvelin):  
- October 20, 2008, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].
- 26) Rana (University Hagazian – PSP supporter):  
- October 30, 2008, *Starbucks* café, Hamra Street, Beirut [in French].
- 27) Rawad (USJ – Marada):

- March 16, 2009, USJ, Huvelin Street, Beirut [in French].

28) Safad (LAU – not affiliated):

- March 3, 2006, LAU, Beirut [in English].

29) Yusef (LU – Hezbollah):

- February 27, 2006, LU faculty of Literature, Unesco district, Beirut [in English and Arabic].

30) Zeynab (LU/USJ – Hezbollah):

- February 20, 2006, Hezbollah's *al-ta'bia al-tarbawiyya* office, Haret Hreik [in French].

(E) Hezbollah officials:

1) Z.A. (Head of the Education and Mobilization Unit):

- February 11, 2006, Hezbollah's *al-ta'bia al-tarbawiyya* office, Haret Hreik [in French].

2) H.Y. (Head of the Education and Mobilization Unit for the region of Beirut):

- March 1, 2006, Hezbollah's *al-ta'bia al-tarbawiyya* office, Haret Hreik [in French].

## Appendix 3 – Interview tables: details on the core sample

Students from the Saint-Joseph University (USJ):

Name	Date of Birth	Home town	Region of origins	School	Sectarian affiliation  Religious-ness	Activism	Parents' profession	Parents' political views
Alain	1985	Metn (not specified)	Metn	Notre-Dame de Jamhour (Catholic)	Maronite  Not church-goer	He is in relations with several civil-right & pro-environment associations"	Father: engineer	His father was a Kata'eb supporter
Caroline	1985	Jounieh, Kesrouan	Kesrouan	Ecole des Saint-Cœurs, Ghazir (Catholic)	Maronite  Not religious	Member of an NGO	Father: accountant  Mother: teacher (Ph. D. in History)	Her parents support the FPM, especially her mother. Her father works in the municipality of Jounieh  Her uncle is a FPM Member of the Parliament
Doni	1987	Rabieh, Metn	Baabda	Champville Antelias (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer, not church-goer	Scout	-	His parents are FPM supporters. His uncle is a prominent figure in the FPM.
Elza	1982	Metn (not specified)	Metn	Collège des Saint-Cœurs, Achrafiyeh (Catholic)  Public School (not specified)	Maronite  Not believer	Active in many activities but all related to the FPM.	Father: technician  Mother: school employee	Her parents don't support any political party. Her mother used to be active in the Kata'eb Youth Section before the war.
Emile	1988	Gemmayzeh, Beirut	Beqaa (Zahleh)	Notre-Dame de Jamhour (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer, occasional church-goer	No	Father: trader in home appliances  Mother: not working	His father was in the LF militia during the 1975-1977 war.
Farid	1981	Jounieh, Kesrouan	Beqaa (Zahleh)	In Zahleh, not specified	Maronite  Not religious	No	Not specified	His parents both support the FPM.
Jamil	1986	Achrafiyeh, Beirut	Beirut (Achrafiyeh)	Notre-Dame de Jamhour (Catholic)	Greek Orthodox  Believer, church-goer	Active in the Order of the Dentists	Father: clothes trader  Mother: not	His father is described as "Leftist". He "used to hate" the Kata'eb. He supported Michel Aoun in 1988.  His mother supported the Kata'eb under Bachir Gemayel, but she is now active within the FPM.
Jacques	1984	Achrafiyeh, Beirut	Baabda (Haret Hreik)	Mont-la-Salle, Ain Saadeh (Catholic)	Maronite  Not religious	Scout	Not specified	His father collaborated with Michel Aoun office in 1988-1990. He was a former member of the National Bloc of Raymond Eddeh.

Jim	1990	Mansourieh, Metn	South Lebanon (Zahrani)	Notre-Dame de Jamhour (Catholic)	Maronite Believer, church-goer	Scout Member of two social welfare associations: <i>Anta akbi</i> (for disabled young) and <i>Sayyedah</i> (for elderly people)	Father: History teacher Mother: French teacher	His parents both support the FPM.
Karl	1987	Achrafiyeh, Beirut	Kesrouan	Notre-Dame de Jamhour (Catholic)	Maronite Believer, not church-goer	No	Father: working in Saudi Arabia Mother: teacher	His parents used to support the National Bloc of Raymond Eddeh.
Khalid	1985	Achrafiyeh, Beirut	Metn (Bikfaya)	Not specified	Maronite Believer, occasional church-goer	Scout Active in some social Welfare programs	Father: member of the Lebanese Army	His father fought with the Army led by Michel Aoun. Both his parents are FPM supporters.
Laure	1985	Achrafiyeh, Beirut	Jbeil (Aqoura)	Collège des Saint-Cœurs, Achrafiyeh (Catholic)	Maronite Believer, church-goer	No	Father: journalist Mother: not specified	Her parents are both activists in the FPM. Before, her father used to support the National Bloc of Raymond Eddeh. Her uncle is a prominent official in the FPM.
Marc	1983	Zalqa, Metn	Kesrouan	College Louise Wegmann, Beirut	Latin Catholic Believer, occasional church-goer	Scout Active member of SOLID – Association for the Detained Lebanese in Syria and Israel	Father: contractor Mother: executive assistant	His parents both support the FPM.
Maroun	1986	Bsalim, Metn	Metn	Athénée, Beirut	Maronite Believer, church-goer	Former Red-cross volunteer	Father: judge Mother: not specified	His parents have no political commitment, but votes for the FPM.
Paul	1981	Achrafiyeh, Beirut	Metn		Greek Orthodox Believer, not church-goer	Not specified	Father: Sate employee in Post and Telecommunication	His parents support the FPM.
Philippe	1985	Zouk Mikhaïl, Kesrouan	Metn	Zahrât al-Ihsân, Achrafiyeh (Beirut)	Latin Catholic Believer, not church-goer	Scout Red-Cross volunteer	Father: photo-journalist Mother: teacher	His father moderately supports the FPM. His mother is affiliated with the FPM.
Tayeb	1983	Ghbeiri, Baabda	Beqaa	In Hamra, an unspecified Christian School.	Shiite Not religious	Volunteer with <i>Samidoun</i> , an NGO created during the 2006 war	Father: Math teacher Mother: archivist	His father used to be a member of <i>Mu'tamar al-Shaab al-Lubnaneh</i> , a nasserist and pan-arabist organization led by Kamal Chatila

Students from the American University of Beirut (AUB):

Name	Date of Birth	Home town	Region of origins	School	Sectarian affiliation  Religious-ness	Other forms of Activism	Parents' profession	Parents' political views
Anis	1990	Hazmieh, Baabda-Aley	Aley Born in Brazil	Zahrât al-Ihsân, Achrafiyeh (Orthodox)	Greek orthodox  Believer, not church-goer	No	Father: business owner  Mother: not working	His father fought to protect his village against the PSP along with LF, but without being affiliated with them.
Assaf	1990	Hamra, Beirut	Baabda (Chiyah)	IC – International College, Hamra	Shiite  Not religious	No	Father: Doctor in AUH  Mother: teacher	Parents not engaged.  His grand-father was closed to Kata'eb, friend with Amine Gemayel.  His cousin is a top official in the FPM.
Fouad	1990	Awkar, Metn	Chouf	Saint-Joseph School, Qornet Chehwan (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer and church-goer	UCO: a Christian student association.	Father: owns a leather factory in Dora  Mother: not working	His father formerly fight within the LF but now supports the FPM  His mother supports the March 14 coalition
Issam	1990	Gemmayzeh, Beirut	Baabda el-Chebbak)	Sacrés-Coeurs, Gemmayzeh (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer, occasional church-goer	No	His father and mother are IT. They have their own small company.	Father was in the Tanzim.  Mother was in the Kata'eb.  Both worked as IT for the LF before joining Michel Aoun in 1988. They were FPM activists during the Syrian rule.
Karam	1988	Jounieh, Kesrouan	Kesrouan	Melkart, Hazmieh  Collège des Saint-Cœurs, Achrafiyeh (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer and church-goer	Scouts	Father: broker in Insurance.  Mother: not mentioned.	His parents express strong views again affiliation with parties.
Layla	1990	Brumana, Metn	South Lebanon	Melkart, Hazmieh	Orthodoxe (Father) and Maronite (Mother)  Believer and church-goer	Scouts	Father: Officer in the Army  Mother: French teacher	Both parents are FPM sympathizers.
Lea	1991	Jounieh, Kesrouan	North Lebanon (Batroun)	Saint-Joseph School, Qornet Chehwan (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer and church-goer	University Christian Outreach (UCO): a Christian student association.  Active in a Lebanese NGO promoting tolerance in schools.	Father: working in a company.  Mother: employee in the municipality of Jounieh.	Her mother is active in the FPM in Batroun. Her maternal uncle is an official (head of the FPM international sections).  Her father is neutral (his family is supporting the LF)

<b>Malek</b>	1988	Baabda, Baabda-Aley	South Lebanon (Nabatiyyeh)	Antonine Sisters School, Ghadir (Catholic)	Maronite Not religious	No	Father: General in the Army Mother: not mentioned	His parents both support the FPM.
<b>Mario</b>	1981	Bsalim, Metn	Beqaa	Mont-la-Salle, Ain Saadeh (Catholic)	Maronite No precision	unknown	Father: Financial Director in the Hotel Dieu Hospital Mother: teacher	His parents both vote for the FPM, but are not active.
<b>Nassim</b>	1989	Baabda, Baabda-Aley	South Lebanon (Jezzine)	Notre-Dame de Jamhour (Catholic)	Greek Catholic Believer, not church-goer	No	Father: General in the Army Mother: not mentioned	His parents support the FPM
<b>Robert</b>	1989	Damour, Chouf	Chouf (Damour)	Notre-Dame de Jamhour (Catholic)	Maronite Believer, church-goer	Scouts Caritas Kunhadi (Lebanese association promoting traffic security)	Father: Officer in the Army Mother: Math and Sciences teacher	His parents support the FPM
<b>Silvio</b>	1990	Zalqa, Metn	Metn (Zalqa)	Grand Lycée Franco-Libanais, Beirut	Maronite Believer and church-goer	No	Father: Businessman, owns several companies Mother: teacher, but not working for a long time	No politics in the family
<b>Tino</b>	1990	Gemmayzeh, Beirut	Aley (Ramlieh-Kahaleh)	Sacrés-Coeurs, Gemmayzeh (Catholic)	Maronite Believer and occasional church-goer	No	Father: IT in a medicament enterprise Mother: lawyer	His parents don't support any political party  The political background of his family is Kata'eb: several of his uncles were fighting with the Kata'eb militia against the Palestinian and the LNM. There are several martyrs in his family.  One of his uncle was in the Army under Michel Aoun's command
<b>Virgil</b>	1989	Jounieh, Kesrouan	North Lebanon (Akkar)	Antonine Sisters School, Ghadir (Catholic)	Greek catholic Not believer	No	Father: Univ. teacher Mother: Math teacher	His father is not interested in politics  His mother supports the FPM

## Students from the Lebanese University – Section 2 (LU):

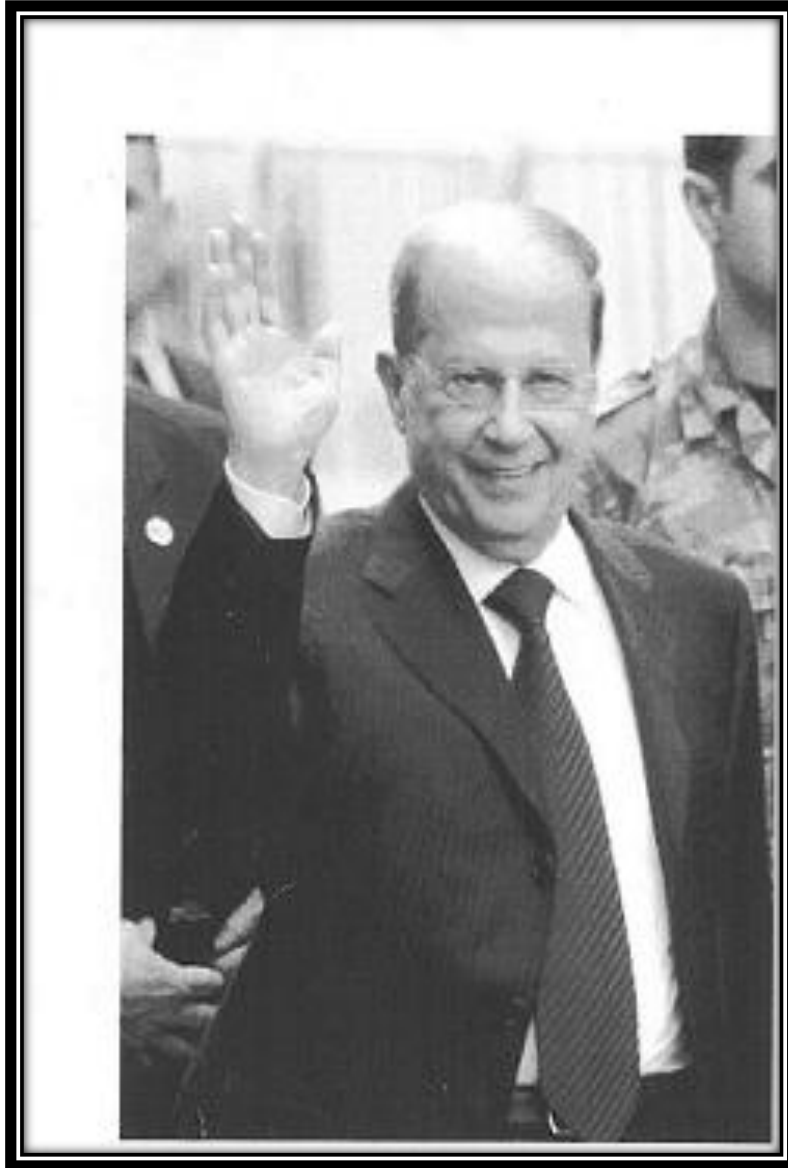
<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Home town</u>	<u>Region of origins</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Sectarian affiliation</u> <u>Religious-ness</u>	<u>Activism</u>	<u>Parents' profession</u>	<u>Parents' political views</u>
Aida	1991	Jdeydeh, Metn	Baabda	École des Saints-Coeurs, Ghazir (Catholic)  Jdeydeh Public school	Maronite  Believer and church-goer	Active in a local Christian association	Father: former employee in the minister of education  Mother: not working	Her parents are not active supporters but vote for the FPM.
Elie	1988	Bachourieh, Metn	Metn	Collège des Soeurs du Rosaire, Mansourieh (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer and church-goer	Scouts (stopped 4 years ago after 10 years)	Father: trade  Mother: not working	His father doesn't support any party. He reportedly votes sometimes for the FPM, sometimes for the Kata'eb.  His mother is not active but votes for the FPM.
Halim	1975	Jbeil, Jbeil	Jbeil	École des frères Maristes, Jbeil (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer	Not detailed	Father: University professor.  Mother: teacher	His father is an important FPM official. He rallied Michel Aoun in 1988.
Jawad	1990	Fanar, Metn	Metn	Mont-la-Salle, Ain Saadeh (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer, not church goer	Scouts (during 5 years)	Mother: Free-lance accountant and work in a company  Father: not living with the family	His father is engaged within the FPM, he is the FPM coordinator in Fanar.
Joe	1989	Jounieh, Kesrouan	Chouf	Carmel Saint-Joseph, Damour (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer, not church-goer	No	Father: food-trader  Mother: not working	His father supports FPM.  His mother supports FPM. But her family, originated from the Chouf used to support the Joubblatts.
Joseph	1991	Adma, Kesrouan	Metn	Mont-la-Salle, Ain Saadeh (Catholic)	Maronite  Believer, not church-goer.	No	Father: businessman  (His mother is deceased)	His father and family in general support the FPM.
Justine	1985	Bsouss, Baabda-Aley	Aley	College des Pères Antonins, Baabda (Catholic)	Greek Catholic  Believer and church-goer	No	Father: Project Manager (works in Africa)  Mother: not working	Her parents don't support any party.
Kamal	1988	Awkar, Metn	South Lebanon (Nabatiyyeh )	Ecole des Trois Docteurs, Achrafiyeh (Orthodox)	Greek Orthodox  Believer, church goer	Active in the Orthodox Youth	Father: Electrician  Mother: Nurse	His parents have both been FPM supporters since 1988.



				Mont-la-Salle, Ain Saadeh (Catholic)  Saint-Georges School, Bsalm (Orthodox)		Movement (MJO – Mouvement des Jeunes Orthodoxes)		
Michel	1981	Baabda (not specified)	Beqaa (Zahleh)	Collège de la Sainte-Famille, Rayak (Catholic)	Maronite  Not believer	Participated in the social movement “Huqûq al-Nâs”, for the civil rights in Lebanon		His father was supporting the Kata'eb and fought with them during the 1975-1977 war. In 1988, he supported Michel Aoun.  His mother was not active, but supported the Kata'eb. In 1988, she supported Michel Aoun.
Nader	1987	Jdeydeh, Metn	Baabda (Qalaa)	Ecole de la Sagesse, Beirut (Catholic)  Jdeydeh Public School	Maronite  Believer, occasional church-goer	No	Father: employee at Middle-East Airlines  Mother: helps in a small family-owned clothes shop	His father was a LF supporter in the 1970s and 1980s. He is today locally active in the FPM.  His mother supports the FPM.
Patrick	1990	Borj Hammud, Metn	Chouf	Ecole Notre-Dame des Apôtres, Jdeydeh (Catholic)	Greek Catholic  Believer, church-goer	No (except a short experience in the scouts when he was young)	Father : employee at <i>Kabraba Lubnân</i> , the state-owned electricity company  Mother: employee in the Minister of Public Work.	His parents have both been FPM supporters since 1988.  His father fought in the militia of the National Liberal Party (of Camille Chamoun) during the 1975-1977 war.
Safa	1991	Metn (not specified)	North, (Batroun)	Borj Hammud Public School	Maronite  Believer, church-goer	-	Father: was in the Lebanese Army  Mother: not working	Her parents are both FPM supporters. Her father fought in the Army with Michel Aoun. He is now active in the FPM in Batroun.
Sami	1989	Fanar, Metn	South (Jezzine)  Born in France	Jdeydeh Public School	Maronite (his mother is Sunni, originated from Algeria)  Believer, not church-goer	No	Father: surgeon  Mother: not working	His parents don't support any party.

Appendix 4 – Photo portfolio for interviews

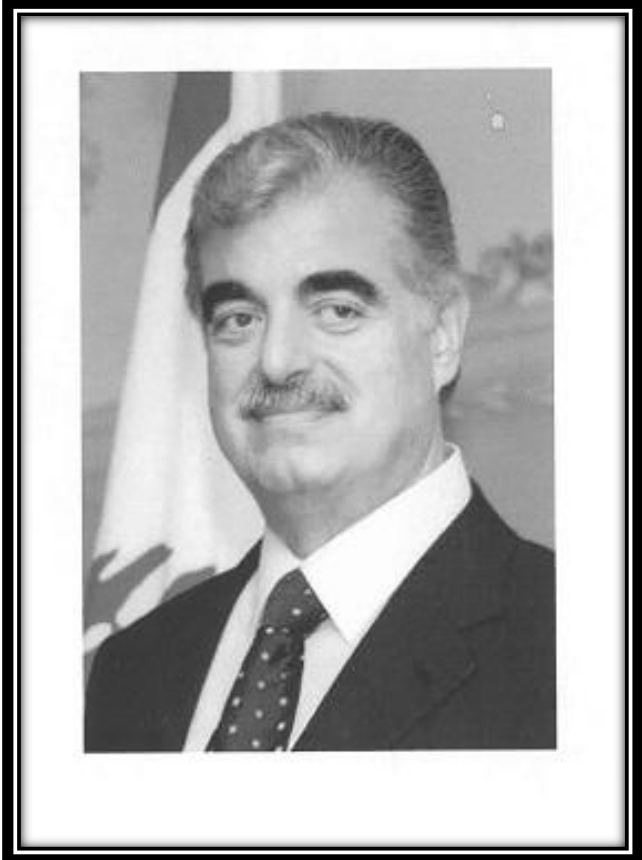
Michel Aoun:



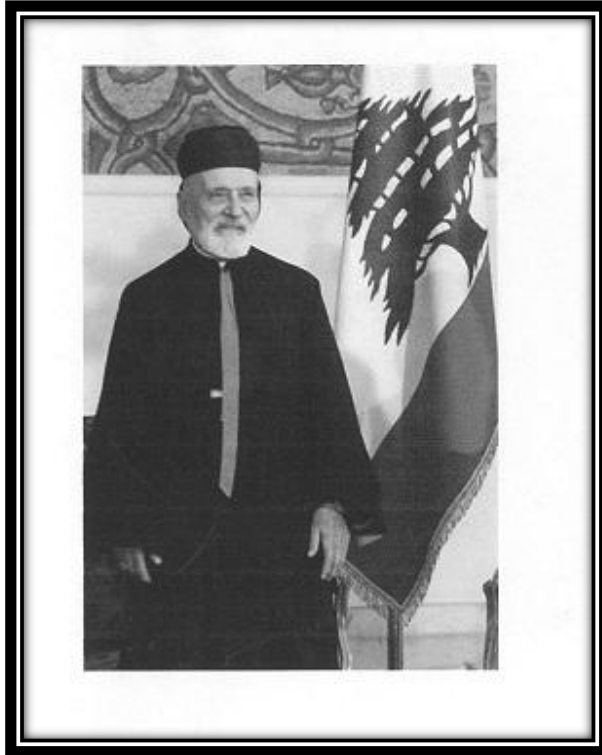
Michel Aoun and Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah:



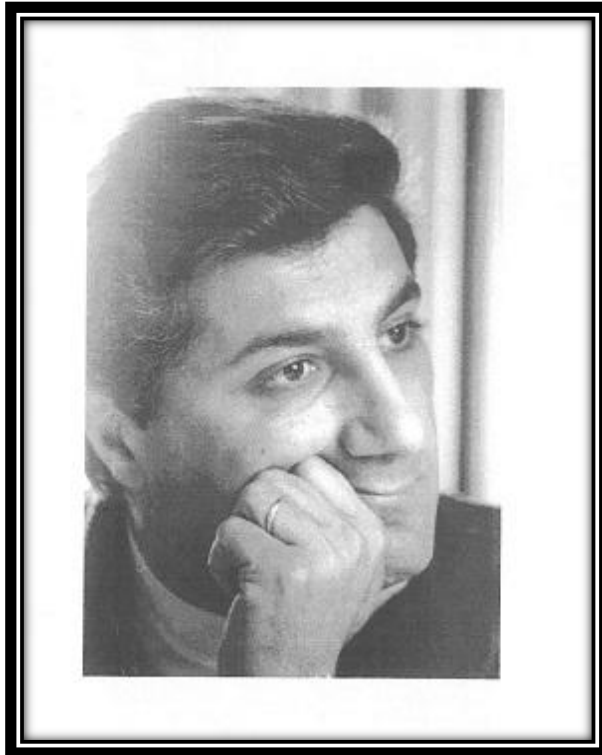
Rafiq Hariri:



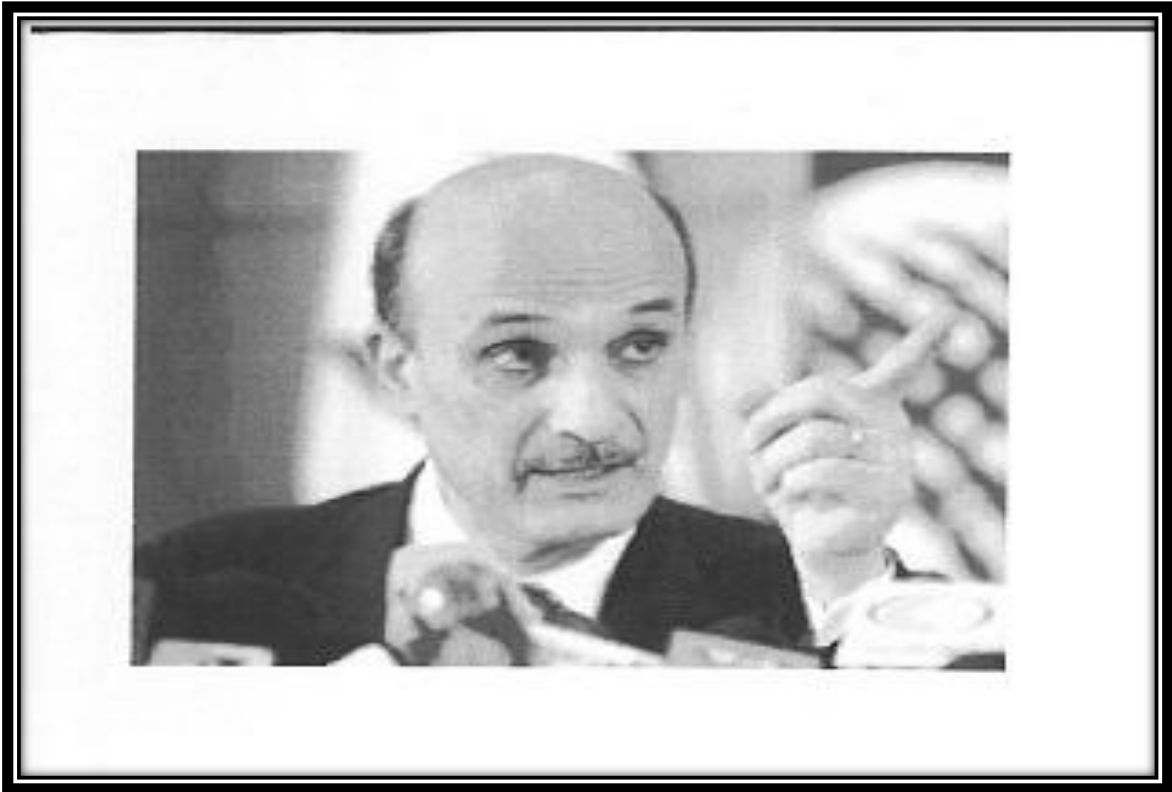
Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir:



Bachir Gemayel:



Samir Geagea:

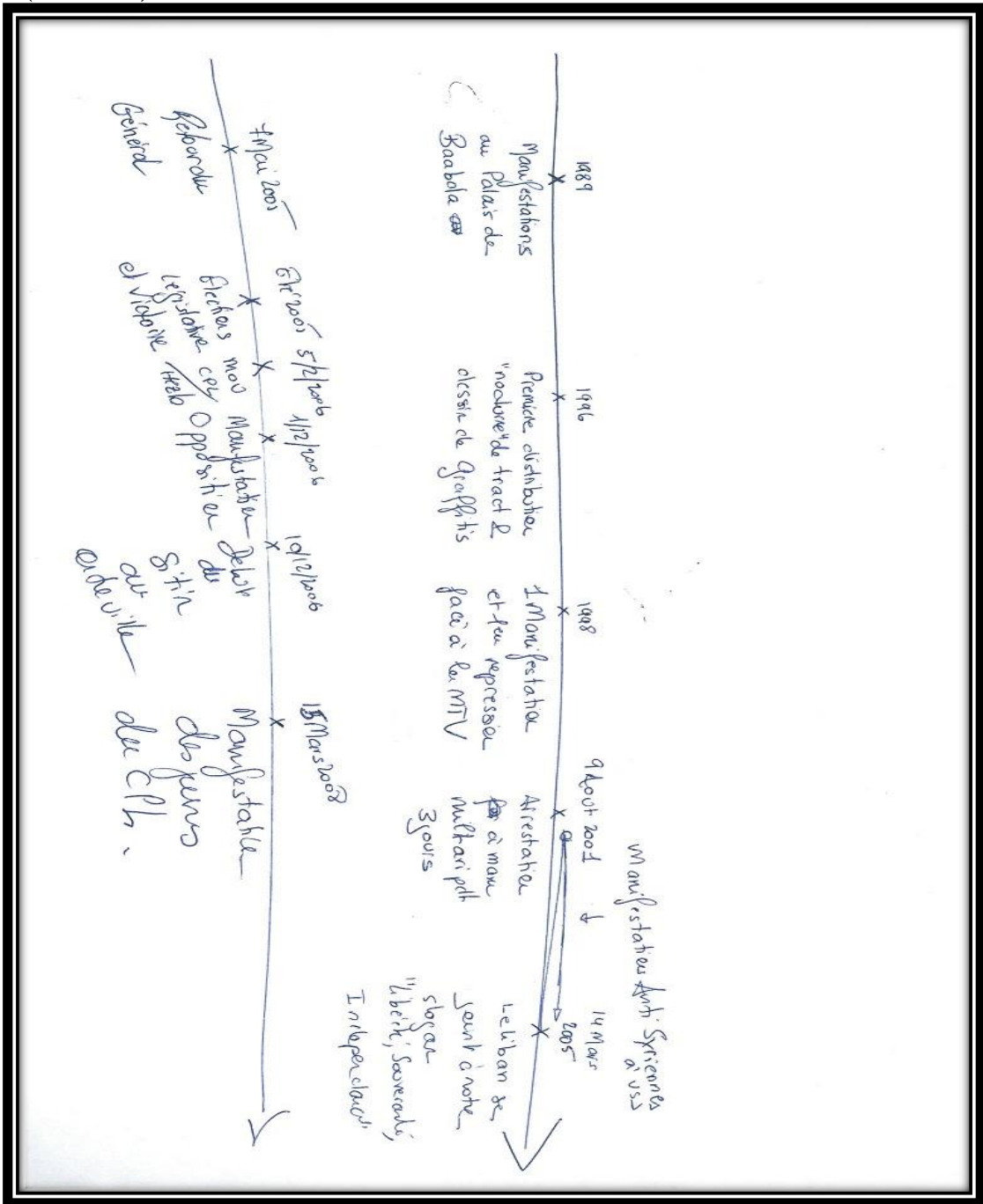


## Appendix 5 – Timeline interviews

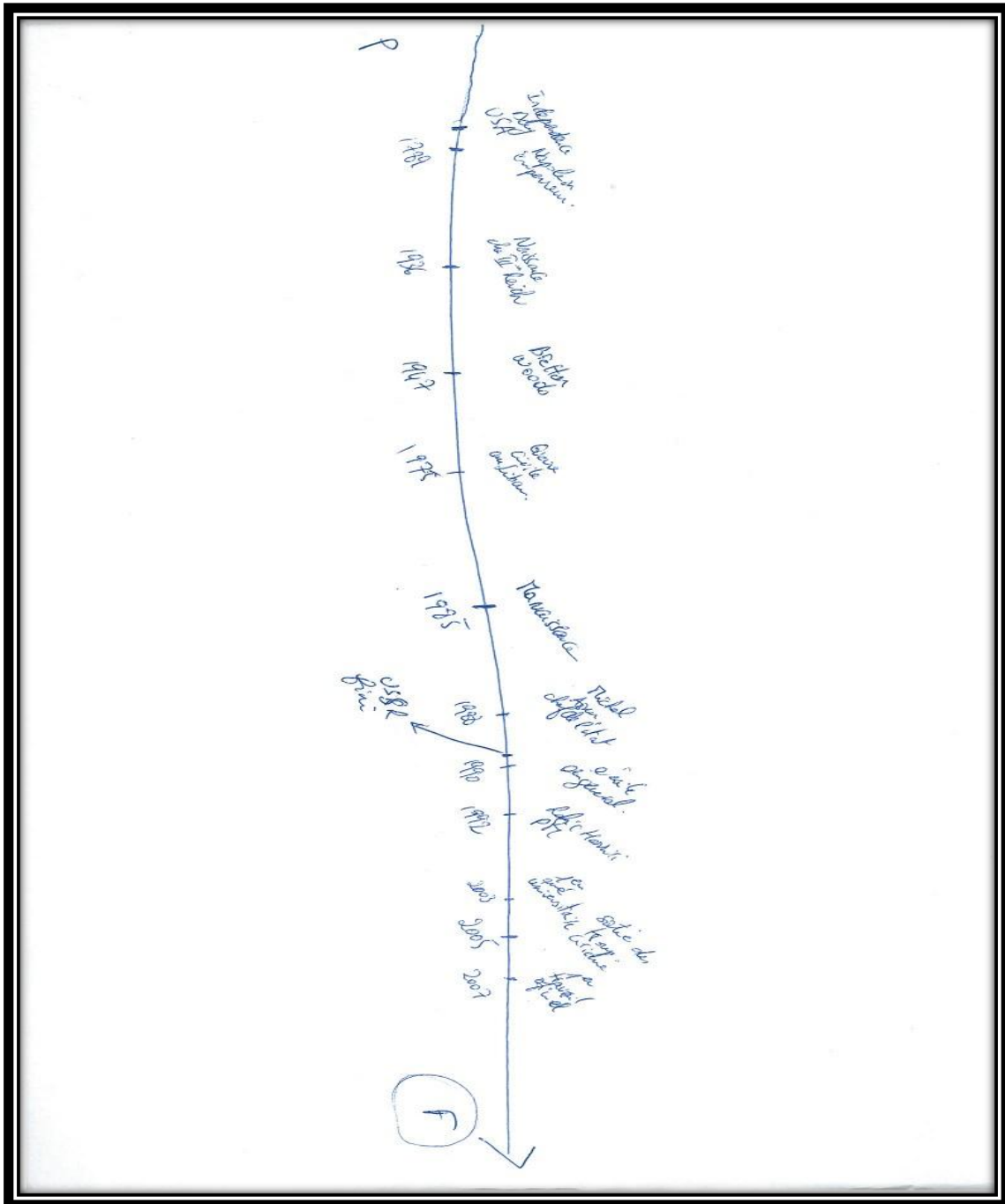
Elza (24-04-2008):

11 janv 1982	7	Ji suis né
18 oct 90	-	chute des régions libres
dec 1994	-	manifesta° de MTV
Août 1998	-	visite du GMA en France et <del>rentré</del> <sup>siarah per</sup> au CPL
Avril 2000	-	1° arrestation
Sep 2000	-	Ma carrière universitaire Commence
Août 2001	-	2° Arresta° du 7 et 9 août
11 janv 2004	-	j'ai rencontré mon petit copain
juillet 2004	-	j'ai eu ma licence
26 Avril 2005	-	Retrait syrien
9 Mai 2005	-	Retour du GMA au Liban
juillet 2005	-	j'ai eu mon DES en journalisme
Sep 2005	-	Je commence mon DEA en se po.
Fev 2006	-	Je commence à travailler comme journaliste
juillet 2006	-	offensive israélienne contre le Liban
sep 2007	-	je commence à travailler à la télé
janv 2008	-	decider de ce mariage
Mai 2008	-	Soutenance de mon memoire

Marc (3-05-2008):



Philippe (25-04-2008):





Appendix 6 – The Lebanese universities in number (for the academic year 2005-2006)

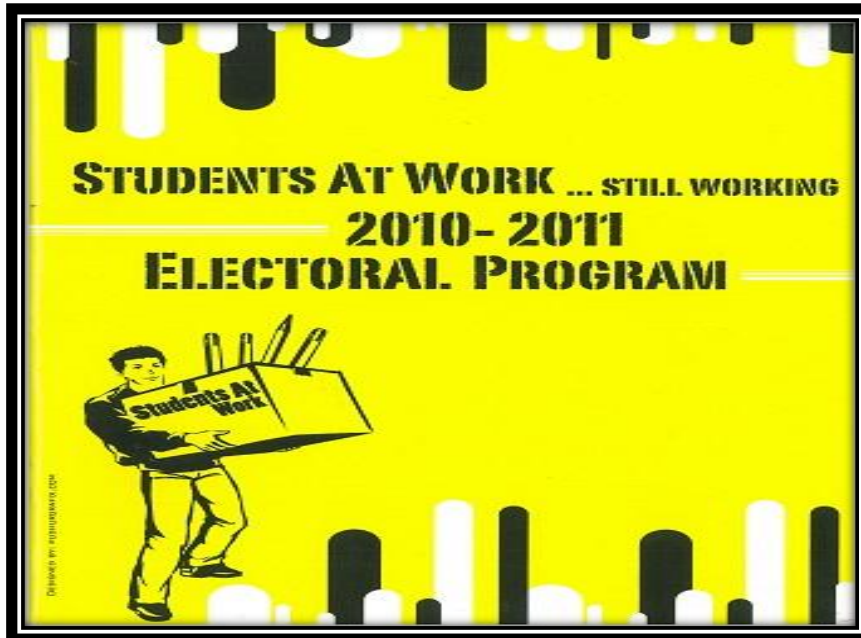
<u>University</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
Lebanese University (LU)	70 627	1 688	4 390
Beirut Arab University (BAU)	13 653	430	670
Saint-Joseph University (USJ)	9 718	463	1 830
American University of Beirut (AUB)	6 944	318	813
University Saint-Esprit Kaslik (USEK)	5 949	140	1 156
Lebanese American University (LAU)	4 569	398	176
Haikazian University	700	26	85
Notre Dame University (NDU)	4 677	48	509
Daawa University Institute for Islamic Studies	290	11	28
Université de la Sagesse	1 893	70	261
Imam Ouzai's Islamic Faculty	3 039	34	57
University of the Middle-East	174	8	37
Beirut Makased University	131	9	11
Saint-Paul Institute for Philosophy and Theology	158	7	30
Balamand University	2 813	55	937
Faculty of Theology in the Near-East	17	5	9
Beirut Islamic University	448	9	36
Jinan University	1 167	72	169
Tripoli Institute for Islamic Studies	214	8	25
Islamic University in Lebanon	2 699	19	350
Ecole Supérieure des	422	25	192

<b>Affaires (ESA)</b>			
<b>Antonine University</b>	1 120	31	188
<b>Hariri Canadian University Group for the Sciences and Technology</b>	399	36	37
<b>University Center for Technology</b>	395	15	77
<b>Institute of Higher Education in Physiotherapy</b>	55	15	45
<b>University Institute for Technology and Pedagogy</b>	675	11	120
<b>American Institute University for Technology</b>	464	54	92
<b>Holy Family Higher Institute for Nursing Science and Physiotherapy</b>	239	6	84
<b>Saidoun Higher Institute for Dental Laboratory Technology</b>	147	4	5
<b>Hawai University - Institute of Management and Information Technology</b>	1 106	90	200
<b>Institut C&amp;A Amercian University</b>	1 020	54	100
<b>AUST</b>	2 658	79	236
<b>Ecole Supérieure et Internationale de la Gestion des Affaires</b>	459	18	37
<b>University Institute of Management and Sciences</b>	432	23	42
<b>Joya Technological University Institute</b>	151	10	52
<b>Arab Open University</b>	2 484	35	101
<b>International Lebanese University</b>	4 722	217	553
<b>Manar University</b>	133	16	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>146 961</b>	<b>4 557</b>	<b>13 770</b>

Source: Centre de Recherche et de Développement Pédagogique

## Appendix 7 – Electoral Programs


“Students at Work” (March 14 coalition – AUB, 2010):



**Students At Work 2009-2010 Achievements**


**Speakers' Corner**

Speakers' Corner (at Hyde Park) is an activity that the USFC re-launched during the academic year 2009-2010. After an absence of 36 years, students can now express themselves freely about various topics within the limits of mutual respect and understanding. Speakers' Corner was held 5 times over a 2 months period covering recent discussion topics, where students of different backgrounds met on the common grounds of appreciation and dialogue.



**Class Ring Ceremony**

The Class Ring Ceremony is an event that the USFC launched for the first time in many years. The Class Ring Ceremony was launched by USFC in collaboration with WAAUB as an initiative to give students a sentimental souvenir from their beloved AUB. The ceremony took place on Thursday June 24, 2010 on AUB green field, joining the Class of 2010 in a celebration of commitment and loyalty to their University.




**Students At Work 2010-2011 Electoral Program**

**Tuition Increase Strike**

After Board of Trustees have decided to apply the 15-credit policy inflating the tuition fee yearly by 25%, the USFC, collectively with the AUB student body, decided to take a stand. On Wednesday May 19, 2010 a strike was organized in hope of revoking the 15-credit policy. Most classes were boycotted and students gathered at main gate at noon and spoke against the unprecedented increase in tuition. On Friday May 21 after the continuous 3day strike, the administration felt the pressure of the student demand. The Office of the Provost called for negotiations with the USFC. The USFC students proposed a list demands, most importantly were:

1. Postponing the implementation of the 15-credit policy until 2011-2012.
2. Forming an oversight committee made up of student members from USFC, faculty members and members of the administration to ensure and enhance the transparency of the financial aid system of AUB.
3. Extending financial aid packages to cover the cost of the additional three credits for students eligible for financial aid, over and above the regular financial aid package.



**Students At Work 2009-2010 Achievements**

**Academics**

The USFC proposed the extension of the reading period by 2 days, providing students with a five-day reading period to help them prepare more properly for their final exams.

**Humanitarian**

After Haiti's deadliest earthquake and standing in front of this humanitarian disaster, the USFC decided in collaboration with the Red Cross Club to manage a campaign for a week, in order to collect money donations from students and faculty members. Donations were transferred to Haiti for a total of \$1,870 which were deposited into ICRC bank account-special Haiti fund.

**Cafeteria Sit-in**

The USFC organized a sit-in on Tuesday March 14, 2010 in order to speed up the construction of the main cafeteria that has been closed since the beginning of the fall semester. The sit-in helped in accelerating the process and pushed for finalizing the cafeteria for the coming student of 2010-2011.

**Awareness Week**

The USFC organized an Awareness Week during the first week of April. This project aimed at enlightening the students on many important topics such as: HIV, drugs, smoking, car accidents, violence against women and environmental concerns. NGOs were invited to spread awareness on these issues.

**Supporting Clubs & Societies**

The USFC decided to allocate to each of the 70 clubs and societies a budget of \$800 in order to support activism on campus.

**Dean Kishwani Farewell Dinner**

On Friday April 30, 2010, the USFC organized a farewell dinner to honor retiring Dean of Student Affairs Maroun Kishwani for his long appreciated commitment to AUB students and community.

**AUB Graduation Party**

The Graduation party is yearly organized by the USFC. Last year the event took place on Saturday June 26, 2010 at Edde Sands. Around 2000 AUBites attended this memorable night making it the best Graduation Party ever.

**Students At Work 2010-2011 Electoral Program**

**Students At Work 2010-2011 Platform**

We present below our platform as part of our vision and plan to improve campus life of AUB. We believe that we are accountable to the student body and thus we act responsibly from the pillars of our leadership style and in accordance with our objectives:

1. A complete and solid follow-up on the results of the famous Tuition Increase Strike during May 2010 and insuring the implementation of all the demands submitted by the USFC including:
  - a. Developing a transparent financial aid system leading to fair and true results.
  - b. Assuring that any student eligible for financial aid will only pay 12 credits per semester over and above the awarded financial aid package.
  - c. Working together with AUB Administration to launch a joint campaign to gather funds to financially support students more.
2. Initiating an academic accreditation review and submitting recommendations to authorities in aim to improve AUB's reputation internationally.
3. Finding a promising solution to AUB's dormitories for students to have a relaxing academic environment. This project aims to upgrade and introduce new facilities.
4. Maintaining the strong profile of the student body through its University Student Faculty Committee (USFC) and reaching out to students for their needs.
5. Hosting two major AUB traditions, revived last year and considered a success of last year's USFC achievements, Speakers' Corner and the Class Ring Ceremony. The Speakers' Corner has created interaction among students exchanging perspectives on campus while the Class Ring Ceremony has created a bond between prospective alumni and their University.
6. Increasing the transportation (bus shuttles) on campus to every hour between courses.
7. Extending the reading period for students to allocate more time for their final exams.
8. Supporting AUB students' clubs, and societies in projects from the allocated budget of the USFC.

Students At Work 2010-2011 Electoral Program

**Students at Work 2010-2011 Platform**

**Faculty level**

**Olayan School of Business**

1. Organizing the second regional **Business Case Competition** among students of sister universities in the Middle East.
2. Initiating a **"Start your own Business"** project for students with innovative ideas to become future entrepreneurs. The project will financially support the winning project to launch the business in the Lebanese market.

**Faculty of Engineering and Architecture**

1. Financing a **student lounge** area for FEA students to use during breaks and exam periods.
2. Working together with FEA professors on organizing **educational competitions** to improve the students' technical skills.

**Faculty of Arts and Sciences**

1. Upgrading the departments' **computer lab facilities** to meet the students' requirements.
2. Working on introducing several **elective courses** as well as increasing the number of university requirement courses.

**Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences**


1. Establishing a specialized **Career Placement Center** to help students find internships and job offers in their field of study.
2. Organizing **AutoCAD tutorials** for Landscape majors and other programs suggested by the students.

Students At Work 2010-2011 Electoral Program


**Suliman Olayan School of Business (OSB)**

Considered the strongest support given to Students at Work for the past five years, the students of the Olayan School of Business have successfully elected our SAW candidates to represent them in SRC and USFC. It is noticeable that 99% of our candidates have won across the five years with two students claiming the highest student position, Vice President of the University Student-Faculty Committee.


**Sophomore**




Karim Mecattaf



Faisal Sarraf



Nader Zaidan




Joumana Al Barmak


Students At Work 2010-2011 Electoral Program

**Suliman Olayan School of Business (OSB)**


**Junior**




Albert Karam




Rami Itani



Bilal Hariri




Carl Faycal




Pierre Khoury Melki


**Senior**




Roy Chaaya



Noel Halwani



Mariani Akkou



Ghida Batal

Students At Work 2010-2011 Electoral Program


**Suliman Olayan School of Business (OSB)**


Students At Work 2010-2011 Electoral Program

**Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS)**


Considered a growing faculty in terms of electing Students at Work candidates to represent the students, our FAFS candidates have been dedicated in completing their platform and coordinating with the students. They have also contributed in several university-wide events during the past academic year.


**Agri-Business and Veterinary**

 Nader Safadi


 Noreg Theodore Chouhassian

**Agriculture 1**


 Bilal Derian

 Jacques Ighieb


**Nutrition 1**

 Lama Dornawi

**Nutrition 2**

 Caroline Hamad

**Food Sciences 1**


 Roger Maloum


Students At Work 2010-2011 Electoral Program


**Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS)**


Considered the largest faculty, the FAS has been the deciding factor of the AUS elections. With around 2000 undergraduate students and tens of majors, the Students at Work candidates have proved to be victorious, thanks to the support of the students. The faculty SRC has worked on several issues upon the demand of the students.


**Sophomore**

 Dima El Machrouk


 Bilal Daher


 Yasmine Hani


 Joanne Boustany


 Albert Zoade


**Sophomore**


 Yara Sou Khalil

 Ziad Fattal

 Amanda Lebbas

 Melissa Menassa

 Theresa G. Fiani


 Nodine Abou-Ikhan




Students At Work 2010-2011 Electoral Program

### Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS)


**Junior**




Nour Stephan




Hisham Mansour




Nour Fakih




Carl Adi Aadi



Melissa Keyrouz




Souheil Ali Hassan




Mhammad Fathallah


**Senior**




Tracy Mabou



Farah Faytroun



Anis Kaddad




Khaled Halabieh

Students At Work 2010-2011 Electoral Program


### Faculty of Engineering & Architecture (FEA)

Considered the host of the strongest battle of the SRC elections, the FEA has witnessed major improvements in the Students at Work representation at the SRC and USFC level. Our candidates proved themselves by leading the faculty into several achievements across the years.


**Engineering 1**




Joy Beaini



Samer Alninan




Fouad Saba




Mohammed Doughton


**Engineering 2**




Julian Kradje




Fawzi Obeid



Lari Dagher




Taher Parsioui




Razan Maana


**Engineering 3**



John Tankoujan




Bassel Jarafar




Abed Hani


**Engineering 4**



Michel Rachid



Abdallah El Skaff



Khaled Ghawry

“Alternative Front” (Secular Alliance – AUB, 2010):

• **ALTERNATIVE, NON-SECTARIAN COALITION-BUILDING:** We envision AUB as a space for all its constituents: students, faculty, staff, and workers. The campus should not be a place that replicates external sectarian politics.

• **PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT:** Promote the voices and participation of minorities, women, and other marginalized groups in their involvement within the student body and in campus activities. Create a mechanism for more access to student resources for projects.

• **ANTI-NORMALIZATION AND ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL:** Ensure that AUB and its members do not engage in any form of normalization with Israel, including taking a proactive stance against academic and cultural normalization with Zionist individuals and institutions.

• **INVESTING IN THE LOCAL:** Prioritize admission, employment, resources, business and contracting alternatives from Lebanese and Arab communities and companies. Divest from foreign and multi-national corporations (especially those invested in Israel) and reinvest in Lebanese and Arab companies with ethical practices.

• **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION:** Support admission of students coming from a variety of classes and social backgrounds to diversify the student body. Stop tuition increases (as this discriminates against students in Lebanon from non-Elite classes) and work on establishing and implementing a transparent, well-functioning re-distributive financial aid program in order to provide equal opportunity for higher education to all communities within Lebanon.

• **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION:** Address the issue of free speech in AUB and ensure students a safe space to engage in any form of expression. The campus should become a place that promotes both healthy discussion and activism of its community members. We stand resolutely against any form of intimidation from faculty or administration inhibiting students from engaging in free expression.

• **TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, REPRESENTATION:** Transfer decision-making power from the USIC to the SRC to promote more accurate and direct student representation. Hold the administration and the elected student representation accountable to all students on campus and their needs. Stop frivolous spending and shift these resources to go toward student activities and needs.

• **INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY:** End outsourcing of workers so their children have as much opportunity as other employees of the university to study at AUB, further diversifying the campus and ensuring that AUB is accountable to the treatment of the workers on campus. Advocate for job security for AUB professors, including student advocacy for a tenuring process for professors.

**ALTERNATIVE FRONT**

**ACTIONABLE ITEMS for FAS**

- Organize consistent faculty-wide town-hall meetings for students, faculty, and workers to voice their needs as members of the AUB community in order to consistently uphold ideals of representation and accountability
- Increase student involvement in the working group created for overseeing a transparent progressive financial aid program
- Allocate funds to create funding programs for various student extra-curricular and scholarly activities (ex. funding for participation in conferences, for organizing workshops and events, etc.)
- Lobby for lower prices/student discounts for cafeteria food and implement an affordable meal plan for students; involve or create partnership with AUB farm to subsidize produce used in cafeteria
- Establish a student voice against the gentrification of Btes St; fewer banks, no shopping mall, more bookstores
- Expand scholarship programs to include graduate programs, ensuring a diverse student body in post-baccalaureate education.

**FAS CANDIDATES**

<b>Freshman</b>	<b>Junior</b>	<b>Graduate</b>
Fadi Haddadin	Hiba Audi	Mario Abou Zeid
Karam Inseeh	Marwa Bohaly	Boushra Ajeeb
Jad Kakkah	Dina Dajani Daoudi	Douhira Darbawi
Mamoun Mahayni	Yasmin El Achkar	Rami El Outa
Bital Sakkar	Hasan Joumaa	Diana Hantas
	Katia Marrouche	
	Lama Zakharia	
<b>Seniors</b>		
Othman Farnassi		
Farah Hamdan		
Rayyan Tutunji		

"...we do the change, you build it on top!"

**VOTE ALTERNATIVE FRONT**



“Pour une économie au service de l’homme” (March 14 coalition – USJ Huvelin, 2009, faculty of Economics):



The image shows a page from the electoral program, specifically the table of contents. The page has a white background with a blue header and footer. The header is a blue banner with the word "Sommaire" in white. The table of contents is listed on the right side of the page, with each item preceded by a small blue arrow pointing to the right. The items and their corresponding page numbers are: Introduction (page 4), Volet Académique et Professionnel (page 5), Volet Divertissements (page 8), Volet Financier et Social (page 11), Promotion (page 13), and Conclusion (page 14). At the bottom right of the page, there is a small footer that reads "Programme Electoral 2009 / 2010 | 3".

Sommaire	
Introduction	page 4
Volet Académique et Professionnel	page 5
Volet Divertissements	page 8
Volet Financier et Social	page 11
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## Introduction

Chers amis et collègues inscrits à la Faculté des Sciences Economiques,  
Chers amis inscrits en cursus de licence,  
Chers amis inscrits en master,

*Veni, Vidi, Vici,*

*Je suis venu, J'ai vu, J'ai vaincu,*

Telle fut la promesse du Bureau de l'Amicale 2008-2009,

L'impossible étant un mot que nous ne disons jamais, le Bureau de l'Amicale 2008/2009 a réalisé ses promesses électorales en ressuscitant la vie étudiante au sein de la Faculté des Sciences Economiques longtemps stagnante durant le mandat des amicales précédentes.


Dans la continuité du nouveau souffle apporté par le Bureau de l'Amicale 2008/2009, nous, candidats aux différents postes du Bureau de l'Amicale de la Faculté des Sciences Economiques, vous proposons un projet électoral en quatre volets : premièrement un **Volet Académique**, puis un **Volet Divertissements**, un **Volet Financier et Social** et finalement une partie consacrée à la **Promotion**.

C'est selon ce projet que nous demandons une nouvelle fois de nous accorder votre confiance en vous exprimant au cours de la **Journée de la Démocratie**.

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## Académique et Professionnel

Puisque l'université est avant tout un espace consacré à une formation académique, nous proposons une série d'amélioration sur le niveau académique et professionnel.



**a. Bureau d'orientation**  
Le Bureau de l'Amicale travaillera sur la création d'un Bureau d'orientation pour les étudiants en troisième année. Ce Bureau organisera des rencontres avec d'anciens diplômés de la Faculté des Sciences Economiques qui partageront leurs expériences avec vous. Le Bureau d'Orientation facilitera aussi aux étudiants l'examen des débouchés futures de leur formation.



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**b. Crédits**  
Le Bureau de l'Amicale traitera la double question des crédits : Premièrement, le Bureau tentera de développer les sessions d'été et de les rendre indépendantes des premier et second semestres en matière de crédits. Deuxièmement, il tentera d'augmenter le nombre de crédits autorisés par semestre pour les étudiants qui portent avec eux un excédent de matières non validées.

**c. Améliorer les relations entre les étudiants et l'administration**



Le Bureau de l'Amicale joue le rôle de passerelle entre les étudiants et l'administration. Nous œuvrerons pour améliorer les relations entre les étudiants à la Faculté des Sciences Economiques et leurs collègues de demain.





**d. Le système des absences**  
Notre Bureau se fera une priorité de remédier au système des absences actuel. Nous présenterons à l'administration un projet de réforme selon lequel, au lieu de pénaliser les étudiants ayant dépassé le nombre limite des absences, récompensera ceux qui assistent aux cours.

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**e. Simulation Boursière II**  
Nous organiserons une nouvelle fois une simulation boursière. Ce genre d'exercice permet une application, dans une dimension nouvelle et plus proche du quotidien professionnel, des théories apprises durant le cursus de licence.

**f. Amélioration des salles d'informatique**  
En collaboration avec l'administration, le Bureau de l'Amicale réhabilitera les salles d'informatique réservées aux étudiants de la faculté.




**g. Système d'accueil**  
Le Bureau de l'Amicale mettra au point un système d'accueil pour les étudiants en première inscription. Ce système facilitera l'implication des nouveaux étudiants dans la vie universitaire tout autant sur le niveau académique que sur le niveau social. Des étudiants de la FSE pourront se porter volontaires et aider les nouveaux venus à s'inscrire.

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## Divertissements

La vie universitaire s'étend aussi au delà de l'académique. Elle permet également l'établissement de liens entre les étudiants. Dans l'optique de consolider les rapports entre les étudiants, le Bureau de l'Amicale organisera des multiples activités.

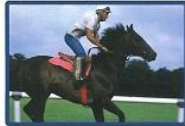
### a. Soirée de rencontre

Nous inaugurerons les activités de l'Amicale par une soirée de rencontre. Ce sera l'occasion pour les étudiants de se rencontrer et de faire connaissance dans un cadre informel.



### b. Journée à la Réserve de Atqa

La Réserve naturelle de Atqa est la première station de tourisme écologique au Liban. Nous vous proposons d'y passer une journée où chacun aura la chance de vivre des moments palpitants. Au programme : rappel, escalade, équitation, ATV.



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### c. Road Trip

Le Bureau de l'Amicale organisera un Road Trip. Cette excursion sera l'occasion de visiter le Liban et de nous rendre dans de nouvelles régions que nous ne connaissons pas.

### d. Boat Trip

Dans la tradition du Boat Trip, le Bureau de l'Amicale de la Faculté des Sciences économiques organisera un Boat Trip.



### e. Camp de Ski

Un camp de ski sera organisé par le Bureau de l'Amicale durant les vacances de Noel ou les vacances inter semestrielle. L'endroit et la date seront fixés ultérieurement après avoir pris en considération votre avis.



### f. Tournoi Sportif II

Le Bureau 2008/2009 a organisé un tournoi sportif en collaboration avec des comités d'autres facultés. Nos candidats feront en sorte que le tournoi sportif organisé par le Bureau de l'Amicale de la Faculté des Sciences Economiques devienne une tradition du Campus des Sciences Sociales et essayeront de le transformer en un tournoi entre les différents campus.



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### g. Voyage 2009 - 2010

Dans la logique de poursuivre ce que d'antérieurs Bureaux avaient commencé, nous organiserons un voyage en collaboration avec les autres Bureaux des Amicales. Le choix de la destination sera basé sur une enquête qui sera conduite auprès des étudiants du Campus des Sciences Sociales.



De plus, le Bureau de l'Amicale organisera des célébrations de Noel, du Nouvel An, de la Saint Valentin, de Pâques.

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## Financier et Social

### a. Aide financière

Selon les revenus du Bureau de l'Amicale, une fois élus, nos candidats décideront dans quelle marge ils peuvent aider le Service Social. Un pourcentage entre 10 et 15% des revenus du Bureau sera mis à la disposition du Service Social pour venir en aide aux étudiants.

### b. Activités caritatives et bénévolat

Le Bureau de l'Amicale créera un Comité responsable de collaborer avec les institutions de la société civile. Le Comité assurera le lien entre ces institutions et les étudiants de la Faculté des Sciences Economiques. D'un côté, il permettra l'accès de ces associations au Campus où elles pourront promouvoir leurs causes et d'un autre côté, le Comité s'appliquera à recruter parmi les étudiants des bénévoles attirés par le travail social.



### c. Prix du Crédit

Le prix du crédit ayant augmenté de 15.5\$ en 3 ans (2005-2006:98\$ ; 2009-2010 113.5\$) nos candidats, conscients de la situation financière actuelle essayeront de remédier à ce problème.

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**c. Eveil**  
Même nous, étudiants à l'USJ, ne sommes pas à l'abri d'un côté des tentations de la société telles que la drogue et la vitesse au volant et d'un autre côté des maladies sexuellement transmissibles. Pour remédier, dans la mesure du possible, à ce problème, nous proposons une série de conférences et de démonstrations traitant ces problèmes.

> JCD  
L'association de la Jeunesse Contre la Drogue donnera une conférence sur les méfaits de la drogue, sur les risques de dépendance ainsi que les mesures prévues par le Code Pénal Libanais pour remédier à ce problème.

> YASA  
La Youth Association for Social Awareness exécutera une démonstration sur notre campus et donnera une conférence sur la sécurité routière.

> MST  
En l'occasion de la journée mondiale contre le SIDA des médecins donneront une conférence sur les maladies sexuellement transmissibles et exposeront, démonstration à l'appui, les différentes façons de se protéger.

## Promotion

Deux comités de promo, l'un pour la troisième année de licence, l'autre pour le master 2 seront formés. Ces comités seront responsables, en collaboration avec le président du Bureau et le Trésorier, qui mettront à leur disposition toutes les ressources disponibles, de la préparation de la soirée de promo.

Ce sont ces mêmes comités qui seront responsables des DVD, des photos, des souvenirs et du YearBook.

De plus, le Bureau de l'Amicale se fera du financement total de la Promo un objectif à réaliser.





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## Conclusion

**Un savant anglais avait dit une fois:  
« La solidarité est synonyme d'humanité »**

A ce stade vous aurez deviné que notre vecteur directeur cette année sera : la synergie. En l'occurrence nous comptons infiniment sur votre coopération et nous nous portons prêt à répondre à vos questions. En clair, chacun de nous est une pierre, une lumière, tout simplement un espoir.

Et c'est vous, chers collègues, la lumière dans l'obscurité, votre opinion est la flamme que nous porterons avec vous sur le chemin de la réussite, pour un avenir splendide et brillant : votre avenir et celui de notre université qui était et restera un mini Liban, lieu de foisonnement des esprits lumières, de création, d'apprentissage et de patriotisme, Huvelin fut la matrice maternelle des « premiers » Hommes dans notre société libanaise et mondiale.

*'Mon adresse n'est pas une ville ni une rue : c'est mon université, c'est l'USJ, c'est la mienne.'*

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“Code Réformiste” (FPM – USJ Huvelin, faculty of Law, 2008):

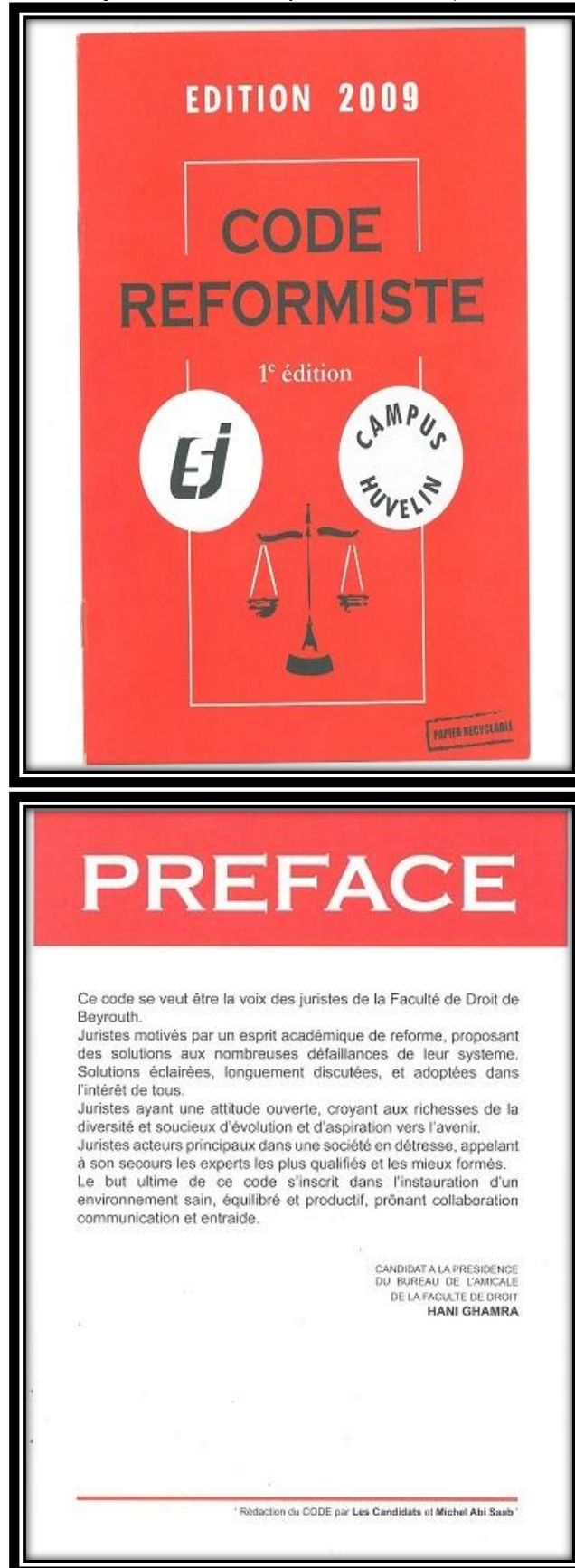





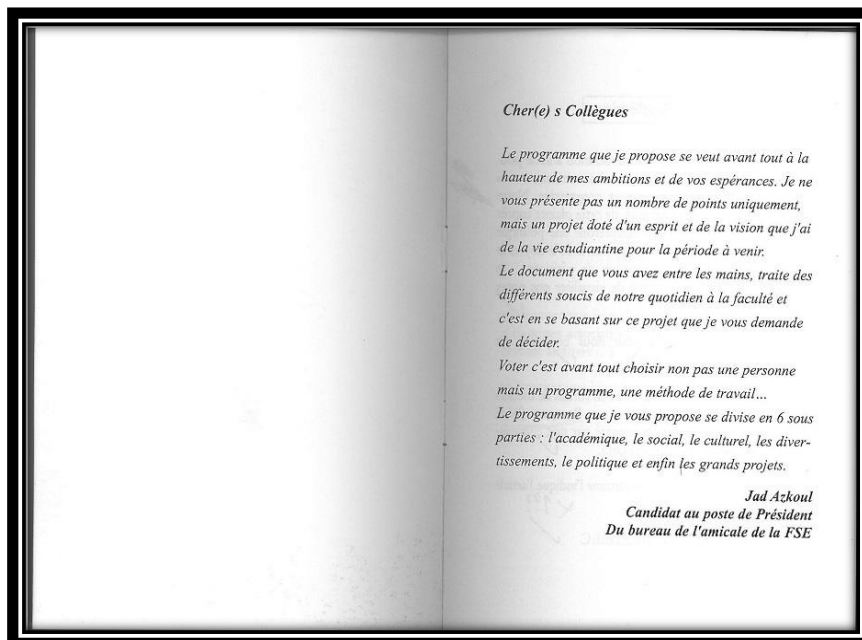
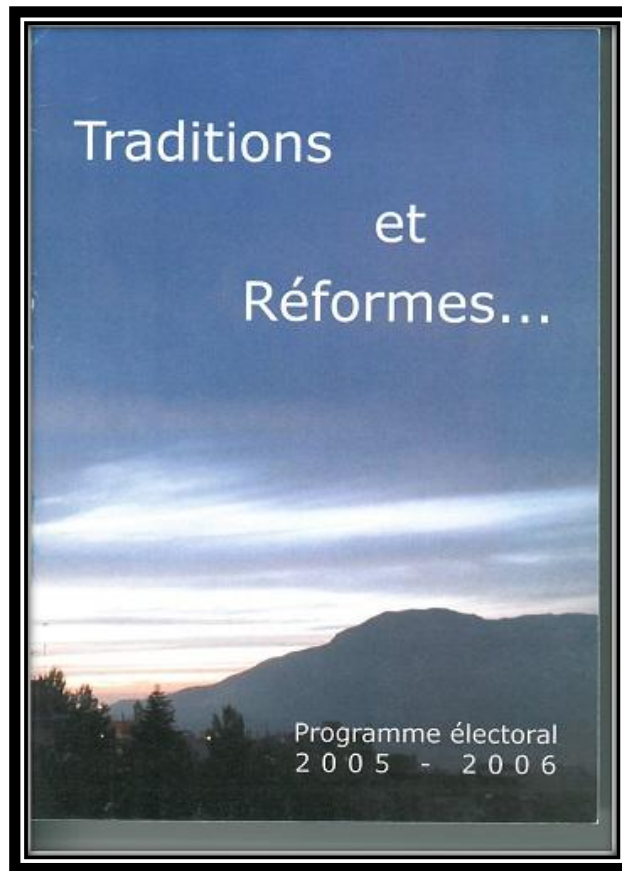
TABLE DES CANDIDATS	
Présidence .....	Hani Ghamra Desirée Feghall Georges Dahrouj Alma Chahine
	
CONTENU	
Titre I .....	Académique
Titre II .....	Culturel
Titre III .....	Social
Titre IV .....	Extra Académique

CODE REFORMISTE	
<b>TITRE PREMIER ACADÉMIQUE</b>	
<b>Art. 1 Déployer les mesures nécessaires pour assurer une meilleure formation académique et orienter les étudiants de la manière la plus éclairée.</b>	
1. Organiser un échange d'étudiants entre notre faculté et d'autres à l'étranger (Lyon II – Paris II)	3. Forum d'orientation dans différents domaines et spécialisations.
2. Forum des stages, stands de différents bureaux d'avocats.	4. Lobbying des anciens de la faculté de droit afin d'assurer des bourses et des stages.
<b>Art. 2 Informer rapidement et efficacement sur:</b>	
1. les changements d'horaire de dernière minute.	
2. les événements académiques, culturels et sociaux.	
1. Améliorer le système SMS pour mieux prévenir les étudiants.	3. Créer un groupe officiel sur facebook afin d'échanger un moyen de communication entre les étudiants membres et raviver les liens entre eux.
2. Envoyer des emails aux étudiants de chaque année.	
<b>Art. 3 Instaurer un dialogue constructif entre les étudiants et l'administration de la faculté selon une politique contestataire et progressive.</b>	
1. Arrêtymat absolu des copies (TD et examens).	4. Fixer la 2 <sup>ème</sup> session de façon à ce que les élèves puissent s'inscrire aux universités en respectant les délais d'inscription de celle-ci (je AUS-LAU).
2. Distribution des copies d'examen.	
3. Généralisation des 5 minutes de repos: pause intellectuelle.	
<b>TITRE DEUXIÈME CULTUREL</b>	
<b>Art. 4 Encourager la communication par la presse, outil assurant la transparence dans le travail de l'amicale.</b>	
1. Interview avec certaines personnalités.	3. Organiser des événements en collaboration avec Béryle pour financer la publication et la distribution de la revue officielle de la faculté.
2. Collaborer avec Béryle afin de publier le bilan de l'amicale.	
<b>Art. 5 Élargir les perspectives culturelles à travers des conférences et des séminaires.</b>	
1. Conférence sur le Droit individuel à la Formation et sur le développement personnel: Gestion de crise, gestion de stress, prise de parole.	3. Conférences sociopolitiques regroupant des personnalités de différents pays politiques ainsi que des juristes pour débattre sur l'actualité juridique libanaise et internationale.
2. Cycle de journées à l'honneur des anciens de la faculté (personnalités politiques, et juristes).	4. Journées de découverte des différents villages libanais.

CODE REFORMISTE	
<b>TITRE TROISIÈME SOCIAL</b>	
<b>Art. 6 Agir pour contribuer à l'élimination des problèmes sociaux.</b>	
1. Organiser des journées d'accueil d'enfants en besoin pour assurer un support moral et matériel.	3. Organiser un forum pour les diverses organisations caritatives (Caritas, SOS „Croux Rouge et Croissant Rouge, Auxilia, Sesabel, Anta Akh...)
2. Organiser une journée de Banque de sang en collaboration avec la Croix Rouge.	
<b>Art. 7 Agir pour un meilleur environnement.</b>	
1. Organiser une journée de nettoyage d'une plage.	3. Prévoir des poubelles de recyclage (papier, plastic...)
2. Organiser une journée de recensement.	
<b>Art. 8 Agir pour une meilleure hygiène et une meilleure santé.</b>	
1. Organiser une journée de prévention contre les maladies sexuellement transmissibles.	3. Organiser une journée d'éveil sur les méthodes de prévention contre le cancer.
2. Organiser une journée de prévention contre le tabagisme.	4. Organiser une journée de prévention contre les effets nocifs de la drogue.
<b>Art. 9 Adopter une politique économique pour la réduction des prix.</b>	
1. Obtenir des réductions en présentant la carte d'étudiants.	2. Collaborer avec une librairie pour réduire les coûts de papeterie (photocopiers, cahiers et manuels).
<b>TITRE QUATRIÈME EXTRA-ACADÉMIQUE</b>	
<b>Art. 10 Renforcer les liens amicaux entre les étudiants de la Faculté.</b>	
1. Road trip pour la découverte des sites touristiques libanais.	3. Organiser des tournois sportifs inter-classes avec un prix pour les gagnants.
2. Organiser le Dîner de Gala annuel de la Faculté de Droit en présence des anciens.	4. Organiser les soirées renommées de la Faculté de Droit.
<b>Art. 11 Assurer un autofinancement par le biais des événements organisés.</b>	
Adopter une politique de transparence en publiant le bilan de l'Amicale de façon régulière.	

“Traditions et Réformes” (FPM – USJ Huvelin, faculty of Economics, 2007):



Vision Académique	Vision Sociale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nous oeuvrerons auprès de l'administration afin de pouvoir récupérer les copies des tests et des examens, et cela à travers une démarche logique et progressive. Notre devoir ne se limitera pas au report de cette plainte auprès de l'administration, mais nous adopterons une politique contestataire progressive et ce en parlant avec le doyen, le recteur et allant jusqu'à la signature de pétitions... et nous demanderons la possibilité de visualiser nos notes sur internet.</li> <li>• Inviter des anciens élèves pour nous conseiller en matière d'orientation universitaire.</li> <li>• Organiser pendant le mois de mars un forum de métiers regroupant différentes entreprises et Banques (BLF, Fransabank...). Ce forum sera préparé par une commission d'élèves et dirigé par le président.</li> <li>• Instaurer un système de tutorat comme l'indique l'article 7 du règlement interne de L'USJ.</li> <li>• Améliorer les ordinateurs du CEDREC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organiser une journée d'exposition sur les activités de différentes associations sociales ( Bassma, Service de l'enfant au foyer ...)</li> <li>• Organiser une journée de nettoyage des plages.</li> </ul>

Vision culturelle	Divertissements
<p>Ecolibre est avant tout le porte parole des étudiants. Pour cela il est nécessaire d'inciter les étudiants à écrire plus d'articles et à effectuer des recherches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organiser en collaboration avec Ecolibre le salon du livre accompagné de conférences culturelles.</li> <li>• Former des équipes d'enquêtes communes avec "le commerce du levant "</li> <li>• Regrouper toutes les conférences qui auront lieu dans un fascicule qui sera distribué en fin d'année.</li> <li>• Fixer un thème économique pour l'année :  <i>" Quelles sont les causes de la dette publique au Liban depuis 1990 et comment faire face ? "</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organiser des soirées et des soirées à thème (cheese and wine ...)</li> <li>• Organiser une soirée de talents</li> <li>• Organiser un tournoi sportif</li> <li>• Organiser un concert en collaboration avec le club musique.</li> <li>• Obtenir des prix réduits pour les cours de plongée (En collaboration avec le Club X-TRME TEAM)</li> </ul>



### Vision Politique

- Selon moi la politique est avant tout basée sur la transparence. Dans cette optique je tiens à vous communiquer mon appartenance politique.
- Chers amis je suis membre actif du Courant Patriotique Libre
- Mon appartenance politique ne conditionnera pas mes décisions mais elles émaneront de vous.
- L'actualité politique sera traitée dans des conférences et des débats.
- Organiser des journées de solidarité avec les parents des détenus dans les geôles syriennes.
- Je propose de fixer un thème à l'action estudiantine de cette année:  
"Le mouvement Estudiantin de la contestation à la fondation"
- Organiser un cycle de conférences sur la vision économique des partis libanais.

### Grands Projets

- J'insiste sur le fait que les idées que je présente dans cette partie sont des projets à long terme.
- Réduire la durée des cours d'une heure trente à une heure.
- Obtenir des réductions en utilisant la carte d'étudiant
- Réduction du droit de vote à 18 ans.

### Conclusion

Vous ayant communiqué mon programme je vous laisse le soin de choisir et de décider qui représente vos aspirations et vos ambitions.

*Merci*

## Appendix 8 – AUB elections turn-out rates

November 2010:

<u>SRC Elections 2010-11</u>					
Faculty	Major	Year	Eligible Voters	Number of Voters	Percentage
<b>FAFS</b>	Agribusiness and Vet	I, II, III	55	48	87,3%
	Agriculture	I	56	39	69,6%
		II	32	27	84,4%
		III & IV			By Acclamation
	Nutrition & Dietetics	I	28	24	85,7%
		II	44	38	86,4%
		III & IV	75	57	76,0%
	Food Sciences & Management	I	29	24	82,8%
		II	28	15	53,6%
		III	33	23	69,7%
	Landscape	I & II	58	47	81,0%
		III & IV	40	33	82,5%
	Graduates	Graduates	94	25	26,6%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>572</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>69,9%</b>
<b>FAS</b>		Freshman	549	309	56,3%
		Sophomore	927	613	66,1%
		Junior	609	376	61,7%
		Senior	491	297	60,5%
		Graduates			By Acclamation
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2576</b>	<b>1595</b>	<b>61,9%</b>
<b>FHS</b>	<b>Public Health</b>	I	106	65	61,3%
		II	44	41	93,2%
		III	47	41	87,2%
		Graduates	175	80	45,7%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>372</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>61,0%</b>
<b>Medicine</b>	<b>MED</b>	I	89	81	91,0%
		II	88	84	95,4%
		III			by acclamation
		IV	73	63	86,3%
		Graduates	66	41	62,1%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>316</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>85,1%</b>
<b>Nursing</b>	<b>BSN</b>	II			by acclamation
		III	35	31	88,5%
		IV	25	19	76,0%
		Graduates			by acclamation
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>83,3%</b>

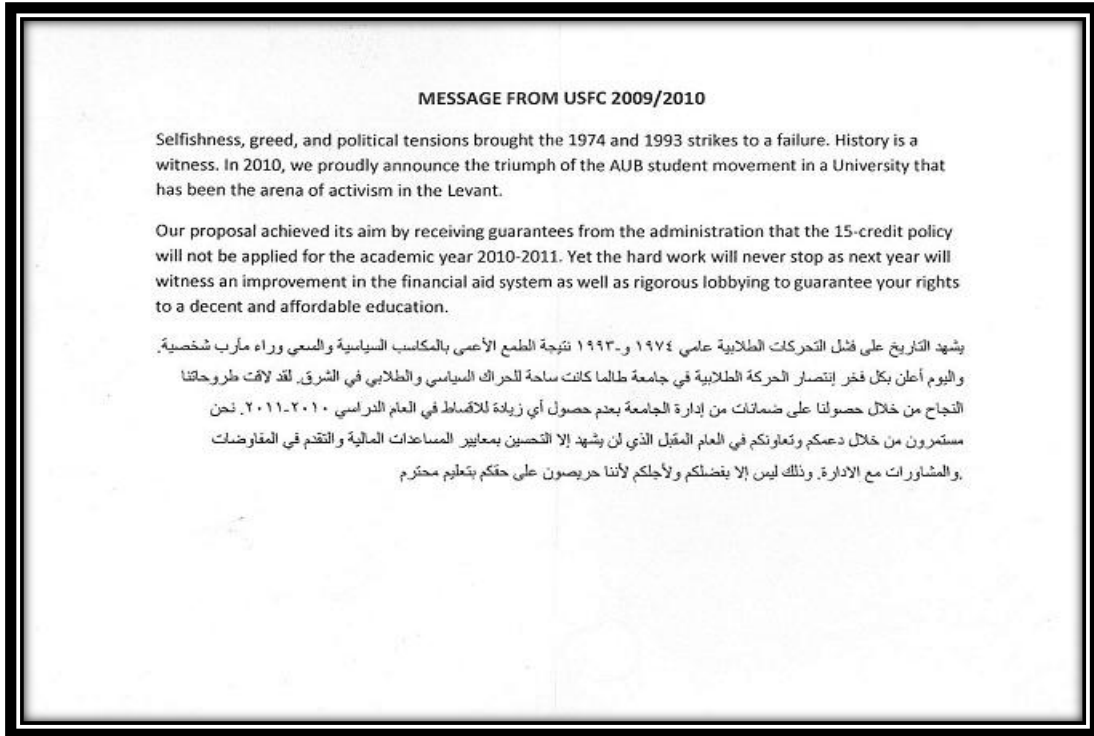
<b>OSB</b>	<b>OSB</b>	Sophomore	385	262	68,0%
		Junior	332	245	73,8%
		Senior	284	214	75,0%
		Graduates	80	48	60,0%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1081</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>71,1%</b>
<b>FEA</b>	Engineering	I	392	317	80,9%
		II	437	361	82,6%
		III	419	355	84,7%
		IV	343	276	80,5%
		Graduates	297	128	43,1%
	Architecture	I & II	73	37	50,7%
		III, IV, & V	82	30	36,6%
					by acclamation
	Graphic Design	I, II	66	49	74,2%
		III, IV	57	38	66,7%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2166</b>	<b>1591</b>	<b>73,5%</b>
TOTAL			<b>7143</b>	<b>4901</b>	<b>68,6%</b>
Re Election for ties on Friday, November 26, 2010					
Faculty	<b>Major</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>Eligible</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>FM</b>	Medicine	IV	73	54	74,0%
<b>FAS</b>		Sophomore	924	330	35,7%
TOTAL			<b>997</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>38,5%</b>

November 2009:

SRC Elections 2009-10					
Faculty	Major	Year	Eligible Voters	Number of Voters	Percentage
<b>FAFS</b>	Agriculture	I	141	121	85,8%
		II	45	37	82,2%
		III & IV			by acclamation
	Nutrition & Dietetics	I	55	41	74,5%
		II			by acclamation
		III & IV	79	70	88,6%
	Food Sciences & Management	I	36	29	80,6%
		II			by acclamation
		III			by acclamation
	Landscape	I & II	52	42	80,8%
III & IV		40	34	85,0%	
Graduates	Graduates	101	32	31,7%	
	<b>TOTAL</b>		549	406	73,9%
<b>FAS</b>		Freshman	566	374	66,1%
		Sophomore	943	715	75,8%
		Junior	576	406	70,5%
		Senior	518	442	85,3%
		Graduates	392	158	40,3%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		2995	2095	69,9%
<b>FHS</b>	Public Health	I	96	75	78,1%
		II	38	37	97,4%
		III	51	47	92,1%
		Graduates	156	78	50,0%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		341	237	69,5%
<b>Medicine</b>	MED	I	86	85	98,8%
		II	84	82	97,6%
		III			by acclamation
		IV	75	58	77,3%
		Graduates	57	40	70,2%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		302	265	87,7%
<b>Nursing</b>	BSN	II	66	46	69,7%
		III	28	25	89,3%
		IV	23	21	91,3%
		Graduates			by acclamation
	<b>TOTAL</b>		117	92	78,6%

<b>OSB</b>		Sophomore	353	240	68,0%
		Junior	353	267	75,6%
		Senior	332	211	63,5%
		Graduates	95	33	34,7%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		1133	751	66,3%
<b>FEA</b>	Engineering	I	330	265	80,3%
		II	437	361	82,6%
		III	411	368	89,5%
		IV	278	262	94,2%
		Graduates	223	119	53,4%
	Architecture	I & II	77	70	90,9%
		III, IV, & V			
					by acclamation
	Graphic Design	I & II			by acclamation
	<b>TOTAL</b>		1756	1445	82,3%
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>7193</b>	<b>5291</b>	<b>73,6%</b>

## Appendix 9 – University Student University Council (USFC) communiqué after the May 2010 strike in AUB



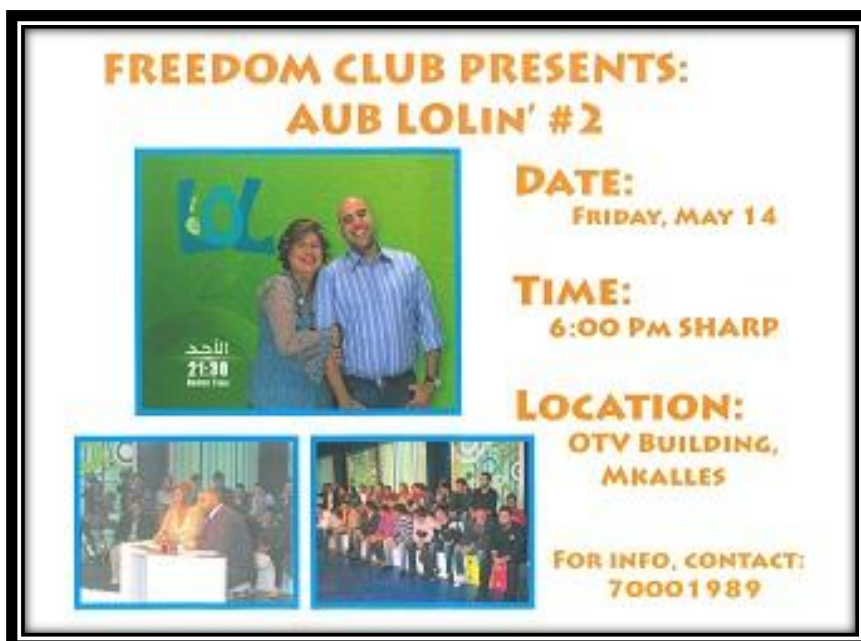
Appendix 10 – Freedom Club (FPM) activities in AUB (sample):



Commemoration of October 13, 1990. The text reads: “October 13. The picture becomes clearer”. The document is signed in the name of the “Students of the FPM”.



Memorial for the Lebanese Army's soldiers killed during the Nahr el-Bared battle.



Invitation to an *Orange TV* show, "LOL", May 2010.




**PREPARE YOURSELF!**  
**FOR A RAFT-TAKING EXPERIENCE**

**ORGANIZED BY FREEDOM CLUB**

LOCATION: NAHR EL ASSI  
DATE: SUNDAY, MAY 16  
DEPARTURE TIME: 7:30 AM

\$40 including:  
- Transportation  
- Rafting  
- Trainers  
- Equipment  
- Insurance  
- Photographers  
- BBQ Lunch



**VISIT OUR STAND AT WEST HALL**  
**FOR INFO: 70001989 - 03020113**

Rafting event in Nahr el-Assi (Orontes), May 2010.

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# KICK IT FOR REAL!

[on giant screens]

GET THE CHANCE TO WIN WITH OUR YONGSA

- 1st prize: Ticket to South Africa including airport taxi game access
- 2nd prize: Airplane Ticket to Europe
- 3rd & 4th prizes: Sports Equipment, Free Sport Experts

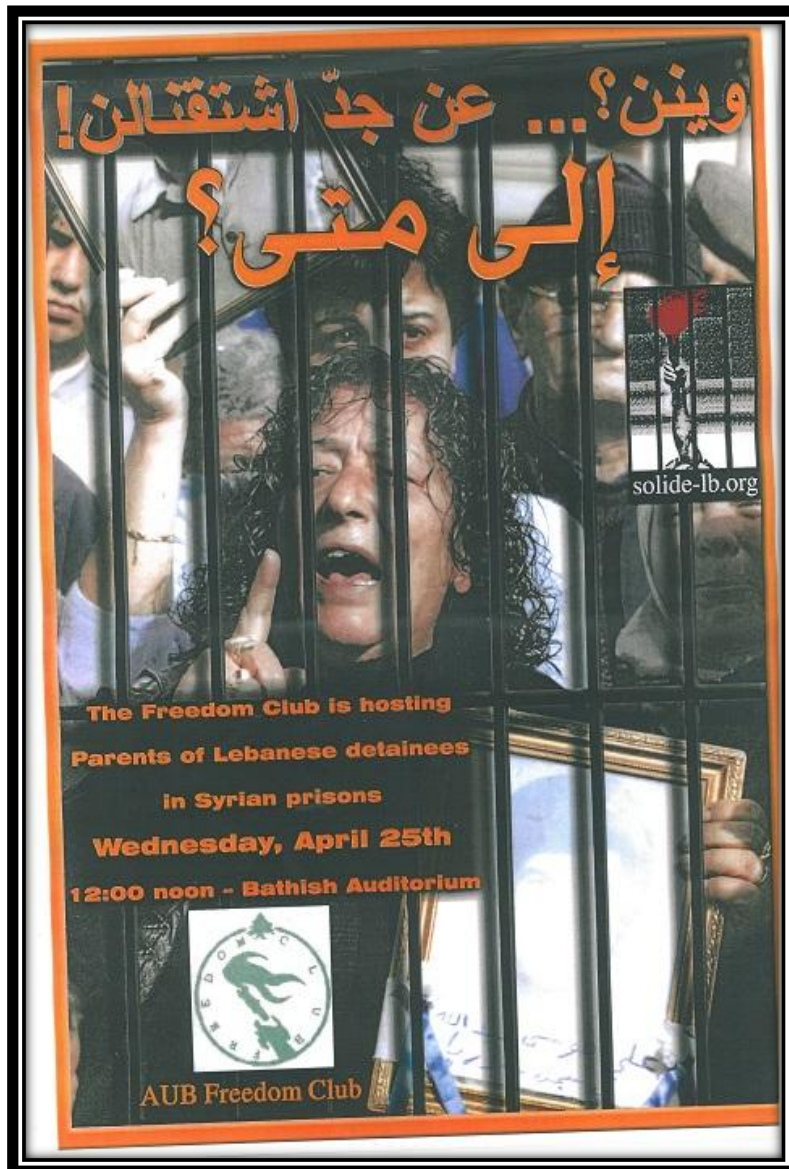
on the 22nd of may @ CYAH - KASEM

Freedom Club invites you to  
Visit our stand at West Hall  
For info - 030201118 - 70001988

001 108 118 118 (08 000 11 88 88)  
122 David Street, 122 121  
021 471

CYAH GERRY RAYNES BAKUBUN CFC RMC

Event for the Champions League final, May 2010.



The Freedom Club hosts the families of the Lebanese detainees in the Syrian prisons, April 2007.

Appendix 11 – FPM Magazine *al-Nashra*, March 2010.

## النشرة المتنبية

أذار 2010 - العدد 2

مساعدة: عن منطقة المتن التربوية - اللجنة المركزية لطلاب المدارس - التيار الوطني الحر.

### اصدقوا، الشباب الواعد...



قام وفد من اللجنة المركزية لطلاب المدارس في "التيار الوطني الحر" بجولة في مناطق الجنوب اللبناني، حيث وضع إكثيل من الورود على أضرحة شهداء قانا، وعلى ضريح الشهيد اللواء فرانسوا الحاج.

من أهم مميزات الحوارات الحوارية هو طريقة للشايف والاشفاق. طائفة الحوار هي للحوار ولبيت للفتش الذي يختلف عن الأول، كما أكد رئيس تكشل التغيير والاصلاح العماد ميشال عون.

ويوضح الجنرال عون مسالة تهم الشباب اللبناني، فقلنا ان "من يحاول تعليمكم ان كل الشبابيين متشبهون، وان من الأفضل عدم التدخل في الحياة السياسية خاصة ان نك يودي الى المشاكل والصدامات، فهو يخالفكم ويخاف على منصبه الحالي المسيطر على المجتمع اللبناني".

### الأم الحرة لا تلد إلا أمة حرة

في الواحد والعشرين من آذار يأتي الزيع، وتضربنا مناسبة جليلة سامية، مناسبة عيد الأم. مناسبة مميزة نخصن فيها امهاتنا في التيار الوطني الحر، اللواتي ناضن وما زلن يناضن في سبيل تربية اجيال مثقفة ومحترمة الأم "العونية" تعلم ابنها حب الوطن والنفاع عه منذ صغره، وتجعله يتق بنفسه ليصبح مواطناً صالحاً وواعياً للمصلحة الوطنية ولخياراته السياسية... فهيناً لكن، التّن الحملات مشاغل الحرية والأمل والشرف، يعكس حملات رايات الشعب والخيانة والاستسلام.

### لجنة طلاب المدارس، المتن

جاد سلامة	كما ان امهاتنا ناضن في تثقيف وتعليم الأبناء لتحضيرهم لمستقبل واعد ومزدهر، وما نجاح وابداع طلاب وخريجي التيار الوطني الحر في شتى ميادين اعمالهم الا دليل على التربية الصالحة التي تلقوها. فقلنا ان الله على الوفاء، ولينمّح امهاتنا مديد العسر والبقاء...
71122778	
جاد محول	
03121929	
إعداد:	
مسؤولة الإعلام	
كلوديا طنبوس	



الفنان غسان الرحباني يؤكد ان الحديث عن خلاف مع التيار الوطني الحر عار عن الصحة و أن هذه الشائعات تنصب في سياق التهجم عليه و على التيار الوطني الحر. في هذا الصدد، تنظم اللجنة نشاطاً بينياً مع الفنان غسان الرحباني خلال الأسابيع القادمة، للإستعلام الإتصال باللجنة.

”بَدَنَ شَيْ  
يَتَسَلَّوْا فِي“



### القانون النسبي أو القانون الأكثرى؟

#### النظام النسبي:

تحصل كل لائحة على عدد من المقاعد يوازى نسبة الأصوات التي حصلت عليها في الإنتخابات. يتم توزيع المقاعد على المرشحين بحسب الترتيب التسلسلي على اللائحة. يتبع النظام النسبي في ٧٣ دولة في العالم منها هولندا والارجنتين. فوائده وسلبياته:

يؤمن النظام النسبي أكبر نسبة تمثيل لشرائح المجتمع، فتمثل الاكثيات والاحزاب الصغيرة كما الاحزاب الكبيرة. يصعب اتخاذ قرارات في المجالس التي تتبع النظام النسبي نظراً لتعدد وجهات النظر.

#### النظام الأكثرى:

يفوز المرشح الحاصل على العدد الأكبر من الأصوات. يحكم الحاصل على الأكثرية المطلقة - ٥١٪. يتبع النظام الأكثرى في أكثر من ٩١ دولة في العالم منها لبنان. فوائده وسلبياته: يسهل اتخاذ القرارات في النظام الأكثرى نظراً لوجود أكثرية تحكم. لا يؤمن النظام الأكثرى عدالة في التمثيل .





Appendix 12 – FPM Youth Magazine *The Alternative*, April-May 2006.

the **ALTERNATIVE** **البديل**  
FPM Students Official Magazine  
Issue 2 - APRIL-MAY 2006 - العدد 2 - نيسان/ماي 2006

# من احتلال إلى احتلال

إكسار البيعت واستمرار نهجه في السلطة...  
زيد عيس وهادي حبيش وجها لوجه!  
- قانون غازي كنعان: مدد له في قريطم!  
- الياس سكاف، وجه زحلاوي - شربل خليل!  
- ذهنية الحكم لم تتغير بعد!  
- الثروة السمكية وقشل السلطة...

## كلمة التحرير إليك...

أوجه بكلامي إلى الذين اقتربت أيديهم بحق الوطن آنما جلت ليلتان يقع في دهاجير الزمان ويتحول إلى أمثال ترتبها دعاء الشهداء.

إلى الذين ارتضوا أن يكونوا عبيداً عند الغرباء بغير أحكام قضيتهم على بلر خؤوم إلى سجن كبير فزخوا بداخله كل من توجهت به شبه شملة الحرية.

إلى الذين أراقوا دم الشهداء وسفكوا أرواح الأبرياء غير أنهم يدموع الأنفصال وأمات الأمهات الكواهي يندبن وقتلاً أصبح محتلاً وولداً أصبح يتيماً وأماً باتت تكتئ.

إلى الذين كتبو الإنسان بأغلال الذئب فيجعله مرهقاً قسيتها الخارج، يتوق إلى الإنتاق وكسر القيود التي فرضها عليه العالم بأسره.

إلى الذين كانوا الحرية المفروزة في خاصرة الأحرار والعقبة في مسيرة التحرير...

أوجه إليك أها الوحش الكاسر الذي لم يضع إلى أين شعبه ولم يراف به لأن أياهه كانت تتخفن على معاطل النفوس الحرة والأية فيقوم اليوم بالمشاخرة بمبادئ لعلما كنت تسعى لتحميها بقوة الترهيب والإكراه لاسترضاء سيدك.

إليك أها الجلاء، أنت الذي ارتكبت تلك المعاصي من دون أن يوف لك حبل وقناعاً كاملاً لا تقبل اللبس والتشكيك، على الرغم من مزاعمك الحائية بأنه كنت مستصفاً وكان مقبولاً على أمرك آنذاك.

تقول لك إن الأوطان لا يبينها أمثالك من الرجال الذين يعاقون الشغل ويتعاملون معه ومن ثم يتأقنون ويستقلون وهن الشعب تنفذون مآزيمهم المنيفة.

تقول لك، أعلم أن التاريخ لك بالمرصاد والويل للخاصين الذين لن يتوحدوا عن إعادة الكرة، لكن مع رستم جديد.

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# We Want **The** Truth...Which **Truth?**

Sako HOLTIAN

With the progress of the political events following the assassination of the former Prime Minister late Rafic Hariri, Lebanon has witnessed a wave of demonstrations incorporating many slogans launched by politicians and people. Among those in great numbers, mainly one slogan could be easily noticed all over TV stations, posters, signs, graffiti, political statements, etc... "We want the truth...Who killed Rafic Hariri?"

Truth in the absolute sense is a word that has considerably wide dimensions. Through its natural tendency to stay in shade, truth is one of the major factors that ascertain the mortal nature of human beings. It is by the search of the unrevealed truth that human race has civilized itself into the relatively high standards of modern life. Truth may be regarded as the key ingredient in the process of moving from a certain state to a better one. Its importance arouses during the first stages of the path line of this process thereby providing solid foundations of reality to base the plans of action upon in an attempt to reach to an effective treatment of the status quo while tending to meet the targets set forth in the intuitive imagination. Truth to solution is what a map is to a traveler. Although one may travel endlessly without reaching to the desired destination if not accompanied with a map, but also one having a map in hands but no desired destination in mind neither he means to travel will certainly not start his journey in the first place.

Having defined Truth in the absolute sense as being the means to move from one state to another, one may understand that its usage in the relative sense alone is that may be fit into an insightful context: truth of what? For Lebanese, truth has been behind a huge cloud of darkness for ages. The aspects of truth to be revealed or the treatment of the Lebanese problems are many and certainly not restricted solely one such as assassination and more specifically, the aspect of truth that cicles assassinations is certainly not restricted to one case but has to be fairly distributed over the long queue of martyrs that have fallen during the bitter tracks of Lebanese history. If the Lebanese people want to arouse a garden, they must not accept a single leaf to be sought ahead. If truth is a tree, and assassination

a branch, and a martyr a leaf, one leaf alone makes no garden. Neither does one branch alone.

Have we ever defined where do we want to head to with the truth that we are after? We have notoriously asked for the truth, who killed PM Rafic Hariri? Have we ever thought if revealing it will ever treat our problems? Will it fade out the long queue of the educated Lebanese youth in front of the foreign embassies? They are a necessity for Lebanon to get on feet once again. Will it extend a salvation hand to the many Lebanese families dwelling in poverty suffocating under the load of the heavy taxes? They used to be the middle class of Lebanon. Lebanon's economical bloom counts on the middle class. Will it have any positive weight in the equation of the high unemployment rate? Each unemployed person is a loss of potentials that are essential in constructing the country. Will it reinforce the judicial body and replace the mentality of dependencies by integrity and justness? The Lebanese people crave to trust the system and respect its laws only if laws are implemented in a trustworthy frame instead of revolved against justice in an pathetic attempt to protect the faint image of the ones responsible to preserve their reliability. Will it reduce the imported sectarian tensions among the Lebanese? The Lebanese naturally tend to live in harmony with each other only if the virus known as "fear of the other", once reaching its territories, is returned unpacked to its senders. Will it create a strong security apparatus by cleansing the system from the entrenched foreign agents? The Lebanese need to feel safe in their homeland to which they would attract Arab and International investments with their natural marketing talents if only the security of the potential investors could be guaranteed. Will revealing the truth about Hariri's murder solve the environmental problems of Lebanon? The Lebanese do deserve to live in a healthy environment instead of envying the herds of other countries' farms. Many are Lebanon's defects, to an extent that ironically even some politicians instead of looking for solutions converse in public revealing their warmest fever to become garbage cleaners in other countries that show respect towards their citizens... Solutions do need the truth as a basis, however, the truth of what?

The truth that we are looking for must be carefully engineered into a clearly defined hierarchy preparing the grounds for effective solutions, instead of being used in perfectly attractive media displays to invest emotions for political gains. Problems are interrelated and the solution of one may lead to the treatment of the other. Assassination is a byproduct of other defects which in turn result from higher levels in the hierarchy. Do we want to avoid the war of the others in our country again? We must then seek the truth about the ingrained fear factor among us. Once revealing the truth about their "divide and conquer" strategy, we must come up with our plans to crash their bridges and prohibit another successful strike. Do we want to build a respectful country? We must then look for the truth about the reasons of its destruction. If one built a structure and it collapsed, it is highly unwise to build again without investigating the nature of the foundation soil in order to avoid another probable collapse.

Over the past decades, our country witnessed a series of wars that ended up in the enforcement of foreign occupations hence the complete paralysis of the constitutional and governmental institutions among which the Internal Security Forces, a fact that offered the smoothest inlet for the many assassinations and paved the way for corruption and poverty resulting in higher vulnerability to sectarian tensions thus tendency to a renewed series of internal conflicts. Besieged by this loop of problems, we want the truth...At what point must we break the loop?

The reasonable outcome is to feed the hungry people; furnish them with better living standards and once hunger is dissipated, the thirst for higher awareness will follow hence the establishment of educational programs to spread knowledge amongst people resulting in stronger immunity against the foreign attempts to run another loop. Better living standards will be provided solely by building a prosperous state of law, that is, moving from a destroyed state to a better one, a process in which truth is the key ingredient... We want the truth about the reasons of our poverty, the very truth that an audit would seek...



# تسلم يا عسكري لبنان...

## الشهداء

### شرف البديلة العسكرية

هاني سبيح - مدينة صلم

الجندي الشهيد جوزيف حليم حماران، من مواليد 1952/1/10 - بيروت، شارك في الجيش بتاريخ 1982/7/29، شارك في الجبهة الوطنية للحرص، وسام الوحدة الوطنية، التقديرات وتمتدحه المعاد قائد الجيش عدة مرات.

الجندي الشهيد عبد الله الخويطر، من مواليد 1952/1/10 - طرابلس، شارك في الجيش بتاريخ 1982/7/29، شارك في الجبهة الوطنية للحرص، وسام الوحدة الوطنية، التقديرات وتمتدحه المعاد قائد الجيش عدة مرات.

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صباح السبت 2007/7/18، المنشن العسكري، بدو

## What is the Alternative?

When I was given the opportunity to write in *The Alternative*, I was very excited because this is a great venue that creates an amazing link between Lebanese residents abroad and at home in general, and a direct link to the Lebanese students in particular. It is in the students of the future, whom we must build our free Lebanon. It is true that this is the FPM, Lebanon's magazine, but at the same time this magazine is an honest attempt to reach out to all the Lebanese, regardless of the party they prefer or belong to. I sincerely call upon all who read this magazine, whether they are students or professionals, left or right, orange or yellow, red or blue, to reach out and join us with one honest goal in mind: To achieve the best alternative for Lebanon!

To the students who are reading this article, I was a university student like you in Lebanon, and I had my share in political debates and fought for my beliefs. The only difference now is that the life experience I went through in the past 10 years in Lebanon and abroad shaped my sense of judgment and criticism and taught me to think more objectively and logically than emotionally. I strongly believe this is the attitude we need to spread among the students in particular and the Lebanese people in general.

What is the Alternative? This is the main question which leads me to a series of other questions I would like to share with you and depend on your sense of objective and logic to find mature and objective answers to.

What is the alternative we are looking for in the alternative of occupation and endorsement? Of course, how do we do

## Tangible Sectarianism and the Clandestine Occupation of Lebanon

With the current national dialogue underway discussing many delicate issues, such as the identity of Shebaa Farms, and while the government is busy consolidating its control after so many years of occupation, one cannot help but question: where is the sovereignty of our neighborhoods? Cruising through the streets of Beirut, we are faced with many stimulating and perhaps distressing signs which are typical and considered as standard by any resident of Lebanon's neighborhoods and is not the capital see overcrowded with the excess of party flags and banners and particularly the pictures of foreign leaders. In a multi-confessional nation such as Lebanon, and bearing in mind the sensitive sectarian scenario that prevails in the country, pictures of respective leaders such as Amrallah-Khazim constitute an unnecessary risk to the fragile psychological situation. Whether the pictures of foreign leaders constitute challenges to the Lebanese national character is a matter of opinion, but pictures directly attributed to foreign revolutions that presage ideologies in complete contradiction to the traditional Lebanese, cultural, political, and social values represent a danger to the collective social welfare of society. Still, this unrefined scenario prevails in all Lebanon's neighborhoods and is not sponsored specifically by any party. Citizens alike sometimes embrace these symbols, completely ignorant of the negative underlying implications they have on the country.

The presence of pictures of foreign leaders in the streets of Lebanon is considered as bizarre and abnormal even under the most liberal standards. The pictures and symbols of foreign leaders and countries must be removed immediately. The tools of division must be eradicated and political parties in Lebanon need to understand that the streets belong to the people and not to themselves. Lebanese national

## على رجاء القيام!

من يتألم لا يذكر الاضية التي من فيها اوارها كان هذا ما تسبب بصدمة تلك الساعات صخا وره مسرد السرد في بلاد الاغراب، ويرويه عن ذلك وما أتف به لبنان، من طاقن، فاعل الوعيد التي تحمى الطالب اللبناني كان كل ما تقابلت معهما عندما اتلته رائدة ليلية الروس الشائع بلعما بها هما أي من ظل الوطن مسوقه محملا بعد أن خارت قلوبنا.

ليظن المواطنون ان كل حدث بعد الطائف وما جاء به هذا الذي يسوقه بلعما من فداد الشتمير الجديد الذي جاء على ايامكم ليملأكم مرة معكم اياهم وتناقضون ايامكم والشعب والتمتع.

## Easy to the People... Hard on Politicians

Lebanon's current problems seem to be nothing but accumulations of historical factors that are thought (wrongfully though) to be invulnerable. It is very frequent to encounter people believing that our problems are deep-rooted and to hear them saying "That is Lebanon. It will never change!" despite the quite many experiences (most of which were introduced by the Free Patriotic Movement) that proved that on the contrary, the change is in our hands and that yes, Lebanon can change!

Sectarianism, corruption, feudalism, public debt, misrepresentation, emigration, brain-drain, insecurity, pollution, disrespect of human rights, etc., and the list extends pretty well to reach our most daily frequent problems such as unemployment, lack of public health insurance, weakness of public educational institutions, politicization of institutions and more several problems that appear to be never ending since generations...

The key resides in the fact that solutions to those problems seem to us quite easy. The second key resides in the fact that the political class that had been governing since the pact of 1943 (which they even



# Entre le 24 Avril et le 13 Octobre: Histoire de deux peuples déchirés

Georges Sarkis TACHDJIAN

Ils sont tombés sans savoir pourquoi... Hommes, femmes et enfants qui ne voulaient que vivre... Ils sont tombés en invoquant Dieu, au seul de leur église ou au seul de leur maison. La mort s'est abattue sur eux sans se soucier de leur âge... Leur seul crime : avoir été Arméniens.

En 1915, durant la première guerre mondiale, entre 1 200 000 et 1 500 000 Arméniens - soit les deux tiers de la population arménienne vivant sous l'autorité de l'empire ottoman - ont été tués sur place ou au cours de leur déportation. Le gouvernement turc est responsable de ce crime collectif, abouissement d'un plan concerté. Voici le texte d'un télégramme du ministre de l'Intérieur de l'époque Talaat Pacha : «Le gouvernement a décidé de détruire tous les Arméniens résidant en Turquie. Il faut mettre fin à leur existence, aussi criminelles que soient les mesures à prendre. Il ne faut tenir compte ni de l'âge, ni du sexe. Les scrupules de conscience n'ont pas leur place ici». Les Arméniens sont tués sur le champ par l'armée, ou déportés vers le sud, sous un soleil de plomb, sans vivres et sans eau, pour retrouver la rive de l'au-delà au bout du voyage...

Mais ce « génocide oublié » qui inspira Hitler - on lui prête ces mots : « Qui se souvient du massacre des arméniens ? » -, des irréductibles du souvenir, issus du peuple arménien lui-même, en portent constamment le flambeau. La diaspora n'a pas baissé les bras. Elle œuvre pour que les responsables soient jugés devant les tribunaux internationaux.

Les massacres, la déportation de plusieurs centaines de milliers d'individus correspondent bien à la définition du génocide élaborée par « la Convention sur la Prévention et la Répression du Crime de Génocide » adoptée le 9 décembre 1948 par l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies. Mais le gouvernement turc conteste toujours l'intentionnalité du crime comme l'ampleur des massacres. Ce refus est vécu par les arméniens comme une seconde mise à mort. Tout est fait pour amener la Turquie moderne à assumer cette part obscure de son passé qu'elle persévère à refouler, à renier, avançant pour le faire des explications invraisemblables, refusant l'évidence, fermant les yeux sur l'économie. La lutte n'a pourtant pas été vaine. Des organisations internationales, des parlements, des gouvernements occidentaux ont fini par admettre l'existence du génocide et rendre justice au peuple arménien, ne serait-ce que moralement, puisque ce peuple entreprenant ne

réclame d'autre réparation que la proclamation de la vérité.

Pour les Arméniens, le Liban a été, surtout après la Première Guerre mondiale et les horreurs du génocide perpétré par les autorités turques ottomanes, une base très importante dans le processus de leur organisation comme communautés



Les fosses communes

dispersées. La place du Liban dans le devenir arménien est indéniable, surtout dans le cas de la renaissance de l'Église arménienne de la Grande Maison de Cilicie à Antélias. L'acharnement et la volonté de la communauté, les subventions de son Église, de ses partis politiques, ainsi que celles de grands mécènes arméniens, du Liban ou de l'étranger, l'ont aidé à se relever sur le plan économique. Il est aussi important de noter, que la structure confessionnelle du Liban, qui accorde à chaque communauté des prérogatives et une grande autonomie, a permis à l'Église arménienne de remplir son rôle non seulement religieux, mais également social, éducatif et juridique.

Sur le plan politique, trois partis arméniens coexistant au Liban, Tachnag, Hentchag et Ramgavar, qui ont en commun leur organisation, leur discipline et leur caractère national, se sont tous trois activement engagés à la défense de la cause arménienne. Ainsi, grâce à l'action de son Église et de ses partis, la communauté arménienne a réussi à développer son patrimoine, faisant de Beyrouth un centre religieux, culturel, artistique et littéraire pour toute la diaspora.

J'appartiens à ce peuple, qui a choisi de mourir sans abdiquer sa foi et qui n'a jamais baissé la tête sous l'injure. Ensemble nous avons survécu malgré tout.

Portant dans mon sang les souffrances de mon peuple, je témoigne, le 13 octobre 1990, d'un autre massacre, celui de mes compatriotes libanais. Cherchant la vérité du génocide arménien, je participe aussi à la lutte contre les crimes contre l'humanité au Liban. Le 14 octobre 1990, je

décide de combattre, alors que l'armée syrienne fait son entrée sanglante au Liban.

A Broummana, 10 soldats sont exécutés à la grenade et à la mitrailleuse alors qu'ils venaient de se rendre. A Bous, 15 civils sont extirpés de leurs maisons et abattus au seuil de leurs maisons. A Dawar, les Syriens exécutent une soixantaine de cadets de l'armée libanaise après leur reddition. A Homel, 19 personnes dont trois femmes et deux adolescents sont mis à genoux et exécutés. A Beit-Meri, 25 soldats sont jetés dans des puits et enterrés à la grenade. A Dahr el Wahh, où la résistance fut sans doute la plus intense, seuls 28 hommes de la Dixième brigade de l'armée libanaise dirigée par le Général Michel Aoun tombèrent au combat et le reste de la garnison, soit au total 80 soldats et officiers, sont sommairement exécutés. Parmi eux, 32 soldats sont découverts les mains encore liées et une croix dessinée au couteau sur le front. Enfin, au Palais de Baabda, 152 soldats et gradés faits prisonniers sont alignés à genoux dans la cour du Palais. Les mains attachées sur le dos, ils sont égorgés les uns après les autres. On leur tire ensuite une balle dans la tempe ou dans la mâchoire et, enfin, leurs bourreaux s'amuse, là encore, à dessiner une croix sur les cadavres mais, cette fois, par rafales dans l'estomac.

Je porte deux cicatrices : celle du génocide arménien et celle de la guerre du Liban. Sur mes papiers, j'exprime l'histoire des deux peuples déchirés, deux peuples qui se sont sacrifiés.

Le Courant Patriotique Libre dont je fais partie, commémore chaque 13 octobre les atrocités de 1990. La communauté arménienne au Liban commémore chaque 24 avril le génocide arménien de 1915. L'homme ignore les frontières du temps et de l'espace. Rien ne pourrait jamais effacer les deux dates. Ceux qui ne connaissent pas leur histoire s'exposent à ce qu'elle recommence.



Les cadavres des Libanais

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ALTERNATIVE

13

وجها

## زياد عيس



إن منتقدي العماد عون،  
لا يعارضونه بسبب  
جدوره العسكرية أو لباسه،  
بل لأن مصالِحهم الشخصية  
تقتضي ذلك

هناك آية وتواصل دائم ونأمل خيراً.

- ما هي علاقتكم بالفوات اللبنانية؟

قلنا مراراً وتكراراً أن التناقض السياسي بين التيارين لا يعني تصارعاً ومشاكل. مع العلم أنه حان الوقت لترجمم العلاقة قيادياً على الوضع الطلابي والشعبي.

- ما هي علاقتكم بالحزب التقدمي الاشتراكي؟

الحوار صريح وحقيقي وهناك محاولة لمعالجة الإشكاليات الأساسية كافة بشكل موضوعي بخاصة مع شباب الحزب.

- ما هو تعليقكم على مشكلة العالدين من إسرائيل؟

لقد أدى كل من التيار الوطني وحزب الله دوراً بارزاً في هذا الموضوع. كما أضفياً جواً من الثقة استفاد منه بعض اللبنانيين. لكننا توقعنا أن تبدي الدولة اهتمامها أكثر. في المقابل نحن نتابع الملف بشكل جدي وما زلنا نسعى ونطالب الدولة بتحمل مسؤولياتها بشكل كامل.

- ماذا عن المعتقلين في السجون السورية؟

لقد سلمت منظمة سويد حزب الله ٢٥ حالة وجودها شبه مؤكد. داخل السجون السورية. فالسيد حسن نصر الله بهتم شخصياً بهذا الملف، ونحن نتمنى الحل ونسعى جاهدين لإنهاء هذه المعضلة الانسانية وعودة المعتقلين كافة.

- ورد في برنامج زياد الرجباني على اذاعة صوت الشعب: "ينصر الله وعونه النصر لنا، ما هو تعليقكم على ذلك؟"

ينصر الله وعونه النصر للبنان واللبنانيين كافة...

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الوطني؟  
التيار الوطني الحر لديه طرح متكامل سيطرحة في حينه. لكننا نعتبر أن للمقاومة قيمة مضافة في سياسة الردع ضد الخطر الإسرائيلي، أما في خصوص وضع استراتيجية الدفاع الوطني بشكائها النهائي، فعلى اللبنانيين إيجاد الحل المناسب الذي يضمن مركزية القرار السياسي والأمني ويؤمّن الحماية الكافية للبنان.

- وصف البعض ورقة التفاهم بوثيقة استسلام من قبل التيار الوطني والهجوم أتى من كل حذب وصوب.

للأسف لم تكن التعليقات بمستوى الحدث لأن الفرقاء السياسيين عالجوها بمنطق مصالِحهم الشخصية. علينا أن نكون على قدر المسؤولية. نحن مثلاً الآن ندرّب في إبداء رأينا حول الورقة الاقتصادية لأن مصلحة اللبنانيين تتطلب منا أن نتأمل على تفاضنا السياسي في الأمور والقضايا الكبرى.

- كيف تصف علاقة التيار الوطني الحر بختيار المستقبل؟

للأسف الثقة بين الطرفين قليلة. كتأمل أن الوقت كفيل بجلّ الهواجس لكن اندام الثقة يزداد.

- السنيرة تحدثت أنه لا يحدّ رئيساً للجمهورية جدوره عسكرية، بم ترءون؟

إن منتقدي العماد عون لا يعارضونه بسبب جدوره العسكرية أو لباسه، بل لأن مصالِحهم الشخصية تقتضي ذلك. نفضل عدم الرد على هكذا أقوال ونطالبهم بأن يطرحوا البديل من ضمن برنامج متكامل.

- ما هي علاقتكم بالكتائب اللبنانية؟

توصلنا إلى إطار واضح ومحدد لأهداف سلاح المقاومة

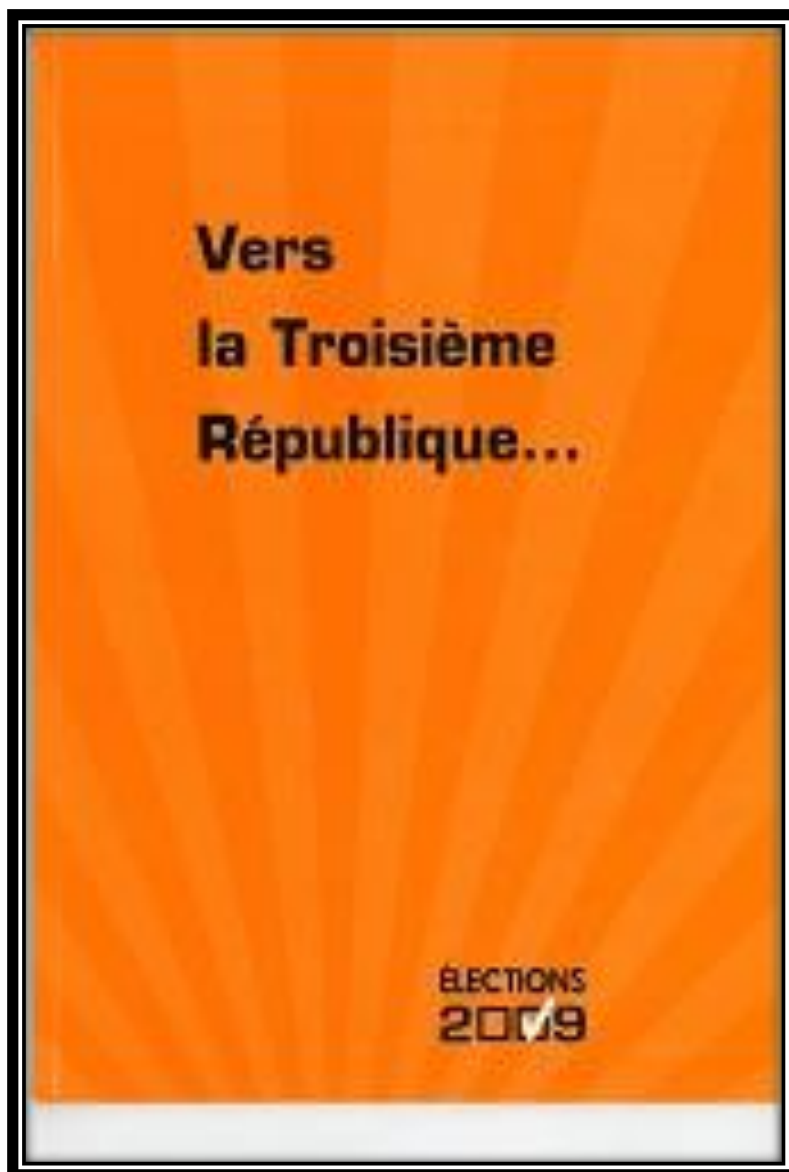
هذا هو طرحنا لقاربة سلاح المقاومة ومن عنده طرح آخر. غير العنتريات التلفزيونية، فليفضل ويطرحة.

- ما هو تصورككم لإستراتيجية الدفاع

ALTERNATIVE

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Appendix 13 – Cover of the FPM electoral program for the 2009 Parliamentary Elections:



## Appendix 14 – The FPM Charter:

### The Charter of the Free Patriotic Movement Party

The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) is an extension of the Lebanese phenomenon that began with a long journey filled with struggle on which General Michel Aoun embarked. This journey continued throughout his office as head of the Lebanese Government in the late 1980's. The FPM phenomenon manifested itself in a heightened awareness among the Lebanese people of foreign conditions and their outcomes. With pioneering, humanistic and brave conduct, the FPM opposed the occupation of Lebanon domestically and internationally and presented many sacrifices while defending its freedom, sovereignty, independence, and the dignity of its people.

As a political party, the Free Patriotic Movement aims at renewing the political life in Lebanon on the bases of knowledge, ethics, progressiveness and the emancipation of the Lebanese individual. The Party is committed to work under the banner of change and reform according to the following tenets:

#### In Principles

The FPM declares:

1. Its belief that the individual is intrinsically valuable and that people are born equal and die equal, having equal rights, freedom, and dignity, and being able to differ in opinions, orientations and beliefs.
2. Its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to all pertinent international charters and conventions, whose values and principles will act as guidelines to the Party's goals and programs.
3. Its intransigence in the belief that Lebanon is a sovereign, free and independent entity founded on a social pact sanctioned by the free will of its people.
4. Its assertion that Lebanon is a distinctive human experience by virtue of its pluralism, intellectual interaction and openness to civilizations, and due to its pioneering democratic experience in the Arab world.
5. Its abidance by the Lebanese Constitution as a charter of governance in Lebanon, in its practice, interpretation, and ratification.
6. Its adherence to the openness of Lebanon to and its interaction with its Arab surroundings and the world, in such a way as not to conflict with the national belonging and provided that the Lebanese will be a dimension of Lebanon in foreign countries and not a foreign dimension within Lebanon.
7. Its conviction that men and women are equal in rights and obligations, since women are fundamental partners in the building of the society and in the making of the political decision.

#### In the Goals

The FPM aspires to:

1. Guaranty the sovereignty of the Lebanese state and its independence and to safeguard its existence.
2. Build a nation of law based on equality, justice, social solidarity, equal opportunities and the upholding of a fair judicial system, since the latter is a true and impartial criterion for the consolidation of justice and democracy.
3. Establish democracy as a system of government and a way of life by guaranteeing the respect of freedoms and basic rights of the citizen.
4. Institute a culture of citizenship in the aim of achieving equality between the Lebanese; enact a discretionary civil personal status law; and separate politics from religion to facilitate the establishment of a secular state.
5. Protect the family because it is the nucleus in the building of a society and a nation.
6. Eliminate all legal and social distinctions between men and women and promote equality through practice on the basis of competence and aptitude.

7. Persevere in supporting the youth and promote their role in developing the society and in stimulating political life.
8. Enable the Lebanese Diaspora to exercise their political rights in Lebanon from their countries of expansion and strengthen the bond among them and between them and their motherland.
9. Disseminate a political culture that liberates the Lebanese from a mentality of tutelage and supplication and develop their sense of critique.
10. Adhere to the free economic system and personal initiative within the boundaries of human dignity and the welfare and principles of social justice.
11. Promote institutional functions on the basis of competence and the implementation of the principal of liability and accountability.
12. Protect and Preserve the environmental resources for a healthy environment is a natural and intrinsic human right and a part of human existence.
13. Make education available to all Lebanese, propagate Lebanese heritage, develop all sectors and encourage the mastering of skills, sciences and arts in such a way as to cater to the needs of the society and the requirements of the age.
14. Propagate the culture of peace, dialogue and democracy.

Source: [www.tayyar.org](http://www.tayyar.org).

## Appendix 15 – The FPM Code of ethics:

## الشفاعة المنافية

## رسالة التبليل

يتطلع التيار الوطني الحر إلى بناء نولة لبنانية سيّدة حرة مستقلة منفتحة على المحيط العربي والعالم ومتقاطعة معهما. وهو يريد نولة حق علمانية وديمقراطية، يكون الإنسان الفرد فيها، نكرأ كان أم أنثى، قيمة بذاته، ويكون على هذا الأساس مضمون الحقوق والحرية والكرامة، بصرف النظر عما قد يختلف به عن سواه من انتماءات فئوية، ومتحرراً من كل التبعيات والوصليات والارتباطات، الداخلية منها والخارجية وهو يعي أن أهم ما حدا بالرأي العام إلى تأييده إبان معركة تحرير الوطن كان، إلى عدالة قضية تحقيق السيادة التي ناضل من أجلها، ما تميز به أهله من منافية ركائزها الأساسية الانحياز التلبت للقيم والمبادئ الوطنية والأخلاقية، والإقدام أمام المخاطر والتحديات، والتفاني في الدفاع عن الحق قولاً وعملاً، واحترامهم لبعضهم البعض وتضامنهم ما بينهم، والتسليم للآخرين بحق الاختلاف، فضلاً عما يتواكب مع هذا كله من ترفع، واستقامة وتطهارة كلف، وتغليب للمصلحة العامة على كل ما دونها من مصالح كما يعي أن قدرته على الاستمرار في استقطاب تأييد الرأي العام ودعم هذا الأخير له في كفاحه من أجل الأهداف المجددة لرسالته، ستكون رهناً لبقاء أهله، مسؤولين وناشطين معاً، على أقصى ما يكون التبات في هذه المنافية.

ولأن المنتسبين إلى التيار مصممون على الفلاح بتأييد الرأي العام في سعيهم إلى الأهداف المشار إليها، تصميماً لا يضاهيه قوة سوى تمسكهم بترائمهم الذي يفخرون به، فهم يعلنون المضي في اعتماد المنافية هذه مركزاً أسمى، إليه يرجعون في ضبط سلوكهم تجاه بعضهم البعض وتجاه الآخرين. وهم من أجل ذلك يتوقعون مجتمعين من كل فرد منهم، أكان في موقع قيادي أم في موقع الناشط، بذل ما يوسع لاعتناق القيم التالية تقاude في الحياة الحزبية، ومن تم ترجمتها أفعالاً بما تُرجح تحت كل منها أدناه من أنماط السلوك والتصرف، مع اعتبار هذه الأنماط مقياساً للثواب والعقاب في تعاطي التيار مع أعضائه.

## قيم التيار وسلوكيات أعضائه

إن المنتسب إلى التيار الوطني الحر، عملاً بما تقدم ذكره، يسعى دائماً إلى التميز بالقيم والسلوكيات التالية:

## في الاستقامة

- يتحاشى التهمة والتعليق النابية والأساليب الملتوية في التعاطي مع الآخرين
- يتحلى بنظافة الكف والشفافية والنزاهة ويسعى إلى مكافحة الفساد
- يتقبل المحاسبة بطيبة خاطر
- يتمسك بالضمير الحي والإيمان بالواجب
- يمتنع عن زج التيار في ما لا يخبه واستخدمه لمأرب شخصية
- ينطق بالحق ويشهد له

## في الالتزام

- يؤدي واجباته الحزبية بجدية وتركيز ويمتنع عن التسلط والتصف
- يتضامن مع الرفيقات والرفق، ويدافع عنهم بوجه الاستهذافات
- يتقيد بالقرارات الحزبية ويعمل على تنفيذها بانتفاع وإخلاص
- يتكتم على مجريات أمور التيار الخاصة
- يحافظ على الهدوء وضبط النفس في كل الأحوال
- يحترم الهيكلية الحزبية عمودياً وأفقياً، ويتقيد بميثاق التيار وأنظمتها
- يسعى إلى نشر روح التأخي وتعزيز الثقة ونبذ الخلافات والغيرة والحسد في داخل التيار
- يشارك طوعاً في أنشطة التيار على تنوعها، ويسهم في تلبية حاجاته ونشر مبادئه
- يعطي قضايا التيار العامة على قضاياها الخاصة
- يفي بالوعد والتعهدات التي يطلعها طوعاً ويقرب القول بالفعل

## في الإنصاف

- يتصرف تجاه الآخرين بمثل ما يتمنى أن يتصرف الآخرون تجاهه

#### في الإنصاف

- يتصرف تجاه الآخرين بمثل ما يتمنى أن يتصرف الآخرون تجاهه
- يحسن استعمال السلطة، مقرناً الحزم بالعدل والقوة بالحق
- يعمل بمبدأ المساواة، ويشجع المناقشة الديمقراطية الشريفة
- يقدر للرفاق والرفيقات تضحيتهم وجهودهم، ويمتنع عن تكويه صورته لأي سبب

#### في الانفتاح

- يتحاشى الأحكام المسبقة
- يتعامل مع الآخرين بمرونة وواقعية
- يتقبل الآخر، ويحترم حقه في الاختلاف
- يتوقى إلى الاستزادة من المعرفة والخبرات
- يرى في النقد البناء وسيلة لتحسين الأداء
- يصغي إلى الآخرين باهتمام ويناقشهم بنهم، واضعاً خبرته بتصرفهم
- ينتشر روح المرح بعيداً عن الإسفاف

#### في الترفع

- يتحمل المسؤولية عن كل خطأ أو تقصير
- يتقبل نتائج المناقشات الديمقراطية بروح رياضية
- يزهد بالمناصب ويعلي المصلحة العامة على المصالح الخاصة
- يعتبر العمل السياسي سبيلاً للخدمة العامة وليس للوجاهة أو المنفعة الخاصة
- يقاوم الإغراءات على أنواعها
- يقيم التواضع والاحترام أساساً للعلاقة مع الآخر ويرتضي العمل في الظل عند الحاجة

#### في الشجاعة

- يبادر بإقدام ويتحمل المسؤولية بلا تهور
- يتحصب للأعداء والخصوم ولا يخافهم
- يتبلر أمام الحقيقت ويتحمل المشقات بعزم
- يجاهر بقناعته ويدافع عنها بجرأة
- يجرؤ على اتخاذ القرارات في الموقف الصعبة
- يطرح أفكاره بجرأة ويناقش كل ما التيس عليه فيه
- ينمي الحس النقدي بالمناقشة، ويمارس النقد البناء تجاه الذات والآخرين

تدوم الشعوب بنوام الأخلاق، وتتحل باتحلالها

.../...



## Appendix 16 – Newspaper articles and FPM press releases criticizing the state repression (from *L'Orient Le Jour*):

- November 7, 2002:



- February 3, 2003:





# Les militants aounistes brutalisés devant la MTV à Achrafieh

Quatre personnes hospitalisées, sept autres blessées, 25 interpellations, deux jeunes toujours en état d'arrestation : tel est le bilan du sit-in organisé samedi par plusieurs centaines de militants du Courant patriotique libre (CPL-aouniste) dans le périmètre du ministère des Affaires étrangères à Achrafieh, pour réclamer l'application de la résolution 520 du Conseil de sécurité et le retrait des « forces d'occupation syriennes » du Liban. Un sit-in qui n'a pas tardé à se transformer en manifestation devant les locaux de la chaîne de télévision interdite MTV, manifestation durement réprimée par les forces de l'ordre.

Le courant aouniste avait appelé à un rassemblement symbolique devant le palais Bustros à l'occasion de la visite du secrétaire d'État Colin Powell à Beyrouth pour marquer « son rejet du terrorisme et aller dans le sens de la volonté internationale qui com-

mence à prendre forme pour exiger le retrait syrien du Liban, et libérer ce pays de l'occupation conformément à la résolution 520 du Conseil de sécurité ».

Vers 14h30, les militants, rassemblés devant le collège de La Sagesse à Achrafieh, ont marché en direction du palais Bustros. Brandissant des drapeaux libanais et des portraits de l'ancien chef du gouvernement de transition, le général Michel Aoun, ils ont scandé des slogans hostiles à la présence syrienne au Liban. « La Syrie dehors ! » et « Nous ne voulons pas de République sous la botte syrienne », ont-ils crié, brandissant des calicots sur lesquels on pouvait lire : « La Syrie dehors maintenant », « Les Libanais sont contre le terrorisme et pour la liberté », « Le régime syrien est une autre version du régime de Saddam », « Mettez fin à l'occupation syrienne tout de suite », « Pas de liberté ni de démocratie pour le

Liban sous la dictature baassiste », « Un Liban libre est un vrai partenaire pour les États-Unis et le monde libre », « Liberté pour nos détenus dans les geôles syriennes », « La Syrie en Syrie et le Liban au Liban », « Le Liban est la victime du terrorisme syrien » et « Résolution 520 du Conseil de sécurité ». Les militants aounistes s'en sont également pris aux dirigeants libanais, accusés des principaux responsables d'être « des marionnettes » et « la voix de leurs maîtres syriens ».

Devant le barrage important constitué par les Forces de sécurité intérieure, les canions de la Défense civile et l'armée aux abords du palais Bustros, les militants aounistes ont été obligés de s'arrêter à la hauteur du centre Sofil, qui abrite le cinéma Empire.

Le responsable estudiantin du CPL, Tony Harb, a aussitôt pris la parole. Rejetant « les prétextes invoqués par Damas pour maintenir son occupation du Liban », parmi lesquels la lutte contre Israël, M. Harb a estimé que « l'occupant syrien avait toujours su s'entendre avec Israël depuis 1970 ». Le responsable aouniste a ensuite lancé un appel au Hezbollah sans le nommer : « L'occupant est sur le point d'aboutir à un règlement avec les grandes puissances à vos dépens. Nous vous prions d'entendre notre appel parce que nous voulons que vous soyez nos partenaires au sein de la patrie. »

« Le Liban n'est plus une épine dans le flanc de la Syrie. En réalité, c'est la Syrie qui est devenue une épine dans le flanc du Liban », a affirmé Tony Harb, avant d'appeler « la communauté internationale à libérer le Liban et à restaurer sa souveraineté ».

Devant l'impossibilité d'accéder au siège du ministère des Affaires étrangères, les manifestants décident alors de poursuivre la manifestation devant les locaux de la MTV, chaîne dont la fermeture est devenue pour eux « le symbole de la répression menée par la Syrie et ses agents au Liban contre les libertés publiques ».

Les militants commencent à marcher vers la MTV, mais ils sont bientôt rattrapés et bloqués par les agents de l'ordre une dizaine de mètres avant le restaurant Roadster. Les responsables aounistes intiment alors aux manifestants de continuer la marche vers les locaux de la chaîne, « quel que soit le prix à payer pour parvenir au but ». Les militants forcent le barrage militaire et s'élancent vers la MTV. Ils sont aussitôt pris en chasse par les FSI.

## Devant la MTV, le drame

Sitôt arrivés devant les locaux de la MTV, les aounistes entonnent l'hymne de la chaîne interdite. C'est alors que l'officier responsable des FSI donne l'ordre à ses hommes de disperser les manifestants. « Délogez-les moi d'ici », lance-t-il aux gendarmes. C'est à coup de matraques et avec les crosses de fusil que les agents de l'ordre et les militaires se déchaînent sur les aounistes, avec une brutalité injustifiée qui n'est pas sans rappeler la ratonnade du 9 août 2001 devant le Palais de justice. Les coups pleuvent de partout. Plusieurs militants tombent à terre ou perdent conscience, ce qui n'empêche pas les militaires de continuer à les rouer de coups de pied et de poing. Deux des aounistes, Tony Orjan et Jean Abdelkarim, sont transportés d'urgence à l'hôpital. Abdelkarim a l'épaule cassée et Orjan, qui a perdu conscience, ne sortira pas de l'hôpital avant la tombée de la nuit : il souffre d'une luxation de l'épaule. Tony Harb est interpellé par des soldats de l'armée. Emmené au poste de commissariat, il s'effondre à terre et est transporté aux urgences de l'Hôtel-Dieu. Il est toujours aux soins intensifs et demeure en état d'arrestation. Deux autres personnes sont blessées et transportées dans les hôpitaux. Il s'agit de Rony Akiki et de Bassam Ghanem. Des dizaines de militants sont interpellés et directement emmenés au poste de gendarmerie. Ils seront tous relâchés en soirée, à l'exception de Peter el-Murr. « Je maintiens en état d'arrestation en raison de son nom », selon des sources aounistes.

Des journalistes sont également malmenés par les FSI durant les échauffourées. Un officier de gendarmerie en uniforme confisque l'appareil photo du photographe de l'AFP. À la restitution de l'appareil, la carte électronique contenant le film avait disparu.

Quinze militants se réfugient par ailleurs dans l'église Saint-Joseph, à l'intérieur du campus de La Sagesse, qui est aussitôt encer-



L'un des aounistes, à terre, est roué de coups par les FSI, devant la MTV. (Photo Wissam Moussa)

clés par les forces de l'ordre. Ils y resteront durant trois heures avant que les gendarmes ne se replient, grâce à l'intervention d'un prêtre, qui négocie leur départ avec les FSI.

## Le communiqué des FSI

En soirée, la direction des FSI a affirmé dans un communiqué que ce sont « les manifestants qui ont agressé les forces de l'ordre en les frappant avec des bâtons et en leur jetant des pierres », « Un officier et trois gendarmes ont été grièvement blessés à la tête et ont dû être hospitalisés, alors qu'un véhicule de la gendarmerie a été endommagé », a poursuivi le communiqué. « En outre, trois manifestants qui ont reconnu avoir résisté aux forces de l'ordre ont été arrêtés et traduits en justice », a ajouté le texte. Des images de deux gendarmes blessés ont par ailleurs été diffusées par la chaîne New TV.

De son côté, le CPL a nié cette version des faits, en mettant l'accent sur l'aspect de « la résistance pacifique à la Gandhi propre à son action ». Le CPL a indiqué qu'« aucune pierre ni même aucune rose n'avaient été jetées en direction des FSI, qui ont brutalement agressé les manifestants et les journalistes ». « Le prétexte de la présence de blessés dans les rangs des FSI vise à justifier cette agression dont les responsables assument les conséquences pénales », a-t-il conclu.

De son côté, le général Michel Aoun a qualifié le comportement

des forces de l'ordre de « crime prémédité contre le peuple libanais ». « Quand les SR agissent contre la loi, ils ne sont pas protégés par la loi », a-t-il indiqué à L'Orient-Le Jour.

Quant au porte-parole du CPL, Georges Haddad, il a affirmé qu'« il n'y a que les étudiants qui peuvent scander de tels slogans au Liban, nul n'osant exprimer ce que ces jeunes clament tout haut », indiquant qu'« il est impossible de bâtir un État démocratique au Liban sous l'occupation syrienne et la société policière qu'elle a imposée aux Libanais ».

Les députés Farès Souhaïd et Mansour el-Bone ont également fait paraître un communiqué commun dans lequel ils ont déploré l'agression, en la qualifiant de « première bavure du nouveau gouvernement ». Les deux parlementaires ont appelé le Premier ministre à « réclamer l'ouverture d'une enquête et à relaxer immédiatement les personnes arrêtées pour prouver que le Liban peut être réellement un État démocratique consacrant la liberté d'expression ». L'ancien député Gabriel Murr a condamné les pratiques d'un pouvoir répressif. « Le pouvoir ne veut que de jeunes supporters de sa politique et rejette le droit à la liberté d'expression réclamé par ces jeunes, à travers les slogans d'indépendance, de souveraineté et de réouverture de la MTV », a-t-il indiqué.

M.H.G.

## SOLIDE réclame une intervention américaine en faveur des Libanais détenus en Syrie

Le porte-parole de SOLIDE, une association d'appui aux Libanais en détention ou en exil, Ghazi Raad, a adressé un message au secrétaire d'État américain, Colin Powell, réclamant une intervention des États-Unis en faveur des « nombreux Libanais enlevés par les militaires syriens et leurs services de renseignements au Liban ».

Le message rappelle qu'il s'agit, « à une exception près, de détentions arbitraires ». Évoquant la découverte de charniers en Irak, SOLIDE a avoué craindre pour le sort des Libanais disparus, « les régimes baassistes d'Irak et de Syrie usant des arrestations arbitraires comme instruments de pression » à l'encontre de leurs opposants, surtout que « la plupart des victimes découvertes avaient été exécutées peu avant la chute du régime irakien ». En conclusion, le message de SOLIDE a appelé les États-Unis à « traiter le dossier des Libanais détenus en Syrie de la même manière que celui des Koweïtiens emprisonnés en Irak » et donc à « intervenir auprès du gouvernement syrien pour mettre fin à ces violations ».



Appendix 17 – *Al-Diyâr* article echoing the document of internal contestation addressed to Michel Aoun (April, 2010):

الديار، ٤/٨/٢٠١٠

**رفاق الدرب والسلاح والمنفى فرقتهم السياسة فإنتقم التيار...**

**أبو جمرأ ولطيف والخوري والعازار جمعتهم وثيقة «المسؤولية تقتضي»:**  
**دعوة الهيئة التأسيسية الى إجتماع عام لطرح الثقة بالقيادة الحزبية**

**صونيا رزق**

لم تشفع رفقة الدرب والسلاح والمنفى بتقارب قلوب مؤسسي التيار الوطني الحر بعد مضي شهرين من الفتور والجفاء والمطالبة، فمحاولات الصلح المتعددة من المفرزين لم تلق جواباً من الرابيه على مطالب الرفاق المؤسسين والمناضلين في صفوف التيار منذ نشأته، فعلى الرغم من تكاثر الطرق التي سارت عليها دروب المصالحة إلا ان نتائجها لم تفلح بالوصول الى ما يريه الكبار في التيار، ما استدعاهم عقد سلسلة اجتماعات للمطالبة بالإصلاحات لكنها والعودة لم تصل الى الأثر الصاغية فعادت ادراجها ليمسك أقطابها أخيراً بوثيقة تناولت الماضي والحاضر وطالبت بمستقبل زاهر وواعد ديموقراطي للتيار من خلال سلسلة مطالب شددوا على تنفيذها قبل قوات الأوان، فكانت الوثيقة خلاصة اجتماع بارز تناول في الشؤون والشجون ضم نائب رئيس مجلس الوزراء السابق اللواء عصام ابو جمرأ، والمنسق العام للتيار اللواء نديم لطيف، وعضو المجلس الدستوري السابق القاضي سليم العازار والرئيس السابق مجلس شورى الدولة القاضي يوسف سعد الله الخوري، بصفتهم مؤسسي التيار الوطني الحر الأوائل ومن اعضاء مجلس التحكيم، فتوافقوا على تعميم وثيقة تحت عنوان «المسؤولية تقتضي» على زملائهم اعضاء الهيئة التأسيسية في حزب التيار، بعد ان كانوا قد أرسلوها الى رئيس التيار الوطني الحر العماد ميشال عون بتاريخ ٢٠١٠/٣/١١.

وتضمنت الوثيقة طروحاً عاماً لتوضيح الداخلي في الحزب مع الاقتراحات التصحيحية اللازمة وذلك شعوراً منهم بالمسؤولية وغبية في تعزيز الثقة بين القاعدة والقيادة للنجاح في ترسيخ المبادئ وتحقيق الاهداف الوطنية التي يسعى اليها الحزب.

وثيقة «المسؤولية تقتضي» تعتبر ان التيار الوطني الحر هو امتداد لحالة جماهيرية نشأت أواخر الثمانينات عندما انتفضت الحكومة العسكرية الانتقالية على الواقع الوطني المتردي الذي كان محكوماً آنذاك بعيبات الملتشيات المتفجرة والوصاية الخارجية، تحقيقاً لايدولوجية السيادة والحرية والديمقراطية، وتشير الى ان الشعب حينها احتضن هذه الانتفاضة وجعل نفسه درعاً لها، ولم يخل من اجل نصرتها بالغالي والغفيس إذ رأى فيها مدخلاً للخلاص الوطني ومبعداً للأمل بمستقبل واع.

وتتابع الوثيقة: «عندما دارت الدائرة وفُرض علينا المنفى ورضخ كخبيرون للأمر الواقع، بقيت نخبة من الشباب في الداخل تواجبه بشجاعة وإيمان إنتصاراً للسيادة، كما كان لشباب لبنان في الخارج وللحكومة المنفية دور فاعل في استعادتها، وأصبحوا جميعهم بقيادة العماد عون النواة الصلبة التي تأسس حولها التيار الوطني الحر، وبعد الانسحاب السوري والعودة من المنفى في ٢٠٠٥/٥/٧، تعاهدنا ان نجعل من التيار حزباً ديموقراطياً علمانياً رائداً لا

يشبه الأحزاب الأخرى التي اندثرت لانها اعتمدت حكم الفرد نهجاً، ومارست الإطعام بكافة اشكاله والفساد بكافة فئوته». وتضيف: «بعد خمس سنوات من الجهد، تعذر الالتزام بما كنا قد تعهدناه، ولم ترق تجربتنا التنظيمية للحزب إلى مستوى الآمال المعقولة عليها، ففي نيسان ٢٠٠٥ تقدمت الهيئة المؤسسة لحزب التيار من وزارة الداخلية بطلب أخذ العلم والخبر بإنشاء الحزب، وقد أرفقت به نظاماً أساسياً يُحتم إجراء إنتخابات الحزب العامة خلال سنة، تحت مظلة إختيار العلم والخبر بحكم المنفى، لكن ذلك بقي حبراً على ورق، وفي حزيران ٢٠٠٦ وبعد درس وجدل استمر اشهر، تم إقرار نظام جديد للحزب يعزّز دور رئيسه ويمنحه صلاحيات شبيهة مطلقة وقد قبل هذا النظام بأكثرية هزيلة، غير انه بقي كسبايه فلم تنفذ الإنتخابات الحزبية العامة لسنة ٢٠٠٧ بحجة عدم الجهور، كذلك الامر في العام ٢٠٠٨ بحجة القرب موعد الإنتخابات النيابية.

وبقي الحزب على حاله من دون قيادة منتخبة برئاسة العماد عون والتمسك بنيتة على منصفات تدبرها هيئات شبيهة دائمة لا حول لها ولا قوة، ولجان ظرفية تنشأ لأغراض محددة تنتهي مهمتها بعد حين.

وأسلت الوثيقة لهذا الامر ورات ان وجود مكتب سياسي يشارك في قيادة الحزب لا يشكل انتقاصاً من الدور القيادي لرمز الحزب ورئيسه، وإن حزبياً كبيراً يحجم التيار الوطني الحر فإق عبئيه السنين الف منتسب، يحتاج الى قيادة متمرسية مسؤولة تتناسب مع مكانته وحجم التزاماته، لعرض الاقتراحات وتحديد توجهات الحلول، والمشاركة في القرارات والإشراف على تنفيذها خاصة في المواضيع ذات الطابع الوطني كالعلاقات الخارجية والتحالقات الداخلية، والأشتراك بمعارضة الحكم او المشاركة في الحكومة، وإختيار الوزراء، والمرشحين للنسبية والبلديات وغيرهم من الموظفين للادارات العامة، خلافاً لصيغ الإختيار المألوفة في المؤسسات السياسية اللبنانية التقليدية.

كما شددت الوثيقة على وجود جهاز لوجستي محترف بإدارة العتاد ومميز بإدارة المال بشفافية بعيداً عن الفساد الذي طالما نددنا به وبالتالي أصبح من حق الحزبيين ومن باب أولى كبار المسؤولين في الحزب ان يزودوا بموازنة سنوية واضحة، ويطلعوا على مورد المال وكيف يتم الإنفاق، ولفتت الى ان هذا الوضع التفردى بالقرار لم يكن خفياً، ولا من دون اعتراضات من قبايين، غير انه كان يدافع عنه بتبريرات وأهية، منها كلام عن عدم حاجتنا الى حزب منظم لان الحزب «مزة ضيقة»، وإن «الحالة العنينة» عارمة وتكفي للفوز في الإنتخابات النيابية، وتعطينا من تعقيدات النظام وتضعب الإدارة والضماغ في مشاهات الإنتخابات الحزبية، مستفيدة إن الاستمرار في تحاشي بناء المؤسسة الحزبية وفقاً لنظامها الداخلي العام وعدم إنتخاب مسؤوليها على اسس ديموقراطية، يعزّزان الشك ان لم يكن قد أصبح يقيناً، في أننا نتجه الى تكرار تجارب الطبقة السياسية البائدة من خلال الوقوع في مطب أحادية القيادة والاستئثار والدخول في شرك العائلية والولائية السياسية.

وتضيف الوثيقة: «لقد نشأ داخل التيار منذ منتصف عام ٢٠٠٨ اتجاه إصلاحى طمع الى تحويله مؤسسة صحفية البنية قادرة على التجدد والإستمرار، لكن تم تخدير المتعرضين البارزين في هذا الحسرك في يوم ٣ اذار ٢٠٠٨ انتهى كالعادة بتعيين بعض هؤلاء في لجنة تنفيذية». وأشارت الى حصول صدمة في منتصف تشرين الثاني الماضي لأهل التيار اثارته سخطهم عندما اختار العماد عون وزيرين للتيار من خارج صفوفه فلم يقبوا لماذا؟ ومقابل أي ثمن تم هذا الإختيار، واعتبروا في هذا القرار مخالفة للمادة ٢٢٢ من النظام كما في التصريحات التي هدفت الى تبريره استهتاراً فأضاحا ببرصالات التيار وقبادهيه البارزين، واستخفافاً بمؤهلاتهم وإكثاراً لتاريخهم وأحقيتهم، وإحصاء لهم حتى تخلو الساحة لمصلحة العائلة وبعض المحظفين من الوصولين لأخفق عليهم التعم ويولون المناصب، وبالرغم من التنبيه والمطالبة بدعوة الهيئة التأسيسية الى الإعتقاد لمناقشة هذا الخطر الخطير وتصحيحه بشكل ديموقراطي، تم الإنطاف على كل ذلك باعتماد المعاطة.

في ضوء كل ذلك أكد المجتمعون على:

– دعوة الهيئة التأسيسية الى إجتماع عام تُطرح فيه الثقة بالقيادة الحزبية.

– إستكمال تكوين قيادة حزب التيار وفقاً لنظامه: بإنتخاب رئيس الحزب مع نائب الرئيس والمفتسين، وتعيين اعضاء المكتب والهيئة التنفيذية كاملة وتأييف المجلس الوطني.

– الحرص على المبادئ والاهداف التي طالما تم التمشير بها والتف للثباتيون حول القيادة على اساسها، وناضلو وضحو لتحقيق تيار وطني حر سيادي ديموقراطي مؤسساتي علماني منظم ومنفتح ليرق لبنيان الى المستوى المدني المتطور، وخصم الوثيقة بأنها تنتظر نجاح العماد عون مع مطالب موقعية.

[At the center, the signatures of the leading figures of the contestation]

حضرة عضو الهيئة التأسيسية  
في التيار الوطني الحر

بتاريخ 2010/4/1 اجتمع كل من:

نائب رئيس مجلس الوزراء السابق اللواء عصام أبو جمرة، والمدير العام الأسبق للأمن العام اللواء نديم لطيف، وعضو المجلس الدستوري السابق القاضي سليم العازار، والرئيس الأسبق لمجلس شورى الدولة القاضي يوسف سعدالله الخوري، وتوافقوا على تعميم وثيقة بعنوان: "المسؤولية تقتضي" على زملائهم في الهيئة التأسيسية للتيار الوطني الحر للاطلاع عليها بعد أن كانوا قد أرسلوها إلى دولة رئيس الحزب العماد ميشال عون بتاريخ 2010/3/11.



وتضمنت الوثيقة طرحا عاما للوضع الداخلي في الحزب مع الاقتراحات التصحيحية اللازمة وذلك شعورا بالمسؤولية ورغبة منهم في تعزيز الثقة بين القاعدة والقيادة للنجاح في ترسيخ المبادئ وتحقيق الاهداف الوطنية التي يسعى اليها الحزب.

في ما يلي نص الوثيقة المذكورة :

### المسؤولية تقتضي!

التيار الوطني الحر امتداد لحالة جماهيرية ، نشأت أواخر الثمانينات عندما انتفضت الحكومة العسكرية الانتقالية ، على الواقع الوطني المتردي الذي كان محكوماً آنذاك بعبث الميليشيات المتناحرة والوصاية الخارجية المتسلطة ، تحقيقاً لايدولوجية السيادة والحرية والديمقراطية

إحتضن الشعب هذه الإنتفاضة، وجعل نفسه درعاً لها، ولم يبخل من أجل نصرتها بالغالي والنفيس، إذ رأى فيها مدخلاً للخلاص الوطني، ومبعثاً للأمل بمستقبل واعد.

وعندما دارت الدائرة ، وفرض علينا المنفى ، ورضخ كثيرون للأمر الواقع، بقيت نخبة من الشباب في الداخل تواجه الإحتلال بشجاعة وإيمان إنتصاراً للسيادة ، كما كان لشباب لبنان في الخارج وللحكومة المنفية دوراً فاعلاً في استعادتها. وأصبحوا جميعهم ، بقيادة العماد عون، النواة الصلبة التي تأسس حولها التيار الوطني الحر.

وبعد الانسحاب السوري والعودة من المنفى في 2005/5/7، تعاهدنا أن نجعل من التيار حزباً ديمقراطياً علمانياً رائداً لا يُشبه الأحزاب الأخرى التي اندثرت لأنها اعتمدت حكم الفرد نهجاً ، ومارست الاقطاع بكافة أشكاله والفساد بكافة فنونه .

ولكن مع الأسف، بعد خمس سنوات من الجهد، تعثر الالتزام بما كنا قد تعهدناه ، ولم ترق تجربتنا التنظيمية للحزب إلى مستوى الآمال المعقودة عليها.

ففي نيسان 2005، تقدمت الهيئة المؤسسة لحزب التيار من وزارة الداخلية بطلب أخذ العلم والخبر بنشأة الحزب، وقد ارفقت به نظاماً أساسياً يُحتم إجراء إنتخابات الحزب العامة خلال سنة، تحت طائلة إعتبار العلم والخبر بحكم المُلغى . لكن ذلك بقي حبراً على ورق.

وفي حزيران 2006، بعد درس وجدل استمر أشهراً، تم إقرار نظام جديد للحزب يُعزز دور رئيسه ويمنحه صلاحيات شبه مطلقة. وقد قبل هذا النظام باكثرية هزيلة، غير انه بقي كسابقه ، فلم تنفذ الإنتخابات الحزبية العامة لا سنة 2007 بحجة عدم الجهوز، ولا سنة 2008 بحجة اقتراب موعد الإنتخابات النيابية !

وبقي الحزب على حاله بدون قيادة منتخبة يرأسه دولة العماد ويديره حضرة العماد وإقتصرت بُنيته على منسقيات تديرها هيئات شبه دائمة لا حول لها ولا قوة ، ولجان ظرفية ، تنشأ لأغراض محددة ثم ، تنهى مهمتها بعد حين .

ان هذا لأمرٌ مؤسف، لان وجود مكتب سياسي يشارك في قيادة الحزب لا يشكل انتقاصا من الدور القيادي لرمز الحزب ورئيسه ، ولأن حزبا كبيرا بحجم التيار الوطني الحر، فاق عديده الستين الف منتسب ، يحتاج الى قيادة متمرسة مسؤولة تتناسب مع مكانته وحجم التزاماته، تعرض الاقتراحات وتحدد التوجهات والحلول ، وتشارك في القرارات وتشرف على تنفيذها خاصة في المواضيع ذات الطابع الوطني كالعلاقات الخارجية والتحالفات الداخلية، والاشتراك بمعارضة الحكم او المشاركة في الحكومة، واختيار الوزراء، والمرشحين للنيابة والبلديات، وغيرهم من الموظفين للادارات العامة ، خلافا لصيغ الاختيار المألوفة في المؤسسات السياسية اللبنانية التقليدية .

اضف الى ذلك الحاجة الى جهاز لوجستي محترف بادارة العتاد ومميز بادارة المال بشفافية بعيدا عن الفساد الذي طالما نددنا به. وبالتالي اصبح من حق الحزبيين، ومن باب أولى كبار المسؤولين في الحزب ، أن يزودوا بموازنة سنوية واضحة، ويطلعوا من أين يأتي المال وكيف يتم الإنفاق !

ان هذا الوضع التفردى بالقرار لم يكن خفيا، ولا مر بدون اعتراضات من قياديين . غير انه كان يدافع عنه بتبريرات واهية، منها كلامٌ عن عدم حاجتنا الى حزب منظم لان الحزب "بزة ضيقة"، ولأن "الحالة العونية" عارمة ، تكفي للفوز بالانتخابات النيابية، وتعفيينا من تعقيدات النظام وتشعب الادارة والضياع في مهامات الانتخابات الحزبية !

ومنها كلام عن الظروف الإستثنائية والمعارك السياسية . وهذه ايضا حجج لم تقنع معظم المناضلين الذين اختبروا واقتنعوا أن حُسن التنظيم وملء الشواغر في القيادات ليس من الكماليات، بل هو سلاحٌ فعّال لخوض المعارك السياسية وربحها بالانتخابات التي تعتبر من اهم دلالات الديمقراطية ووسائلها، ولانهم يعرفون ان حماة المعارك ما كانت لتثنيهم عن مهمة البناء لو ان القيادة ارادت ذلك فعلا ....

إن الاستمرار في تحاشي بناء المؤسسة الحزبية وفقاً لنظامها الداخلي العام وعدم انتخاب مسؤوليها على أسس ديمقراطية يثيران تساؤلات جدية حول القصد من ذلك، ويُعززان الشك، إن لم يكن قد أصبح يقيناً، في أننا نتجه إلى تكرار تجارب الطبقة السياسية البائدة من خلال الوقوع في مطب أحادية القيادة والاستئثار والدخول في شرك العائلية والوراثة السياسية ... هذا الانحراف الذي إذا ما استمر يؤدي حتماً إلى مخاطر لا حدود لها.

وهكذا فقد نشأ داخل التيار منذ منتصف عام 2008، اتجاه إصلاح طمح إلى تحويله إلى مؤسسة صحيحة البنية، قادرة على التجدد والاستمرار. لكنه تم تخدير المعارضين البارزين في هذا التحرك بما حصل يوم "ثلاثاء أسود" انتهى كالعادة بتعيين بعض هؤلاء في لجنة تنظيمية.

وفي منتصف تشرين الثاني الماضي، حصلت صدمة لأهل التيار أثارت سخطهم، عندما اختار العماد عون وزيرين للتيار من خارج صفوفه. فلم يفهموا لماذا !! ومقابل أي ثمن تم ذلك الاختيار!! واعتبروا في هذا القرار مخالفة المادة 222 من النظام كما في التصريحات التي هدفت إلى تبريره، استهتاراً فاضحاً برجالات التيار وقياديه البارزين، واستخفافاً بمؤهلاتهم، وإنكاراً لتاريخهم وأحققتهم، وإقصاء "لهم"، حتى تخلو الساحة لمشينة العائلة وبعض المحظيين من الوصوليين لتغدق عليهم النعم ويولون المناصب.

وبالرغم من التنبيه من مغبة هذا الخطأ قبل وقوعه وبعده، وبالرغم من المطالبة بدعوة الهيئة التأسيسية إلى الانعقاد لمناقشة هذا التطور الخطير وتصحيحه بشكل ديمقراطي، كما البحث في سبب استكمال الهيكلية الحزبية، تنفيذاً للنظام، حتى لا يبقى الوضع التنظيمي معلقاً إلى ما لا نهاية، تم الالتفاف على كل ذلك باعتماد المماثلة في محاولة لاستيعاب النعمة واحتواء المعارضين بالإعلان عن إطلاق ورشة عمل للجنة التنظيمية وعن بداية مرحلة جديدة واعدة! لكن النتيجة جاءت كما كان متوقعا، هزيلة ومخيبة للأمل، ولم يتعد الأمر تعيين لجننتين حُشر فيها التابعون وبعض المعارضين لإلهائهم بمهمات مؤقتة... وهذا هروب إلى الأمام والهروب إلى الأمام لا يصلح قضية إنما كالعادة ينتهي بالفشل.

في ضوء كل ذلك، وبعد مشاورات كثيفة أجريناها نحن الموقعين ادناه واستشارات  
قمنابها مع كثيرين من قياديي التيار الوطني الحر وناشطيه، نؤكد من جديد على  
ما يلي :

أولاً، دعوة الهيئة التأسيسية الى إجتماع عام تُطرح فيه الثقة بالقيادة الحزبية.

ثانياً، إستكمال تكوين قيادة حزب التيار وفقاً لنظامه: بإنتخاب رئيس الحزب مع  
نائبه الرئيس والمنسقين، وتعيين اعضاء المكتب والهيئة التنفيذية كاملة،  
وتأليف المجلس الوطني .

ثالثاً، الحرص على المباديء والأهداف التي طالما تم التثشير بها والتف اللبنانيون  
حول قيادته على أساسها، وناضلوا وضحوا لتحقيقها تيار وطني حر  
سيادي .... ديمقراطي .... مؤسساتي .... علماني .... منظم .... ومنفتح.  
ليرق بلبنان الى المستوى المدني المتطور.

ختاماً" ، إن ما دفعنا للمصارحة بما ورد اعلاه،

هو شعورنا بالمسؤولية، ورغبتنا في أن نُحقق قليلاً من الانسجام بين ما  
يُطالب به علناً من إصلاح لمؤسسات الدولة والعاملين في إدارتها .....

وبين واقع حزبنا، وانحدار الثقة الناجمة عن هذا الواقع.  
واقتراننا من جهة ثانية أن المباشرة بوضع مضمون هذه الوثيقة موضع التنفيذ،  
من شأنه نقل النقاش من الشارع وضبطه ضمن الأطر الداخلية، ودفع جميع  
جميع عناصر حزب التيار الوطني الحر وتحفيزهم على متابعة بذل الجهد  
والتضحيات لتحقيق المباديء والأهداف التي نشأ على أساسها هذا الحزب.

لذلك وبانتظار تجاوبكم تفضلوا دولة الرئيس بقبول فائق الاحترام.

في 2010/3/11

دنيا فيليم العازار

ف

الهاقي

نصير  
د. محمد عبدالله الوزير

اللف نديم لطيف

ع

اللواء عصام العجوة

ع

## Appendix 19 – Karl's Project



## Etude sur l'organisation du travail politique du CPL dans le cadre universitaire

Réalisée par les étudiants du CPL  
Huvelin en Economie

BEYROUTH

2006

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## INTRODUCTION

Le mouvement étudiant, dans une société politiquement épanouie est supposé être l'un des axes principaux de la société civile. Au Liban ce mouvement n'arrive pas à traduire les attentes de ses jeunes ni à jouer son rôle principal qui est de solliciter une dynamique de changement dans la société. L'efficacité du mouvement étudiant est fonction du degré d'autonomie des étudiants par rapport aux structures qui les entourent. L'atteinte à cette autonomie peut provenir de l'administration universitaire qui exerce une répression à l'encontre de ses étudiants en leur interdisant de parler de politique, ce qui est le cas de l'USEK ou de l'ALBA. L'atteinte peut provenir également des partis politiques. À cet égard, une autonomie totale ne saurait jamais exister, et d'ailleurs, dans un système politique sain, il est très normal que l'action étudiante soit entremêlée avec celle des partis politiques puisque la vie étudiante n'est qu'une phase transitoire où chacun constitue un avis politique. Malheureusement, la plupart des partis politiques libanais souffrent d'un discrédit chronique qui se répercute directement sur le mouvement étudiant. Que ce soit par la personnalisation des partis, leur monopolisation par certaines familles ou leur identification à l'une des communautés religieuses, la plupart des partis politiques libanais sont en mal d'évoluer vers des structures politiques modernes et démocratiques, cantonnant ainsi dans des cadres idéologiques du passé et freinant toute propension à l'innovation et à l'évolution. À ce niveau force est de constater que cette année le CPL a reçu une forte adhésion des étudiants, ce qui est justifié par l'élément de nouveauté dans son parcours qui est relativement éloigné de la guerre comparé aux partis traditionnels.

Mais si le CPL compte continuer à développer son discours politique pour attirer plus de sympathisants et arriver à évoluer le style de politique dégradant qui règne dans le pays, il devra le faire à partir de la restructuration de son organisation interne et plus précisément celle de sa base étudiante qui a toujours été le pilier du travail politique du parti. C'est ainsi dans ce contexte que les étudiants du CPL d'Huvelin en économie ont décidé de présenter une étude concernant l'organisation du travail politique du CPL dans le cadre universitaire.

### **1ère étape : Pour devenir activiste ou sympathisant du CPL**

Le formulaire ci-dessous comprend des informations utiles pour l'organisation des activités du CPL dans le cadre universitaire. Les étudiants qui désirent travailler avec le CPL devront le remplir chaque année pour garder les bases de données à jour. Ainsi le responsable par faculté pourra recenser le nombre de personnes disponibles à travailler alors que les personnes sympathisantes du CPL constitueront une base électorale.

NOM :

PRENOM :

DATE DE NAISSANCE :

FACULTE :

ANNEE UNIVERSITAIRE :

ADRESSE D'HIVER :

ADRESSE D'ETE :

NUMERO DE TELEPHONE :

NUMERO DU PORTABLE :

E-MAIL:

ETES-VOUS SYMPATHISANT OU ACTIVISTE :  SYMPATHISANT

ACTIVISTE

POUR LES ACTIVISTES, VOITURE DISPONIBLE ? :  OUI  NON

QUELS SONT VOS CENTRES D'INTERETS DANS LE TRAVAIL POLITIQUE A LA FACULTE ? :

ELECTIONS (RELATIONS SOCIALES)  ARTICLES (ALTERNATIVE)

- EVENEMENTS (SOIREES)
- DEBATS & CONFERENCES

- EXPOSITIONS POLITIQUES
- INFORMATION

### **2ème étape : Création de comités de travail**

La base de données permettra déjà de créer des comités pour organiser le travail et avoir des personnes fixes disponibles et responsables des différents types d'évènements. A priori, les comités devront être formés d'étudiants d'années différentes.

Comité d'élections, relations sociales : Ce comité chargé par exemple des pointages sera formé d'au moins une personne par groupe, par année. Ils devront avoir une haute capacité d'adaptation sociale parce qu'ils auront à découvrir les personnes sympathisantes ou activiste du CPL. Leur rôle sera ainsi de former des listes de pointages, faire circuler des informations résultant de la stratégie électorale du parti, savoir mettre à la page les candidats et surtout pouvoir attirer les indépendants. Leur travail en fait est celui de toute personne activiste, mais une organisation pareille rend le travail plus efficace dans la mesure où il donne une structure au travail.

Comité des articles : Toute personne douée pour écrire pourra être mise en contact avec un responsable de "Alternative", le magazine officiel du CPL dans les universités et pourra par suite leur envoyer des articles ou adhérer à l'équipe de rédaction. Ces personnes pourraient également aider les candidats dans la rédaction des programmes électoraux.

Comités des évènements sociaux : En fait, ce comité est fait pour organiser des soirées ou des évènements entre étudiants. Cela peut être dans le cadre de l'amicale si le CPL continue à gagner chaque année ou dans le cas contraire indépendamment. Ils pourront réserver des tables dans une soirée, leur rôle sera aussi de ramener des gens pour les divers évènements de nature sociale (Cinéma, Road trip, dîners...) et un profit peut être tiré de tels évènements, il constituera une importante partie de l'autofinancement.

Comité des expositions : Les personnes adhérentes à ce comité pourront être responsables de l'organisation de la journée du 7 mai par exemple (panneaux d'affichages, drapeaux, posters, affiches etc.)

Comité des Débats et des conférences : Lors d'une conférence universitaire inter-étudiante il est très important d'avoir préparé le sujet pour pouvoir poser des questions subtiles de façon organisée. Ce sera le rôle de ce comité, de discuter des questions à poser et décider des personnes qui les poseront pour éviter toute mésentente et contradiction.

Comité de l'information : Ce comité est essentiel pour le groupe. Il sera chargé de faire circuler toute information touchant le groupe, et cela à travers l'envoi de SMS aux numéros de portables des membres (recensés déjà dans le formulaire d'adhésion), mais aussi à travers l'envoi de Mails. De même, il sera responsable de l'organisation des bases de données et des documents utiles dans le futur (organiser les formulaires et mettre à jour les bases de données, conserver les programmes de tous les candidats, conserver toutes les revues et annonces distribuées par les partis adverses).

### **3ème étape : organisation des rencontres et des évènements**

Lieux de rencontres : Cette tâche revient au responsable de faculté, il devra de préférence, en coordonnant avec le CPL choisir un bureau proche de l'université ou dans une zone populaire qui convienne au maximum de personnes. L'emplacement devra être fixe sauf exception pour plus de facilité. Moyens de transport : Le transport représente l'un des majeurs inconvénients d'engagement des étudiants. Ce problème peut cependant être facilement réglé avec un peu d'organisation. Ce que nous proposons, c'est de charger le comité de l'information de la réalisation d'un document de la forme suivante et de le distribuer à tous les membres :

Ashrafieh

#	Nom	Prénom	Num.1	Num.2	Mail	Comité
1	Abdallah	Fallah				
2	Abdou	Ayman				
3	Abdou	Marlette				

Ainsi, les personnes ayant des difficultés de transport pourront s'organiser avec les personnes motorisées, de plus ce document pourra faciliter la coordination entre les membres des différents comités.

Contenu des rencontres : Pour les étudiants en 1ère année, il est nécessaire d'organiser une journée de formation portant sur la charte du CPL, les principes, le programme électoral, l'histoire basique... le CPL étant un parti bâti sur des principes et des convictions dont il est fier et dont il a le devoir de promouvoir chez les générations à venir. Et cela tenant compte du malheureux fait qu'au Liban tous les citoyens n'adhèrent pas à un parti par conviction ou par principes. Ainsi en montrant une différence dans la formation de nos partisans, nous pourrions non seulement en attirer plus mais aussi promouvoir un nouveau style de politique plus civilisé. De même, pour une formation continue de tous les membres, des débats au sein du groupe sur les questions d'actualité, des rencontres avec des personnalités du CPL pourront être organisées par le responsable de faculté et préparées par le comité des débats et des conférences (Recherche sur les différents thèmes, préparation de questions...) et enfin encourager les membres à consulter régulièrement le site ([www.tayyar.org](http://www.tayyar.org)) du CPL. Sans oublier les rencontres électorales.

Evénements au niveau national : En ce qui concerne le CPL au niveau national, pour une participation massive des étudiants aux événements organisés par le CPL, ce sera la responsabilité du comité de l'information à travers les SMS, les mails et une organisation du transport. Ceci en addition de la consultation du site qui affiche les dates de tous les événements majeurs du parti.

#### **4ème étape : La répartition des responsabilités et l'autofinancement**

Au sein du CPL, les postes se représentent sous-ordre suivant :

Responsable des universités privées : il est le lien entre le parti et les partisans universitaires, c'est à lui qu'il faut s'adresser pour toute coordination directe avec le parti. Il est désigné par le Président du parti.

Coordinateur de campus : son rôle est de veiller sur une bonne coordination entre les responsables des différentes facultés au sein du même campus et il est responsable des événements concernant tout le campus. Il est élu par les responsables de facultés.

Responsable de faculté : C'est l'un des piliers du système, nous proposons que dorénavant son élection soit obligatoire (ce qui ne se passe pas actuellement) et avec la participation de tous les étudiants sauf ceux de 1ère année qui ne peuvent juger une personne en début d'année sans la connaître. Nous proposons aussi que les candidats présentent un programme pour promouvoir le principe de démocratie au sein du parti et que le responsable soit choisi selon sa culture politique, son charisme, et sa capacité d'adaptation sociale, sachant qu'il est représentant du parti dans les débats et les événements. Son rôle est aussi d'assurer une gestion efficace du groupe.

Secrétaire Général du groupe: Nous ne voyons plus l'importance de ce poste après la création de comités, cependant il pourrait être responsable du comité de l'information vu l'importance de sa tâche.

Trésorier du groupe : C'est la personne qui détient la comptabilité du groupe, c'est pourquoi il doit être transparent et devra garder toutes les factures, et présenter des bilans financiers par mois.

Les partisans : D'après le principe fondamental de la démocratie se sont eux qui choisissent leurs

représentants, les avis de tous doivent donc toujours être pris en considération et ils pourront participer directement aux décisions à travers les comités.

Pour l'autofinancement, il sera réalisé en partie par les événements organisés par le comité des événements sociaux. D'autre part les étudiants qui le peuvent pourront participer à travers le paiement mensuel d'une somme raisonnable. Ce sera la responsabilité du trésorier qui devra gérer l'argent.

## CONCLUSION

Nous réalisons que cette étude n'est pas parfaite, mais nous avons insisté surtout en tant qu'étudiants d'économie de présenter une solution concrète à tous les problèmes auxquels le CPL est en train de faire face actuellement du point de vue organisation du travail politique dans les différentes facultés. Cette étude basée sur l'expérience personnelle du groupe représente une première vision d'une structure de travail commune du CPL dans toutes les universités libanaises. Nous espérons ainsi qu'elle trouve l'écho favorable auprès des personnes concernées...



## Annexe à l'étude sur l'organisation du travail politique du CPL dans le cadre universitaire ( À lire avec l'étude )

Réalisée par les étudiants du CPL

Huvelin en Economie

BEYROUTH

2007

### PLAN

#### I- INTRODUCTION

#### II- L'ETUDE (Les remarques)

1ère étape : Devenir activiste ou sympathisant du CPL

Formulaire d'adhésion

2ème étape : Les comités de travail + Remarques générales

Comité d'élections, relations sociales

Comité des articles

Comité des événements sociaux

Comité des expositions

Comité des débats et conférences

Comité de l'information

#### III- CONCLUSION

### INTRODUCTION

Nous avons dit dans l'étude réalisée l'année précédente que : " si le CPL compte continuer à développer son discours politique pour attirer plus de sympathisants et arriver à évoluer le style de politique dégradant qui règne dans le pays, il devra le faire à partir de la restructuration de son organisation interne et plus précisément celle de sa base estudiantine qui a toujours été le pilier du travail politique du parti. " Cependant, le contexte a malheureusement changé. Cette année, il faudrait dire que le CPL n'arrive plus à attirer de nouveaux sympathisants, pour ne pas dire qu'il est en train d'en perdre, ce qui est dû essentiellement à notre avis à un manque de transparence dans notre discours, à un relâchement dans la formation de nos partisans, et à un sentiment de répugnance collectif qui règne au sein de la population libanaise vis à vis de la situation politique du pays. C'est pourquoi, il est important de pouvoir évaluer la situation à tous les niveaux

concernant le CPL et corriger le faux là où il existe. C'est seulement à travers cet esprit critique que le CPL pourra de nouveau être considéré comme le seul bon parti libanais et non le meilleur des pires. Reste à chacun d'œuvrer dans son contexte. Nous en tant qu'universitaires engagés, nous proposons tout simplement de réaliser l'étude proposée l'année passée, mais bien sûr en transformant le théorique de cette étude pour qu'il soit réalisable espérant ainsi que la nouvelle année serait celle du succès pour le Liban avant tout, mais aussi pour le CPL.

### **1ère étape : Pour devenir activiste ou sympathisant du CPL**

Le travail d'organisation d'un parti n'est certainement pas quelque chose de facile, surtout faire remplir les formulaires d'adhésion. Ce travail demande beaucoup de temps, c'est pourquoi il serait mieux de diviser les tâches, ce qui est possible à travers le comité d'information que nous détaillerons plus tard.

De même un classeur contenant les formulaires, les documents d'organisation (voir ci-dessus), ainsi que les factures et les documents d'archive, doit être tenu.

### **2ème étape : Création de comités de travail**

Dans la partie qui suit nous détaillerons l'organisation des comités.

Comité d'élections, relations sociales : ce comité n'a pas vraiment une grande utilité, puisque tout le monde participe et est intéressé par les élections, il serait donc ridicule de désigner des personnes responsables de ce travail, cela le limiterait. Cependant une tâche extrêmement importante doit être maintenue, les pointages. Donc ce comité sera appelé désormais comité de pointages et sera formé de 2 personnes par année qui auront à constituer des listes en 1ère et 2ème année uniquement, vu que ce sont les plus difficiles à constituer et que ce sont les années les plus stratégiques du point de vue élections.

Comité des articles : ce comité très essentiel malheureusement ne peut avoir assez d'adhérents pour fonctionner, ce qui est dû au malheureux fait que rares sont les étudiants au Liban motivés d'écrire dans n'importe quelle langue. Cependant il est nécessaire qu'au moins une personne, et par rotation s'il le faut, donne à "Alternative" de nos dernières nouvelles en tant qu'étudiants du CPL en économie. (à chaque numéro sortant de Alternative)

Comités des événements sociaux : ce comité doit être conservé, mais il doit être actif et si nécessaire peut fusionner avec le comité des expositions. Ces personnes doivent être créatives et actives puisqu'elles sont aussi responsables de l'autofinancement. Sans oublier que toute exposition doit obligatoirement être préparée avec le comité d'informations qui aura à sa disposition les archives.

Comité de l'information : ce comité est extrêmement essentiel pour le groupe puisqu'il regroupe les tâches de plusieurs comités, à savoir l'ex-comité des expositions, l'ex-comité des Débats et des conférences ainsi que celui de l'information, il devra à la base faire tout le travail d'organisation que nous développons dans cet annexe, préparer les débats et conférences, préparer les programmes, désigner une personne pour écrire un article dans Alternative, désigner un porte-parole au groupe, faire circuler l'information, et l'organisation des bases de données.

En conclusion, bien sûr les bonnes personnes doivent être trouvés pour les bons postes et selon leurs affinités, mais concernant toutes les tâches dans tous les comités, le responsable de tâches doit prendre l'avis de tout le monde et demander de l'aide de son comité mais placer une personne par tâche vise à cerner les responsabilisées. De même, Nous ne demandons pas des étudiants en Master de participer au travail mais plutôt d'aider avec leur savoir-faire, la priorité doit être aux premières années.

De même, le responsable de faculté doit placer un calendrier annuel qui constitue comme un programme de travail pour l'année de son mandat, et doit aussi présenter un bilan en fin d'année pour évaluer son travail. Il est très important sinon urgent d'organiser des rencontres politiques avec des responsables du CPL pour essayer de redonner un souffle de motivation aux partisans.

## CONCLUSION

En conclusion, nous aimerons rappeler à toutes les personnes concernées par cette étude que si nous ne commençons pas en tant qu'étudiants d'Economie qui sont considérés comme une partie de l'élite de la société libanaise, à épanouir notre pensée politique le plus tôt possible, il sera trop tard pour le Liban et pour notre avenir dans ce pays. Et partant du fait que l'organisation du travail activiste du parti basée sur une ouverture d'esprit et un raisonnement logique ne peut que nous épanouir, il est urgent surtout en tant que partisans du CPL de le faire !









