Building Bridges in a Divided Society

CSOs' efforts to further the process of interpersonal reconciliation in Lebanon in an environment of political apathy and societal segregation

The Cultural Cafe - café ﺑ ﻛﻔﻚ ﻗﻬﻮﺗﻨﺎ - in Tripoli, an initiative of MARCH

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Abstract

This thesis sheds light on the question how civil society organisations (CSO), that work in the field of peacebuilding in Lebanon in areas where sectarian tensions are tangible, are attempting to erase and redefine the antagonistic and adversarial relations formed during violent conflict through a process of bottom-up, interpersonal reconciliation on the community level. Viewed through the lens of Allport's Contact Hypothesis, it appears that *within* the contact situation, CSOs are able to create a facilitating space for interpersonal reconciliation between participants. However, *beyond* the programmes several challenges are visible that may hinder sustainable outcomes. This research also addresses whether the contact situation also has the ability to trigger attitude change on the side of the participants. Analysed by means of Pettigrew's four interrelated processes and Tilly's social boundary mechanisms, the findings suggest that CSOs have the ability to trigger attitude change by facilitating contact, in which intergroup learning and intergroup cooperation to work on common goals set the process of boundary transformation into motion. Thus, CSOs often function as a bridge-builder between different groups that experience feelings of enmity against each other, a quality pointed out by the literature. However, the potential for CSOs to play a constructive role in further interpersonal reconciliation is in some instances hindered by several social and psychological barriers on the community level and an uncooperative attitude on the side of authorities on the local level. Thus the context in which work, namely that of societal segregation and political apathy, limits the ability of CSOs to work on transforming negative relations into positive ones.

Key words: interpersonal reconciliation, civil society organisations, Lebanon, post-conflict peacebuilding, Allport's Contact Hypothesis, Pettigrew's processes on mediating attitude change, Tilly's social boundary mechanisms.

Acknowledgements

The Master's programme Conflict Studies and Human Rights did not only give me the opportunity to conduct my field research in Lebanon, a place I had been fascinated with due to its societal and political complexity for several years without ever setting foot in the country, it also taught me how to conduct proper qualitative research.

Gratitude therefore goes to my supervisor Mario Fumerton, whose strict guidance proved a huge motivation to go the extra mile. He taught me to 'use my head' to solve the problems I encountered instead of asking him for the answer. Yet, those times I was in need of a critical eye to comment on my ideas, Mario was always willing to provide feedback and useful suggestions for improvement.

Many thanks go to Unite Lebanon Youth Project, the NGO I had the honour of interning at, and the representatives of civil society organisations that were willing to be part of my research: Director Nayla Tabbara, Program Coordinator Mayssam Imad and Community Outreach Coordinator Nagham Tarhini of Adyan, Accountant Talal Zeidan of DLR, Project Manager Elisa Shamma of DPNA, Programme Officer Fadwa Ghaddar of FDCD, Programme Coordinator Farah Wahab of MARCH, Activities Coordinator Marc Torbey el Helou of Offre Joie, Board Member Raji Abdel Salam of PHRO, Country Director Elias Ayoub of RTP, DME Coordinator Morgane Ortmans of SFCG and Conflict Resolution Trainer Ali Haidar of ULYP. I would also like to thank the participants that were willing to share their experiences with me, as the findings represented in this study would not have been complete without your contribution.

At the start of the Master's programme I could not have imagined enjoying every bit of the process: from writing my research proposal, conducting research in the field, interning at ULYP to the actual writing process. This experience has not only provided me with valuable insights into my field of interest – CSOs and post-conflict peacebuilding – it also paved the way for the realization that qualitative research is invaluable when it comes to gaining an in-depth understanding of complex matters.

I therefore sincerely hope this thesis will give you new and valuable insights.


Kelly Indira Buis

The Hague, August 2016

"There is no handy roadmap for reconciliation. There is no short cut or simple prescription for healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence. Creating trust and understanding between former enemies is a supremely difficult challenge. It is, however, an essential one to address in the process of building a lasting peace. Examining the painful past, acknowledging it and understanding it, and above all transcending it together, is the best way to guarantee that it does not – and cannot – happen again."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu[1]

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[1] A foreword written by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who headed South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in 'Reconciliation after Violent Conflict. A Handbook' by Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse, 2003.

Map of the Confessional Geographic Distribution of Lebanon's Population
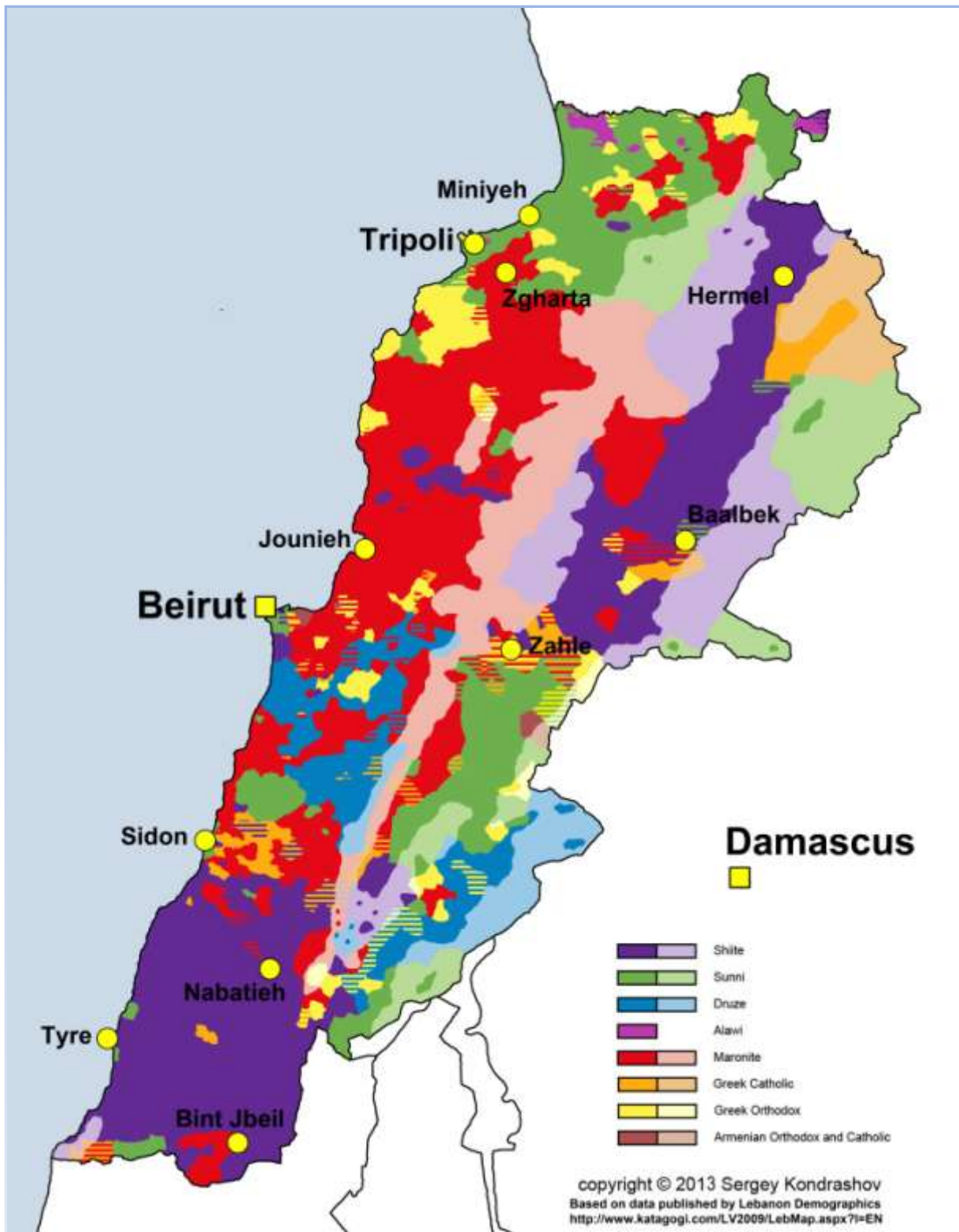
Abbreviations and Acronyms

CSO – civil society organisation

DPNA – Development for People and Nature Association

DLR – Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation

FDCD – Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue

OJ – Offre Joie

PCPB – post-conflict peacebuilding

PHRO – Palestinian Human Rights Organisation

RTP – Right To Play

SFCG – Search for Common Ground

ULYP – Unite Lebanon Youth Project

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INTRODUCTION

My first taxi ride in Lebanon, from the airport in the South of Beirut to my apartment in the Christian neighbourhood Gemayzeh in the East of the city, revealed the spatial segregation of the Lebanese population. Instead of mentioning the names of the areas we were driving through, the driver introduced the neighbourhoods by means of the religious background of its residents, pointing at buildings that would serve as markers to ascertain the confession of each neighbourhood. Only after several weeks, as I got familiarized with other identity markers such as party flags, graffiti and posters of political leaders, I realised how entrenched the sectarian divisions in Lebanon are. Conversations with taxi drivers and other passengers in a *service*, a shared taxi, not only revealed the physical segregation, it also gave me an insight into the antagonistic attitudes that different confessions or groups might have toward one another. Clearly being a foreigner, the first thing drivers usually ask is what country I am from, followed by the question whether I like Lebanon and its people. Often, the third question is whether I am married, which by trial and error I have come to answer affirmatively – a little white lie. During one of these rides, an unexpected question followed. "So is your husband Christian or Muslim?," the men next to the driver asked me. Hastily I searched for some sort of indication about the confession of the men, but this was one of the instances the taxi did not display any religious symbols. In order to avoid an unpleasant turn of conversation, I answered that my husband was Dutch. The men were satisfied by the answer. "We are both Christian," the taxi driver explained. "Indeed, and we fought against the Palestinians in the civil war," the other men added, "they are the cause of all the troubles."

1. The Academic Debate

1.1. CSOs Role in PCPB

As the world is becoming more multifaceted and fragmented, the increasing complexity of post-conflict peacebuilding (PCPB) efforts did not go unnoticed in academic and policy circles. Since the 1990s, the importance of civil society organisations' (CSOs) involvement in PCPB has been increasingly emphasized. It is even suggested that one of the most significant factors to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of PCPB initiatives is the involvement of civil society (Parver and Wolf, 2008). Qualities attributed to CSOs are, among others, the ability to promote tolerance and a change in attitudes as they have the potential to challenge prejudices, stereotypes and the us-versus-them dichotomy (Parver and Wolf, 2008; Omach, 2014; Orjuela, 2003). Given their awareness of the cultural context and the underlying societal reasons of the conflict (Parver and Wolf, 2008), CSOs often function as a bridge-builder between different groups that experience feelings of enmity

against one another by fostering trust and dialogue (Cousens & Kumar, 2001 in Omach, 2014), thereby promoting social cohesion and reconciliation (Omach, 2014).

Although the attention for CSO initiatives has increased, "it was not matched by a corresponding research agenda on the nexus between civil society and peacebuilding" (Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006:1). For example, little is known about the enabling conditions that would facilitate the work of CSOs (Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006). Some more critical voices exist as well. According to Carothers, "civil society everywhere is a bewildering array of the good, the bad, and the outright bizarre" (1990-2000 in Omach, 2014), warning us for outright civil society enthusiasm. Likewise, assessing the actual impact of PCPB programmes is challenging as it is difficult to establish a link between the generally broad claims in project proposals and the actual societal impact of these activities, according to Ross and Rothman (1999 in Orjuela,2003). Indeed, both academics and CSOs need to focus critically on the impact of small-scale activities and its link to the wider conflict context, Orjuela (2003) argues.

1.2. CSOs and Interpersonal Reconciliation

Interestingly enough, most qualities mentioned above centre around the CSOs' ability to bring people together and to address the adversarial and antagonistic relations formed during conflict, a process often referred to as interpersonal reconciliation. Especially in post-conflict situations, the need for reconciliation on the community level is of the upmost importance to address the negative relationships between people and transform it into more positive ones: "the transformation of a culture of war into a culture of peace" (Wessels, 2009:359). In that regard, the literature places interpersonal reconciliation work often within the domain of CSOs. In Lebanon, focus group discussions conducted by the International Centre for Transitional Justice in five neighbourhoods of Greater Beirut identified "NGOs and community groups as potential vehicles for bridging sectarian divisions in Lebanese society" (2014:30).

By stating that "reconciliation's basic problem is that no-one agrees how to define it or do it," David Bloomfield points out the complexity of the issue (2006:4). Indeed, there is not an agreed definition nor a 'one size fits all' approach to reconciliation. Yet, a distinction can be made between interpersonal and political reconciliation, with the former centering around personal interaction, emotions and the creation of personal bonds on the community-level. The latter, on the other hand, takes place on the national or societal level, and entails "weaving anew the social fabric" (Bleeker, 2006: 160 in Bloomfield, 2006), a wide-scale form that requires the construction of socio-political relations.

The current academic debate tries to shed light on the notion by placing it in a larger context. Not only can reconciliation be considered as a process or an outcome, it is also placed in the dichotomy of top-down political versus bottom-up interpersonal reconciliation. While often pursued at the expense of one another, the interaction of top-down and bottom-up reconciliation is vital for sustainable reconciliation, several authors argue (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Bloomfield, 2006; van der Merwe, 1998). It is also argued that civil society can serve as the interface between top-down and bottom-up reconciliation (Bloomfield, 2006). Yet, while the literature firmly places bottom-up reconciliation work within the domain of CSOs (Bloomfield, 2006), relatively few studies have focused on the actual ability of CSOs to further the process of interpersonal reconciliation.

1.3.   Definitions

Before introducing the research question, the definitions of 'interpersonal reconciliation' and 'CSOs' require attention. Given the definitional ambiguity, I have formulated a definition of interpersonal reconciliation based on the existing literature: 'interpersonal reconciliation is a relationship-oriented process that involves personal interaction centering around dialogue to contribute to a change in attitude and to the building of positive relationships between former adversaries'. Civil society is considered a complex concept as well. While at times it might seem as "the big idea on everyone's lips" (Edwards, 2004:2 in Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006), there is no agreement on the definition. For this thesis, civil society is defined as an intermediate arena between the family, the state and private sector (Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006), and it consists of non-governmental and other non-profit organisations. It is an "arena that provides space for diverse societal values and interests to interact, debate, and seek to influence society and the political process" (Omach, 2014:3). In the context of Lebanon, the definition requires some specification as in the Arabic language there are two terms for civil society. While 'al-mujtama al-ahli' puts kinship relations centre stage, "[a]l-mujtama al-madani carries a willingness to move away from traditional structures and perceptions," thereby removing the patron-client relationships between, for example, political parties and citizens that are an inherent feature of 'al-mujtama al-ahli' (Traboulsi quoted in Bernhard Hillenkamp, 2005). CSOs in Lebanon are often an al-ahli type, but the CSOs involved in this research are of an al-madani nature.

2. The Research Question

Given the increasing importance attached to the involvement of CSOs in reconciliation efforts, its identification as a "potential vehicle for bridging sectarian differences in Lebanon" (ICTJ, 2014:30) and my personal interest in the role of CSOs in PCPB, the question arises how CSOs actually seek to further interpersonal reconciliation. Thus, the main research question is formulated as follows: How are CSOs that work in the field of peacebuilding in Lebanon in areas where sectarian tensions are

tangible attempting to erase and redefine the antagonistic and adversarial relations formed during violent conflict through a process of bottom-up, interpersonal reconciliation on the community level? The analytical lenses used to scrutinize the reconciliation-oriented programmes is the Contact Hypothesis of Allport (1954), Pettigrew's theory on mediating attitude change (1998) and Tilly's insights on social boundary mechanisms (2001;2004), whose relevant components will be introduced later in this thesis. The work of the CSOs is placed in an environment of societal segregation as the local population is often physically and psychologically segregated along confessional lines and in a context of political apathy as top-down reconciliation efforts are rarely being pursued in a system dominated by sectarian interests.

The relevance of this question is two-fold. Theoretically, through the lens of contact theory and social boundary mechanisms, this research will shed light on the *actual* ability of reconciliation-oriented programmes in Lebanon to erase and redefine adversarial and antagonistic relations formed during conflict. It is a response to the academic literature in which qualities attributed to CSOs focus on its ability to change attitudes, and its potential to challenge prejudices, stereotypes and us-versus-them dichotomy (Parver and Wolf, 2008; Omach, 2014; Orjuela, 2003). Likewise, CSOs are regarded as bridge-builders between antagonistic groups as they foster dialogue and trust (Cousens & Kumar, 2001 in Omach, 2014). Still, Ross and Rothman (1999), assert that establishing a link between project proposal claims and the actual impact of activities is challenging. In that light, this thesis will answer the question whether CSOs indeed have the ability to work on attitude change by critically examining the impact of these programmes on its participants.

On a practical level, this research provides a case study of Lebanon in a specific field within PCPB, namely that of interpersonal reconciliation. A new perspective is provided by placing the work of CSOs in a context with impeding national and local factors, namely that of political apathy and societal segregation. In this way, this research aims to reveal the enabling and constraining factors that CSOs face, a gap in the literature that Paffenholz and Spurk (2006) highlighted.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Strategy

This research is qualitative in nature, relying on data collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation and questionnaires. Denzin and Lincoln offer a well-formulated definition: "Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. [...] At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers

study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (2000:3 in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:3). Thus, it tries to uncover and understand the way people attach meaning to certain phenomena within their social world, such as beliefs, decisions, values or actions. In this thesis I will provide a qualitative interpretation of the meaning CSOs attach to the process of interpersonal reconciliation in order to understand and explain the setup of the reconciliation-oriented programmes and how CSOs attempt to mediate potential attitude change of its participants.

Furthermore, this research uses a case study design which allows for an in depth analysis of a phenomenon in a specific environment. Miles and Huberman define a case study as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (1994:25 in Baxter and Jack,2008), with the case essentially being the unit of analysis. "By attempting to capture as many variables as possible, case studies can identify how a complex set of circumstances come together to produce a particular manifestation" (Hancock, 1998:6). This research covers a series of cases, namely the various reconciliation programmes of ten CSOs, contributing to the depth and richness of the analysis provided.

3.2. Research Design

3.2(a) Setting

Lebanon's civil war and successive violent shocks have exacerbated and continued to exacerbate tensions among confessional groups. This in combination with a large civil society presence means that a sizeable number of CSOs explicitly focus on the subject of interpersonal reconciliation and social cohesion.[2] Thus, the topic of study seems to manifest itself quite strongly, meaning that Lebanon is a relevant setting for this research. Beirut is the capital as well as the home of the main office or network of all CSOs. Yet, while several programmes are implemented in Beirut, most programmes target poverty squares and areas where tensions are tangible outside the capital, covering the whole of Lebanon.

3.2(b) Sampling

This research is based on non-probability sampling in combination with a snowball or network method. This means that I deliberately selected CSOs on the basis of a particular feature, in this case their work on reconciliation-oriented programmes, to ensure the relevance of the sample (Ritchie, Lewis and El-Am, 2003). The initial CSOs proved to be a very useful source of information on other

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[2] Civil society in Lebanon is among the most active in the region with 8,331 officially registered CSOs, meaning that per 1000 inhabitants 1,3 association is active (BRD, 2015).

organisations working in the field, which I subsequently approached. The CSOs were selected upon the following criteria: (1) their programmes should contain an element of reconciliation; (2) active on the community level; (3) the programmes need to facilitate interreligious and interethnic contact; and (4) a clear method to facilitate interpersonal reconciliation. An introduction to the CSOs can be found as an appendix. The selection of the interviewed participants is likewise based on non-probability sampling. Participant criteria were (1) participation in a reconciliation-oriented programme, (2) having experienced either directly or indirectly antagonistic or adversarial relations in their personal lives, and (3) the ability to reflect on their experiences. This sampling method was designed to ensure rich, informed and relevant qualitative data.

3.2(c) Time Frame

This research is based on a single research episode, between 1 March and 1 June 2016. In that period I interned at Unite Lebanon Youth Project in Beirut. Gaining in-depth insight into ULYP's work gave me a richer understanding of interpersonal reconciliation in practise and provided me with an opportunity to get a hold on the ins and outs of programme implementation. This, in turn, proved valuable in the subsequent interviews, participant observation and data analysis.

3.2(d) Data Collection Techniques

My initial data were derived from programme descriptions and information on the CSOs' website. For a more detailed picture, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of ten CSOs and the facilitators of MARCH's and ULYP's programmes. This meant that the topic guide covered a standardized list of questions, but the interviews themselves were more of a conversational nature. Semi-structured interviewing allowed me to delve deeply into the CSOs interpretation, motivation and ideas in relation to their programmes, the observed impact and the contextual impediments (Richie in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Thus, I could dive into the complexity of the issue and contradictions possibly arising, and get a thorough understanding of the issue at hand (Harrell and Bradley, 2009). The participants of the Cultural Cafe, an initiative of MARCH, were interviewed in an unstructured manner, without questions prepared beforehand, as our encounter was rather unexpected. A former Adyan participant filled in a questionnaire as time constraints prevented me from organising a group discussion.

Next to this, naturally occurring data were are also collected, as I conducted participant observation of ULYP's Frame by Frame project and of MARCH's Cultural Cafe. This allowed me to focus on the interaction and the nonverbal communication of the participants. The added value of integrating several data collection techniques is that it guaranteed a certain flexibility and enabled

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me to combine reconstructed perspectives of the CSOs and the participants with an insight in how these programmes occur in practise. As Ritchie argues: "each brings a particular kind of insight to a study" (2003:37). The last step concerned triangulation, in which I relied on non-interview-based sources to cross-verify the data. Thus, secondary data analysis was done, based on programme documents, annual reports, media interviews, features on CSOs, online testimonies of participants, documentaries, and project outcomes.

During the semi-structured interviews with representatives of CSOs, which were all conducted in English, I made use of a voice recorder, which was consented to by all the interviewees. Rather than negatively impacting the interview, the recorder ensured that their experiences, views and observations were handled with care as it allowed me to listen repeatedly to their comments and quote them directly, preventing me from 'reframing' their arguments or take it out of context. Several informal interviews were also conducted in English, but some required the help of a translator as my level of Arabic was not sufficient to conduct interviews. The setting of the informal interviews, often during a programmatic session or in one of the few neutral meeting spaces where participants can meet, did not allow me to use a voice recorder, nor would it be conducive to the quality of the interview.

3.3. Procedure

During the first phase of the research I reached out to CSOs with the request to involve their work in my research. Once I arrived in Lebanon, the second phase consisted of finalizing my topic guide after two initial interviews. All in all, I conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen representatives of ten CSOs. The third phase also consisted of participant observation during a session of ULYP's Frame by Frame programme, informal interviews with ULYP trainers Fadi Dabaja and Ali Haidor and MARCH' trainer Khaled Merheb and during a visit to the Cultural Cafe, I informally talked to four of the participants about their experiences. Lastly, a questionnaire was send out to participants of Adyan's programme. The final phase consisted of transcribing and coding the relevant parts of the semi-structured interviews, the questionnaires and the notes from the informal interviews. After transcribing the interviews, I first deconstructed my interviews, notes and observations into key phrases: the process of open coding. Then I tried to identify relations between the open codes, which is to referred to as axial coding (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). Coding allowed me to analyse the data properly before commencing with the actual writing process.

4. Limitations and Opportunities

During the research I encountered several limitations that require attention. Lebanon's societal and political situation is at times so utterly complex that it is difficult to capture it in words or do justice to its complexity. The same holds for the immense religious and ethnic diversity within the country and even within groups itself, which makes any sort of concise description impossible. While an entire chapter is dedicated to the general context in which the CSOs work, word constraints mean that the conclusions reached are more of a general nature than programme-specific.

Turning to my role as a researcher, I had to be well aware of the normative component inherent in reconciliation as well as my possible bias towards the positive effects of such programmes, in light of my previous work with a Dutch NGO on a social cohesion project in Lebanon. On the side of the CSOs, there is the possibility of the "good story" trap in which there is little critical reflection on their work and positive accounts dominate. Being well aware of this possibility, it is safe to say that this seldomly occurred during my research as the semi-structured interviews allowed for probing questions and I regularly asked for clarifying examples.

When it comes to the effects of the programmes, I depended on self-reported data of the participants. This meant that I had to rely on self-insights and self-reflection of the respondents, which may be subject to response bias. Likewise, the sample size of participant experiences is small. Thus, while overall information saturation is not reached, it is attained within the sample group. It also proved difficult to observe behavioural changes of participants due to the single research episode. It was therefore impossible to trace the long-term effects of the programmes myself, having to rely on the CSOs experiences and that of several former participants.

Several opportunities should be noted as well. It proved relatively easy to get into touch with CSOs, especially since a specific niche of organisations is dedicated to reconciliation, and without exception they were willing to participate in the research. The semi-structured interviews were all conducted in English as the representatives of CSOs, without exception, had a strong command of English. Only for the informal interviews with participants in the Cultural Cafe I was in need of a translator, but trainer Khaled Merheb offered his services right away. Instead of the language barrier serving as an impediment, the fact that Khaled has built up a relationship of trust with the participants made it possible for the youth to share their experiences without hesitation. In line with that, project visits and participant observations were made possible in the case of ULYP and MARCH. Lastly, documentary material was widely available.

5. Chapter Outline

In order to provide a clear picture of the societal and political situation in Lebanon, the following chapter is dedicated to the context in which the CSOs work, namely that of societal segregation and political apathy. The second chapter sheds light on how CSOs seek to create a facilitating space for interpersonal reconciliation, analysed through the lens of Allport's Contact Hypothesis. It appears that the *within* the contact situation, CSOs are able to create a space for participants to engage in dialogue. However, *beyond* the programmes several challenges are visible, such as the lack of institutional support, fund dependence and the difficulty of establishing structured opportunities for long-term exchange and community inclusive reconciliation.

The third chapter dives into the processes of attitude change to erase and redefine the antagonistic and adversarial relations formed during conflict. While Pettigrew's processes provide an insight into the steps that mediate participants' attitude change, little can be ascertained with certainty as relatively few CSOs monitor and evaluate the experiences of the participants. Yet, Tilly's social boundary mechanisms, that of brokerage, deactivation and erasure, reveal how the antagonistic relations transformed into more positive ones, based on participants' experiences.

The fourth chapter addresses the enabling and constraining contextual factors that impact the work of CSO. The potential for CSOs to play a constructive role is in several instances hindered by several social and psychological barriers on the community level as a result of societal segregation, and an uncooperative attitude on the side of authorities as a result of a general political apathy.

The conclusion centres around an evaluation of the role CSOs play in furthering interpersonal reconciliation. It provides a discussion of the theoretical framework and presents possibilities for further research.

1. Context

The reconciliation-oriented programmes of CSOs cannot be analysed without sketching a picture of Lebanon's societal structure and political landscape first, which is often summarized as 'a complex multi-confessional, socio-political fabric'. Yet, in order to understand the political apathy when it comes to official reconciliatory efforts and the societal segregation of its population, it is necessary to start off with the violent episodes in Lebanon's turbulent history that exacerbated the tensions among the confessional groups.

1.1. A modern History Rife with Conflict

Hajjar summarizes Lebanon's complex past as follows: "At times in Lebanese history, different communities fought fierce battles with each other, followed by long periods of co-existence, only to resurface in war, time and again" (2002:5). While these periods of co-existence should not be neglected, the violent episodes have exacerbated and continued to exacerbate tensions among confessional groups.[3]

The State of Greater Lebanon, the predecessor of the Lebanese Republic, was created in 1920. The mandate given to France by the League of Nations altered the demographic composition of the region significantly. The areas that were added to the Christian-dominated Mount Lebanon were inhabited mainly by Druze and Muslims, causing a steep decline in the percentage of Christians in the population to slightly over 50 percent (Traboulsi, 2007). Hitti asserts that "the addition [...] almost doubled the area of the country and increased its population by about one-half, over 200,000, predominantly Muslim. [...] What the country gained in area it lost in cohesion" (1956:490-91 in Turkmen-Dervisoglu, 2012). Yet, the civil war of 1975-1990 cannot be reduced to a conflict between Christians versus Muslims. Although it is impossible to summarize the complexity of the war in one page, and I will not attempt to do so, several factors contributed to the rise in tensions. The divided views on how to respond to 'the Palestinian question' played an essential role. The arrival of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation on its territory in 1975 and the influx of Palestinians in large numbers after the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, intensified political divisions. The Maronite Christians

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[3] There are several books that I would recommend as they give an impartial and balanced account of Lebanon's history and its violent episodes, namely: 'A History of Modern Lebanon' by Fawwaz Traboulsi (2007), 'Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon' by Robert Fisk (1990) and 'Hezbollah: A Short History' by Augustus Richard Norton (2009). To get a personal insight into the war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006, I would recommend the book 'Berichten uit een Belegerde Stad' ('Messages from a Besieged City') by Abdelkader Benali. Books that I have not read myself, but that were often mentioned during my stay in Lebanon are 'Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict' by Samir Khalaf (2002) and the novel 'Origins' by Amin Maalouf (2009).

fiercely resisted their presence and the resulting change in the demographic balance,[4] fearing the loss of their privileged position under the sectarian power-sharing system which favoured Christians to Muslims in a 6-to-5 ratio. In the Muslim-dominated rural areas, the harsh living conditions, their disadvantaged economic position and their underrepresentation in the political arena, despite the demographic changes, gave rise to grievances on their side. The accumulation of these social, political, economic and religious issues led to the start of the civil war in 1975. As the war progressed, each faction organized itself in militias, and counter militias emerged as inter-community fighting was rather the rule than the exception (Rigby,2000 in Bloch-jørgensen,2006). Atrocities during the war were committed by all sides, leaving around 150,000 people dead, more than 300,000 injured, 17,000 disappeared and a large percentage of the population displaced (Traboulsi, 2007). While the civil war officially ended with the signing of the Ta'if Accord in 1989, the Israeli occupation of the South, who invaded Lebanon in 1982, did not cease until 2000.

The wave of political assassinations and bombings the country has experienced since, more than thirty since 2004, has only increased tensions and suspicions among confessional groups. Klap and Yassin come to the conclusion that "No Middle Eastern country has accumulated such a bleak record of unsolved political violence" (2008:46). The assassination of the leader of the Sunni Future Movement, Rafiq Hariri, in February 2005, whose case remains unsolved until this day although fingers have been pointed at Hezbollah and Syria, is a case in point. His murder led to widespread popular protests – the Cedar Revolution – and a rare political consensus, causing Syria to withdraw and end its *de facto* protectorate over Lebanon after 29 years (Traboulsi, 2007).

Nevertheless, violent shocks continued. The strained relationship with its Southern neighbours flared up again in 2006 during a 34-day military conflict between Israel and the Shi'a Islamist militant group Hezbollah, leaving more than 1000 people dead, many people displaced and the South destructed (Norton, 2009).[5] Tensions between the Lebanese authorities and Palestinian

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[4] According to the last official census of 1932, 58.5% of the inhabitants belonged to one of the Christian sects, whereas the 'non-Christian' population made up 41.5% of the citizenry (Sunnis: 18.6%, Shi'a: 15.9% , Druze: 5.9% and other non-Christians: 1.1%). Although no official census has taken place since, the demographic balance has shifted significantly over the years. The Lebanon-based research company 'Statistics Lebanon', estimated the following demographic structure for 2012: 54% of the population belongs to one of the Muslim sects (Sunnis and Shi'a both estimated at 27%), Druze at 5.6% and the Christian population at 40.5% (21.5% Maronites, 8% Greek Orthodox, 5% Greek Catholic and 6.5% belonging to other Christian groups).

[5] It must be noted that Hezbollah is more than a Islamist militant group, although its origins can be directly traced back to Israel's invasion and subsequent occupation of Southern Lebanon during and after the Lebanese civil war (1985-2000). The 'Open Letter: the Hizballah program' (1985), in which its objectives and identity were revealed, clearly states Hezbollah's aim to put an "end to the burdensome Israeli occupation" and "the Necessity for the Destruction of Israel.'' Yet, Hezbollah did not cease to exist after Israel's withdrawal in 2000, having formed a significant social services organisation providing nearly all health and social services in Southern Lebanon. Likewise, despite internal disagreement, the party entered the political arena in 1992.

organisations did not cease either. In 2007, for example, clashed erupted between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Fatah al-Islam militants in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr el Bared, killing more than 450 civilians, soldiers and militants during the 105-day siege of the UNWRA camp.

A final development worth mentioning is the effect of the Syrian war, which have uncovered local power struggles and intensified communal tensions in Lebanon, particularly between Sunni and Shi'a communities. Violent clashes between groups who support the opposing sides in Syria have occurred since 2011 in Tripoli, Beirut and Saida.[6]

Although justice can hardly be done to the complexity of its history and the foregoing is merely the tip of the iceberg, it is beyond doubt that the various conflicts have hardened and sharpened divisions and distrust among, and at times even within, Lebanon's sectarian communities.

1.2. Confessional System and Political Divisions

Lebanon's unique features, referring to its considerable Christian population and long exposure to the West, largely account for its confessional system, Traboulsi (2007) argues. *Ta'ifiyya*, the Lebanese form of consociationalism, a system which Lijphart (2004) argues requires the two fundamentals of power sharing and group autonomy, is based on the proportional sharing of political and institutional power among its confessional communities. In Lebanon this has led to the institutionalisation of the 18 official religious sects.[7] The idea behind the power sharing arrangement is that it ensures cooperation between elites of different religious sects in the political system, it precludes the exclusion of one of the factions, and hence prevents fighting and conflict (Picard and Ramsbotham, 2012; Traboulsi, 2007). Even though Lijphart is a proponent of consociationalism in divided societies, he named Lebanon as one of the "biggest failures of power-sharing systems," due to the "constitutions writers' choice of unsatisfactory rules and institutions"(2004:4).

The origins of Lebanese confessionalism can be traced back to the millet system of the Ottoman Empire and the *qa'im magamiya* declaration of 1843 which divided Mount Lebanon into two separate administrative regions, one Christian and one Druze. It was not until the year of Lebanon's independence as a state in 1943 that the confessional political system took shape under the unwritten National Pact, which stipulated a ratio of six Christians to five Muslims in the

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(Norton, 2009). Its political wing has currently 12 seats in parliament and is part of the March 8 Alliance, which forms the government together with the Change and Reform Bloc and the Pro-Government Independents.

[6] Council on Foreign Relations: Global Conflict Tracker [Accessed on 25 June 2016].

[7] The 18 officially recognized religious groups compromise 12 Christian sects, four Muslim sects, the Druze and Judaism. The Sunni, Shi'a, Alawites and the Ismaili belong to the Muslim sect. Next to the Maronites, the largest Christian community, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Copts, evangelicals and Roman Catholics make up the Christian confessions.

distribution of parliamentary seats. It was also agreed that the President would always be of Maronite Christian descent, the prime minister Sunni and the speaker of parliament Shi'a. Yet, the fact that the ratio did not adapt to changes in the demographic composition gave rise to tensions in the subsequent years, as the Muslims felt underrepresented. Enver Koury even stated that "the fixed ratio is one variable that is responsible for the 1975-1976 crises in Lebanon" (1976:5 in Turkmen-Dervisoglu, 2012).

The Ta'if Agreement (1989), also called the Charter of National Reconciliation, that marked the ending of the civil war, replaced the 6-to-5 ration with parity. Ta'if has been often criticized for its contradictory nature: while it states that "abolishing political sectarianism is a fundamental objective" (Ta'if Agreement, II.G, 1985), it guarantees proportional representation of all sects, thereby instituting confessionalism once again (Bloch-jørgensen, 2006). In fact, Nasr argues that confessionalism has increased after the war. The reasons are four-fold. First, (forced) displacement of people in large numbers led to homogeneous communities and increased segregation. The economic difficulties faced by its population account for the second reason as it increased people's reliance "on the patronage dispensed by the new sectarian political bosses (*zu'ama)"* (Nasr, 2003:122). Thirdly, Lebanon has experienced a rise in religious organisations and a revival of its influence. And lastly, the Sunni-Shi'a divide has sharpened in light of the rise of extremist movements and regional developments, causing people to identify more in sectarian terms (Nasr, 2003 in Norton, 2009).

The political context in which the CSOs work is not only dominated by sectarian interests, it is also in a state of continuing crisis due to the political divisions that mirror regional, historical and confessional fault lines. This is exemplified by the fact that Lebanon has been without a president since May 2014 due to disagreement among the Christian parties on the nominee, leaving parliament in a political stalemate. CSOs are faced with these inherent challenges and the implications that follow from it. One is that "the culture of political sectarianism became gradually entrenched in the collective consciousness and political practice of Lebanon's political and social elites" (Bahout, 2016:6). The small political elite who have in their hands the decision-making power that was given to them after Ta'if, have an interest in sustaining the status quo and hence securing their positions, but have not shied away from using sectarian divisions to their own advantage (Traboulsi,2012:29 in Madsen,2015). In multiple instances, elites have wielded their influence to mobilize support for local power struggles that intensified due to ongoing war in Syria. It has led Bahout to argue that the main flaw of the sectarian model is that it paves the way for identity politics and reinforces "sectarian identities and providing them with full-fledged political and legal status came at the expense of convergence toward a common identity"(2016:8).

The political elites' uncompromising attitudes and their interest in maintaining the status quo do not make it likely that the political divisions or sectarian system will change in the near future, especially since the Ta'if Agreement has merely reorganized rather than transformed the system. This is aggravated by the shift from interest-based to identity politics. Under the former, interests were pursued by negotiations and power politics, but the shift to identity politics in Lebanon has led to a zero-sum approach as every issue is viewed through the lens of communal survival. Bahout ends his analysis of the post-Ta'if period with the rather worrying conclusion that "The fear factor has come to supersede everything" (Bahout,2016:17).

1.3.   Official, Top-down Reconciliation Efforts

Lebanon's post-war situation has often been described as one of 'collective amnesia' or 'state-sponsored amnesia', a term coined by Samir Khalaf (1994 in Barak, 2007). A consequence of this approach is that official, top-down reconciliation efforts have rarely been pursued.

The post-war transitional justice process in Lebanon is characterized as sustaining a culture of impunity. No truth-seeking commissions were established, the inefficient reparations programme suffered from mismanagement and institutional reform has been flawed to say the least (ICTJ, 2014). Matters were complicated further when the Lebanese parliament passed a general amnesty in 1991 for all crimes related to the war. Salient detail: several former war lords were appointed a seat in parliament in the meantime (Barak, 2007).[8] In that light, it cannot come as a surprise that the main political parties, whose leaders actively participated in the war, torpedoed time and again a state-led investigation into the war, and an official state apology has never been offered. Interestingly enough, several sectarian leaders did formally apologize on behalf of their militias. One of the earliest initiators, Walid Jumblatt, leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, declared in 1993: "Yes, I am responsible, directly or indirectly, for religious cleansing and mass destruction because, at the time, I was a warlord" (ICTJ, 2014). While Samir Geagea of the Lebanese Forces stressed the importance of national reconciliation in his apology, very little has been done in reality. To name two scarce examples: the Ministry of Displaced initiated several youth camps in the early 1990s to foster

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[8] Samir Geagea is one example of a former warlord who has entered the political arena. In 1986, Geagea became the commander of the Lebanese Forces, a Christian militia. In 1994 has was tried and sentenced for war-related crimes - the only militia leader that has been persecuted - but in the wake of the Cedar Revolution in 2005 he was released. Geagea is currently the leader of the Lebanese Forces, a political party that he founded after the war with currently eight seats in parliament. My visit to Bsarri, the town Geagea's family is from, clearly brought to the fore the considerable amount of support he enjoys in this Maronite region. In the town's central square, around which several churches are located, Geagea and his wife look down upon the people passing by from two huge billboards that decorate the roofs of two buildings located across of one another. On that note, I have rarely visited a country in which support for a politician is so intimately linked to ones religious affiliation and geographical origins as Lebanon.

reconciliation. However, the camps merely included Christian and Druze youth, and were organised in only a few areas (Bloch-jørgensen, 2006). Another attempt to foster national unity focused on reconstructing Beirut to its former ancient splendour, an initiative of then prime minister Hariri's company Solidère in 1994. Yet, the effect is debatable. The project has been criticized for encouraging a culture of forgetfulness, and opposition to the company's plans has been fierce (Larkin, 2009).

All in all, a pragmatic stance prevails on the national level, in which political considerations take the upper hand as politicians aim at securing their political futures. Sectarian divisions and interests have reinforced politicians' indifferent approach and undermine the possibility and hope towards national reconciliation (Klap and Yassin, 2008). Investigations and formal inquires into the war have been silenced, leaving the many survivors and families of those who disappeared in the dark (ICTJ, 2014). As Young argues "The delicate balance of the country's confessional politics makes any critical examination of the past extremely sensitive. In a way, silence and forgetfulness have become part of the national culture" (2000:45).

The culture of impunity in combination with state-sponsored amnesia leave CSOs with a burdensome task, namely that of developing alternative mechanisms to further reconciliation and to rebuild relations between groups (Safa, 2007). But many civil society initiatives to address the commemoration and memory of the war have not been supported by the government. "To turn the page, without first reading this page" (Documentary Manour, 2012) seemed to have been the adage on the political level.

1.4. Physical and Psychological Societal Segregation

The 'Green Line', separating the predominantly Christian East from the largely Muslim West of Beirut, was the most notable demarcation line separating communities in wartime Lebanon. Yet, the physical segregation of communities took place on a more local level as well. As each community organised itself in militias, claiming certain geographical areas as their own, they forced people from other sects to leave 'their' area. Already by the end of 1976, the territories were cleansed, after approximately 500,000 people were forced to move, resulting in homogenous neighbourhoods and areas (Rigby, 2000 in Bloch-jørgensen, 2006).

The physical segregation did not reverse itself after the war. Rather, it is argued that Beirut, to take the capital as an example, is more religiously segregated than ever, especially in terms of residency and education. When it comes to residency, instead of militia checkpoints, the post-war period has given rise to other social and identity markers: flags, banners, graffiti and symbols indicate

the religious background or the political movement supported in the area (Nasr, 2003; Hanf, 2003; Khalaf, 2006 in Larkin, 2009).[9] In Larkin's research on youth's experiences of Beirut's post-war recovery, Yasmine gives a striking account of the entrenched sectarian divisions: "On a recent bus journey I passed images of Nasrallah, Berri, Aoun, Jumblatt, Hariri.[10] Each photo marked confessional boundaries; communities are defined by the boundaries and markings on their walls" (2009:15). An apparent consequence is the lack of public places for people from different backgrounds to meet. It appears that the reconstruction of down-town Beirut has prioritized the religious and commercial aspects over the creation of a shared public space. "This failure to provide a new national space that could bridge existing sectarian divisions, or at least be a meeting place for a multiplicity of ideas, remembrances and experiences, may indeed be rebuilt Beirut's most serious flaw," Larkin argues (2009:14).

On the educational side, physical segregation means that schools often provide education to one particular religious community. This has particular consequences for more sensitive courses in the curriculum, such as history. Given the lack of historical consensus on the occurrences during the civil war, most history books in school end at 1943 - the year of independence. In other cases, schools chose a history textbook based on their religious affiliation, promoting a coloured, non-objective account of history. The new generation is therefore either left with a biased understanding or no knowledge at all, turning to their families for answers (UNDP, 2013; ICTJ, 2014; Documentary Zaccak, 2011).

Besides the physical segregation, the element of psychological segregation among the Lebanese communities requires attention. In some post-war contexts, communities continue to live in a culture of war as social relations have been distorted and "war and violence become normalized and woven into the fabric of daily life" (Wessells, 2009:349). In that line, Khalaf observed that the psychological splintering of space is a continuing consequence of the civil war (2002 in UNICEF, 2011). Using my own experiences in Lebanon based on interviews, the 'Green Line' formerly separating East from West Beirut, is a fitting example. While the line is not physically dividing the city anymore, it is still an imaginary line in the minds of especially the older generation, warning others to

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[9] An interesting article to read, entitled 'Beirut's schizophrenic identity' (2013), is that of Arthur Bernhoff, who is currently based in Beirut for his PhD research. He shares his experiences on social and identity markers in the capital and the entrenchment of sectarian divisions: https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/arthur-bernhoff/beiruts-schizophrenic-identity

[10] All of the names mentioned by Yasmine are leader of political parties, whose posters, banners and flags decorate the walls in any city or region in Lebanon. Hassan Nasrallah is the Secretary General of the Shi'a militant and political organisation Hezbollah, Nabih Berri is the head of the Shi'a Amal Movement, Michel Aroun was until 2015 the president of the Christian Free Patriotic Movement, Walid Jumblatt is the leader of the Druze Progressive Socialist Party and Saad Hariri, son of assassinated Rafic Hariri, is the leader of the Sunni Future Movement.

not cross to 'the other side'. Likewise, our guide Ibrahim repeatedly warned us to stay close to him as we were walking along Syria street in Tripoli, as he did not trust the people of that neighbourhood based on stories he had heard. It seems that the social transformation that determines whether former enemies "produce and reproduce their collective identities in either persistent antagonism or mutual acceptance" (Buckely-Zistel, 2006:4) has tilted towards the former in Lebanon.

This fear of the other is aggravated by the lack of an overarching national or collective identity that unites the Lebanese, as divisions, whether religious, political, social or regional, have created significant problems for the formation of a collective identity. Instead, the traumatic events of the civil war have often been reproduced in the group's collective identity, the concept Volkan coined as 'chosen trauma' (1991 in Buckely-Zistel, 2006). As such, "they [the sub-communities] act as independent mini-nations within a larger national entity called Lebanon" (Abraham, 2008 in Turkmen-Dervisoglu, 2012).

Thus, the societal situation in Lebanon can be characterized as one of physical and psychological segregation of its population along confessional lines. In the physical realm, the fact that residency and education are often segregated contributes to the entrenchment of sectarian divisions. On the psychological side, the fear factor continues to raise imaginary barriers between groups and people identify more in terms of their communal identity rather than a collective one. Given the political apathy and societal segregation, the following chapter addresses the question how CSOs aim to create a facilitating space for reconciliation in light of these challenges.

2. A Facilitating Space for Reconciliation

2.1. Allport's Contact Hypothesis

In 1954, Gordon W. Allport proposed the Contact Hypothesis, which until this present day plays an influential role not only in the social sciences but also in policy-making circles (Everett, 2013). As the name suggests, the hypothesis posits that contact between members of certain groups – under several optimal conditions – can lead to positive outcomes, such as the reduction in intergroup conflict and prejudice. Allport's original formulation of the Contact Hypothesis puts forward four optimal conditions that need to be present for the contact situation to positively affect relations between groups: (1) equal status of the participants within the contact situation, (2) the pursuit of common goals, (3) intergroup cooperation and (4) institutional support (Allport, 1954). In the sixty years that followed Allport's hypothesis, and as more academic effort was dedicated to intergroup contact theory, it appeared that Allport's conditions merely act as facilitating rather than essential conditions in the contact situation (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). The same research also showed that the effects of contact extend beyond situations with different racial or ethnic groups, the initial groups Allport's hypothesis was based on. Likewise, next to the four conditions mentioned above, it appeared that cross-group friendships have the ability to reduce intergroup prejudice as well (Pettigrew, 1998). Yet, other authors claim that friendships are merely the result of contact, rather than the cause of positive changes (Cornell, 1994).

However, further research brought to the fore several concerns with the Contact Hypothesis or gaps in the existing literature. While contact seems to be a very effective way to reduce prejudice, it proves a challenge to include a more prejudiced individual in the contact situation (Everett, 2013). Similarly, little research has been dedicated to the nexus of intergroup contact and societal change. Not much light has been shed on how a change in attitudes towards the other group can lead to a change in the ideological mindset that upholds inequality, especially since a cause-effect relationship is not self-evident (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2005 in Everett, 2013). This had led Lemish to argue that "the primary accomplishment of the Contact Approach in plural societies is that [...] meetings [between groups] take place," even if this means that the conflict itself is only superficially changed by these meetings (1986:19 in Cornell, 1994). The final concern with Allport's 'positive factors' approach is that it functions as an open-ended theory, in which an endless range of situational factors can be added. "But, with an ever-expanding list of necessary conditions, it becomes increasingly unlikely that any contact situations could meet these highly restrictive conditions" (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2005: 271).

Given the multitude of possible situational factors, I have decided to stick to Allport's original formulation, as these conditions have stood the test of time, despite its facilitating rather than essential nature. Based on these four conditions for positive intergroup contact, this chapter focuses on the potentiality of the reconciliation-oriented programmes to create a facilitating space for interpersonal reconciliation by bringing participants from different religious, ethnic and geographical backgrounds into contact with each other. Yet, given the facilitating nature of the conditions, I am not presuming to find "cause-effect" relationships between the conditions and the creation of a facilitating space. Rather, this chapter focuses on the question how these conditions can contribute to a contact situation that positively affects relations between groups.

2.2. Participant Selection by CSOs

Yet, before diving into the conditions for the creation of a facilitating space, it is necessary to shed light on the programme's participants, as participant selection criteria can have a significant impact on the outcome. First of all, the age category is of importance. Almost all CSOs particularly target youth for their reconciliation and social cohesion programmes. Hope is mentioned by CSOs as one of the reasons for this particular focus, as it is the future generation that can make a difference.[11] Likewise, youth have not lived through the war and can still be 'brainwashed' in a positive way.[12]

The second point of difference is the recruitment strategies of CSOs. On one side of the spectrum is FDCD, that relies on youth themselves applying for projects.[13] Other CSOs actively recruit people, but only focus on those who are interested in the initiative. For example, Adyan's Youth Club programme depends on headmasters nominating teachers willing to participate with their class.[14] On the other side of the spectrum the majority of CSOs are located. They are actively engaging possible participants who in first instance may be hesitant or outright hostile towards the idea of meeting people from other confessions or backgrounds.

The third distinction centres around inclusiveness. While several CSOs involve Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians, other organisations prioritize Lebanese youth in their programmes, such as Offre Joie: "In Lebanon, of course, priority is given to Lebanese."[15] Lastly, CSOs target different segments of society. While several organisations work with youth in poverty squares and high-risk areas, other

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[11] Author's interview with Talal Zeidan, Treasurer of Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation, Beirut, 27 April 2016.
[12] Author's interview with Farah Wahab, Programme Coordinator MARCH, Beirut, 17 March 2016; Al Jazeera feature 24 June 2015.
[13] Author's interview with Fadwa Ghaddar, Programme Officer of Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue, Beirut, 18 May 2016.
[14] Author's interview with Director Nayla Tabbara, Program Coordinator Mayssam Imad and Community Outreach Coordinator Nagham Tarhini of Adyan, Beirut, 13 April 2016.
[1515] Author's interview with Marc Torbey el Helou, Activities Coordinator Offre Joie, Beirut, 18 May 2016.

CSOs mainly target well-educated university students. DPNA is an example of the former, whose participants have to meet the vulnerability criteria it has set.[16] FDCD, on the other hand, takes the religious and ethnic background of those who have applied into consideration, but all participants are enrolled in university. Under the heading of 'design limits', the issue whether programs are able to reach those participants most in need will be addressed more in-depth.

2.3. Creating Conditions Conducive to Intergroup Contact

2.3.1. Equal Status: 'It is not an illusion'

Initially, Allport's condition of equal status referred to the relationship between the participants *within* the contact situation. "Equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals" (Allport, 1954:281) precludes hierarchy. Further research indicated that equal status is also important *prior* to the contact situation (Brewer and Kramer, 1985). In particular because pre-existing status differences form a challenge to the creation of equal status within the contact situation (Riordan & Ruggiero, 1980 in Brewer and Kramer, 1985). In light of Lebanon's complex social fabric with 18 officially recognized sects, the accompanying religious personal status laws, the sectarian divisions that dominate not only the political arena but also trickle down to all layers of society[17], the unhealed wounds of the civil war that continue to separate the population along confessional lines, and the many different versions of history that exist, people might not *perceive* their status as equal compared to their fellow countrymen from different religious or ethnic backgrounds.

Being particularly sensitive to the (perceived) pre-existing status differences, CSOs aim to physically but not psychologically detach the participants from their surroundings, thereby creating a level playing field for the participants. The idea behind this approach is that youth need to meet in a neutral and peaceful environment, far away from violence or tensions in their own communities, in order to open up to each other. The physical detachment is used to stimulate discussion, exchange experiences and learn from each other. Project Manager Elisa Shamma of DPNA explains 'It is not an

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[16] Author's interview with Elisa Shamma, Project Manager of DPNA, Beirut, 14 April 2016.

[17] During my first week in Lebanon, when I was still unaware of the magnitude of the influence of the sectarian system on everyday life, I met Hassan, a professional Lebanese basketball player who shared his experiences on the highly politicized field of basketball. One of the first things he told me had a lasting impression: 'This country has the tendency to change everything you love into something you hate, like basketball. Everything in Lebanon is influenced by the sectarian system'. In Lebanon, Sunni, Shi'a, Druze, Christians etc., all have their own team. Even for the national team players don't get solely selected on their abilities, there are sectarian considerations here as well, as the teams are funded by political parties.

illusion. At the same time we are talking about realistic things in the summer camp. We just want to detach them physically, but trigger them emotionally'.[18]

Likewise, nearly all the organisations explicitly focus on the creation of a safe space during the programmes, where participants feel free, accepted and tolerated in order to stimulate the exchange of views. This is in line with Moscovici and Zavalloni's (1969) work, which has shown that participants must be in an atmosphere where they feel they can express themselves freely in order for a group shift to occur. Each CSOs has its own strategy on how to create such a safe space. Offre Joie, for example, focuses on the commonalities between the kids and youth in their summer camps. At the end of each day, the participant prays in their own way while others watch and listen. Marc Torbey explains 'What unites us is the Lebanese anthem, our *duʿāʾ* in the evening, our prayer time, what unites us are our 3 principles: love, forgiveness, and pardon, which exists in all religions. [...] What unites us, we needed to highlight it.'[19]

Thus, equal status within the contact situation has to be ensured in order for the participants to open up and feel comfortable with sharing their experiences, hence the physical detachment and the creation of a safe space. Yet, this should not preclude a focus on actual differences outside the contact situation given the reconciliation-oriented nature, as we shall see in the discussion below.

2.3.2. Common Goals : 'It is not just about bringing people together'

Bringing people into a contact situation is one thing, but for positive outcomes to be achieved it is necessary to pursue a common goal in the contact situation, according to Allport (1954), who based his hypothesis on the idea that cooperative factors enhance intergroup relations. This does not only ensure that people work together to achieve a shared goal, it also means they have to rely on each other in order to realize it.

Before exploring the programmatic goals that are pursued to further reconciliation, it is interesting to shed light on the question who actually decides on the goals. It appears that a majority of the CSOs identify the activities to tackle the issues at hand themselves, at times already during the project proposal phase. However, another approach is employed by Country Director of RTP Elias Ayoub, who decided to focus more on the peaceful communities pillar after consulting youth[20]: 'The youth, you know, identified the issue of violence, conflict, safety [...] as something that really needed

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[18] Author's interview with Elisa Shamma, Project Manager of DPNA, Beirut, 14 April 2016.
[19] Author's interview with Marc Torbey el Helou, Activities Coordinator Offre Joie, Beirut, 18 May 2016.
[20] Right To Play has identified three main areas as critically impacting the development of a child: quality education, health practices and peaceful communities. Consequentially, its sport and play programmes focus on one of these pillars.

to be tackled. [...] this was something from my previous experience, because I have done a lot of work with youth in urban centres, working on violence and conflict, working on bringing people with different backgrounds together under one roof, so I knew it was necessary to have that voice in there'.[21]

Interesting enough, Allport's argument that cooperative efforts enhance intergroup contact appears to be an underlying assumption of the programmes. Ultimately, the visions of the CSOs all converge around the issue of reconciliation and social cohesion. Yet, different ways of achieving reconciliation, and thus different common goals, can be discerned. To create a clear picture, I will distinguish the tangible from the intangible common goals. The former often centre around projects or activities in which a certain end result is showcased by the participants. A widely used approach is the organisation of retreats, in which youth from different religious and geographical backgrounds come together for several days. Often, the aim is to foster dialogue through arts-based activities (DPNA and SFGC), sports (RTP) or school projects (Adyan). The widely appraised project of MARCH serves as an example that a common goal can bring antagonistic groups together. A couple of months after the deadly clashes between the rivalling Alawite neighbourhood Jabal Mohsen and the Sunni Bal al-Tabbaneh neighbourhood in Tripoli ended in 2014, 16 participants from both neighbourhoods met for the first time. MARCH's aim was for the youth to write and act in their own comedy play, basing the story line on their experiences. The accompanying documentary 'Love and War on the Rooftop' was screened in theatres all around Lebanon to bring the message across that 'the other' is exactly like us and their shared problems turned out to be the bridge that united them.[22]

While the programmes often have tangible outputs in the form of movies or art pieces, these are merely the *means* through which the CSOs hope to stimulate dialogue and to bring about the behavioural or ideational changes. Again, each CSO has its own focus point. For example, Adyan emphasizes the value of tolerance and the acceptance of diversity[23], ULYP believes that cultural awareness leads to acceptance of other cultures and thus people[24], Offre Joie highlights nationalism and the Lebanese identity to create a common ground[25] whereas DPNA tries to give the youth a sense of belonging outside of the religious and political realm, thereby refraining from actively

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[21] Author's interview with Elias Ayoub, Country Director Right To Play Lebanon, Beirut, 23 March 2016.

[22] Author's interview with Farah Wahab, Programme Coordinator MARCH, Beirut, 17 March 2016; Al Jazeera feature 24 June 2015.

[23] Author's interview with Director Nayla Tabbara, Program Coordinator Mayssam Imad and Community Outreach Coordinator Nagham Tarhini of Adyan, Beirut, 13 April 2016.

[24] Author's interview with Conflict Resolution Trainer Ali Haidar of Unite Lebanon Youth Project, Beirut, 17 May 2016.

[25] Author's interview with Marc Torbey el Helou, Activities Coordinator Offre Joie, Beirut, 18 May 2016.

changing the youth. Elisa Shamma explains: 'For me it is about providing the space for them to be able to change the way they want to change'.[26]

Indeed, a vast majority of the CSOs believe that common tangible goals are a means to change the underlying prejudices, stereotypes and misconceptions of the participants. One common factor in the approach of the CSOs is that dialogue in and of itself will not be sufficient. As Elias Ayoub formulates it 'Some believe there is this one way to do it, and it is based on dialogue and bringing different groups together, and then hashing out these issues, which I think is not effective. It think it should be part of an overall approach. [...] The more we push models like the thing that was done with MARCH, the more we can encourage other organisations to also tackle the issues in that way.'[27] Thus, an overall approach should link activities to dialogue and therefore focus on intangible goals through the tangible means, rather than focusing on one to the exclusion of the other.

2.3.3. Intergroup Cooperation: 'letting them discover'

The third condition of intergroup cooperation almost naturally follows from the previous condition of common goals, and the idea that cooperative factors enhance intergroup relations. Thus, Allport (1954) notes that an inter-dependent effort in a non-competitive environment is necessary for positive outcomes to emerge.

Indeed, a common goal, especially when centering around reconciliation between groups, can be equated to intergroup cooperation, as genuine reconciliation requires both sides to make an effort. It appears that almost all of the involved CSOs provide an opportunity for participants to work together, either within the time frame of the programme or beyond the project in more structural cooperation efforts. An example of the former is the "Better Together" Programme of SFGC and it local partner DPNA, which brings Lebanese and Syrian kids together for a year-long social cohesion programme. In mixed groups, the youth works together on one of the four arts (video, music, drawing and theatre) but are also challenged to think about their stereotypes and misconceptions towards each other. The toolbox of SFGC contains many art-based activities because 'Arts [...] is a cultural medium that doesn't threaten anyone. [...] It is a safe way of expressing themselves', according to Morgane Ortmans.[28]

Providing opportunities for post-programme intergroup cooperation forms a challenge for many of the CSOs, as funding restraints often do not allow for follow-up projects. Nevertheless, Offre

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[26] Author's interview with Elisa Shamma, Project Manager of DPNA, Beirut, 14 April 2016.
[27] Author's interview with Elias Ayoub, Country Director Right To Play Lebanon, Beirut, 23 March 2016.
[28] Author's interview with Morgane Ortmans, DME Coordinator Search for Common Ground, Beirut, 1 April 2016.

Joie's volunteer network proves to be a sustainable set-up, which ensures that intergroup cooperation is not confined to the time frame of a project. In case of an urgent situation, for example after the 2006 war with Israel or the explosion in the neighbourhood of Achrafieh in Beirut in 2012, volunteers from all different backgrounds are called upon to help rehabilitate the area by removing the rubble and restoring the area to a liveable state.[29] Another initiative is MARCH's Cultural Cafe in Tripoli, which I visited to talk to the youth that are running the cafe, which is located exactly on the border and former frontline of the rivalling neighbourhoods of Jabal Mohsen and Bab al Tabbaneh. Trainer Khaleb Merheb describes the added value of the cafe not only as an opportunity for the youth of the two neighbourhoods to cooperate together and share the responsibility for running the cafe, but he also emphasizes the snowball effect it has. Their friends visit to the cafe now as well, and come into contact with a new mentality, in which fighting each other is not accepted anymore.[30]

While a vast majority of the CSOs stimulate intergroup cooperation between the participants within or beyond their programmes to reach a more tangible common goal, it also uses the cooperation efforts to work on underlying attitudinal changes – the intangible goals. As Talal Zeidan explains: 'It is not about giving them the result. So it is about letting them discover by themselves the others'.[31]

2.3.4. Institutional Support: 'It is all about understanding'

The positive effect of intergroup contact is "greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom or local atmosphere)," according to Allport (1954:281). Research has shown that people more readily accept intergroup contact when socially sanctioned (Pettigrew, 1998).

All of the CSOs acknowledge that reconciliation and social cohesion are very sensitive topics in Lebanon, and institutional support – whether on the level of the authorities or in communities - is often lacking or difficult to establish, and in the most severe cases authorities actively opposed the project. At times, this has created challenges for the implementation of the programmes, as access to neighbourhoods or schools often has to be negotiated through the national government, local municipalities or local religious leaders. Yet, many CSOs are aware that the underlying reason for this lack of support is often fear. Elias Ayoub acknowledges that being granted permission requires a certain mutual understanding: 'A lot of Lebanese Christians, for example, have a fear that the Palestinian refugee camp scenario would be brought back but with the Syrians this time and have

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[29] Author's interview with Marc Torbey el Helou, Activities Coordinator Offre Joie, Beirut, 18 May 2016.
[30] Author's informal interview with Khaled Merheb, Lawyer and trainer MARCH, Tripoli, 19 April 2016.
[31] Author's interview with Talal Zeidan, Treasurer of Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation, Beirut, 27 April 2016.

them naturalized here in Lebanon. So once you sort of break down that fear and you talk it through and you are able to communicate effectively what the aim of the project is [...] It is all about understanding.'[32] This view corresponds to Elisa Shamma's experience: 'In the same way political parties fear that if you come and talk about social cohesion in a political sense that their people will understand that they don't need them anymore. So of course, because at the end of the day you need to work in this community, [...] so you will tell them you understand and no, you are not going to talk politics. But you are going to talk politics in your own way.'[33]

This brings up the question whether, and if so, how the CSOs seek to develop institutional support or ensure that their projects can be implemented? While none of the CSOs are financially supported by national or local authorities to implement reconciliation projects, the nature of contact with the authorities varies, from none to pragmatic to structural. MARCH has a clear non-involvement policy, as 'These were the cause of the problems, so you cannot involve any political or religious authorities at all.'[34] This, however, does not mean that the authorities sit back and accept the presence of the Cultural Cafe in Tripoli. On the contrary, MARCH has faced much opposition, ranging from verbal threats to physical assaults against its employees and participants by local politicians, according to trainer Merheb and the youth.[35]

Still, the pragmatic stance predominates. Most CSOs are in contact with the authorities as they have to negotiate access in order to implement their programmes or are willing to invest time in creating a basis of trust, such as RTP and DPNA. On the other side of the spectrum are the CSOs that aim at cooperation. Adyan is in close contact with the Ministry of Education through a partnership to develop an educational curriculum on inclusive citizenship. Yet, despite its close connections within the ministry, developing a curriculum on the extremely sensitive topic of history is also for Adyan a project for the long haul.[36] FDCD has close contacts with the official authorities as well, partly because of its founder Dr. Rev. Jarjour, a well-respected man in Lebanon, whose reputation has the ability to open doors and generate support in the highest levels of the government.[37]

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[32] Author's interview with Elias Ayoub, Country Director Right To Play Lebanon, Beirut, 23 March 2016.
[33] Author's interview with Elisa Shamma, Project Manager of DPNA, Beirut, 14 April 2016.
[34] Author's interview with Farah Wahab, Programme Coordinator MARCH, Beirut, 17 March 2016; Al Jazeera feature 24 June 2015.
[35] Author's informal interview with Khaled Merheb, Lawyer and trainer MARCH, Tripoli, 19 April 2016; Informal interview with Tarek (26), Youssef (21), Taha (15) and Omar (15), Cultural Cafe, Tripoli, 19 April 2016.
[36] Author's interview with Director Nayla Tabbara, Program Coordinator Mayssam Imad and Community Outreach Coordinator Nagham Tarhini of Adyan, Beirut, 13 April 2016.
[37] Author's interview with Fadwa Ghaddar, Programme Officer of Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue, Beirut, 18 May 2016.

It appears from the foregoing that Allport was correct in assuming that institutional support is a condition for intergroup contact to yield positive results. Not only because people feel more comfortable in joining when it is socially sanctioned, but also because some CSOs face considerable difficulties in implementing the programmes when support is lacking. Thus, CSOs need to be either persistent in their efforts to reassure the local municipality of the true purpose of the project, patient to develop a partnership with a ministry or bold enough to withstand the pressure exerted by authorities to terminate the programme.

2.4. Programmatic Constraints

From the foregoing it appears that most CSOs pursue the conditions that Allport labelled as optimal in creating intergroup contact situations. It would, therefore, be a logical conclusion to state that CSOs are successful in creating a facilitating space for intergroup contact. And while it is indeed undeniable that the CSOs are providing a safe space for participants to meet, talk, discover and work together across division lines, light must be shed on the programmatic constraints faced by the CSOs.

2.4.1. Design limits

Research on community centres initiatives based on Intergroup Play Theory in Northern Ireland, a variant of the Contact Hypothesis, has uncovered several constraints that can be traced back to the very design of the programmes (Cornell, 1994),[38] of which some are clearly visible in the case of Lebanon. Firstly, the contact situations either entail "short-term, intensive immersion programs or else involve a schedule of limited, irregular contact" (Cornell, 1994: 32). Many CSOs are aware of this constraint, and often attribute it to the financial strains experienced due to their dependence on outside funding. SFCG, for example, stresses the impossibility of developing a long-term vision for its peacebuilding programmes as funding is often guaranteed for a period between 12 and 30 months, including initial outreach. This, in addition to the second limitation that highlights the lack of structured opportunities for exchange, points out that there is not the time nor the resources to develop a long-term exchange platform or to follow up with the participants in a structured manner after the programme has ended.

Thirdly, the research states that groups are only in contact during the programme, and as they arrive and depart separately, the contact experience is not connected to their everyday lives.

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[38] In Northern Ireland a programme of formal education entitled Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) was developed in 1983 to ''bridge divisions and dispel prejudice, and to promote improved community relations by teaching students self-respect as well as respect for the cultural traditions, backgrounds and beliefs of others,'' either as a general approach to teaching or implemented as ''a specific project involving teachers and pupils from more than one school and from both communities'' (Cornell, 1994:31)

While this isolation may be the case, it is often a conscious choice on the side of the CSOs to physically detach the participants from their environment. And yet, exactly because they are not psychologically segregated from their environment, as reconciliation and social cohesion programmes explicitly focus on the communities the participants are coming from, this constraint does not seem to hold. Yet, given the difficulty of establishing long-term platforms for exchange, it might be difficult for the participants to stay in touch or to hold on to their new experiences after the programme has ended and they return to their own environment.

Fourthly, Cornell also noted that IPT initiatives often suffer from a lack of formally trained facilitators, thereby losing out on opportunities for constructive dialogue. While this concern seems legit, all of the involved CSOs bring in either professional artists or trained dialogue facilitators to work in their programmes or they train staff themselves. As one of the few CSOs fully relying on internal capacity, PHRO trained its team of facilitators based on its own know-how in the aftermath of the Nahr el Bared clashes in 2007.[39] As people were boiling to the point that they had to sit down and talk, it was of the upmost importance to educate the facilitators in depth on the situation at hand and prepare them emotionally for the dialogue sessions, according to Raji Abdel Salam.[40]

The final limit of ITP programs centred around its inability to reach those participants most in need. Elisa Shamma is aware of the challenges of looking for the most vulnerable Lebanese. She recalls that 'I have noticed a lot the difference between the status of the Lebanese participants that we had and that of the Syrians refugees. [...] But did we really look at the most vulnerable Lebanese? I don't think so. Maybe because it was harder for us to know who they are. [...] They were more privileged. This did not create a problem within the project. But most of the Lebanese did not relate to the issues of the Syrians.'[41] While DPNA admits the challenge while working in poverty squares and high-risk areas, other CSOs seem to mainly target well-educated university students. FDCD and DLR, for example, do not actively recruit participants and thus rely on students applying themselves. While this focus in itself does not preclude the necessity of intergroup reconciliation, my personal observation is that those most in need of these programmes are not found in universities, but in poverty squares and high-risk areas. When asking Talal Zeidan's view on this, he answered 'Here we have a problem that we need to target the people who need such trainings [...] We need to have a

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[39] In the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr el Bared clashes erupted in 2007 between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Fatah al-Islam militants, killing more than 450 civilians, soldiers and militants during the 105-day siege of the UNWRA camp. The focus groups and dialogue sessions that PHRO organised brought together inhabitants of the camp, Palestinian suspected of involvement in the clashes, representatives of the army and people living in the rural area around the camp.
[40] Author's interview with Raji Abdel Salam, Board Member of Palestinian Human Rights Organisation, Beirut, 24 May 2016.
[41] Author's interview with Elisa Shamma, Project Manager of DPNA, Beirut, 14 April 2016.

different approach maybe. I always say this [...] we really need to target those who suffer from this'.[42]

2.5. Conclusion: The Potentiality of a Facilitating Space

CSOs are actively ensuring equal status by creating safe spaces and physically detaching participants from their environment. Similarly, CSOs emphasize common goals and intergroup cooperation, and make use of tangible common goals as a means to work on the underlying misconceptions and prejudice. Thus, *within* the programme CSOs are able to create a space where participants enter into dialogue with each other in a non-threatening and open manner. Yet, several factors hamper the creation of a true and lasting facilitating space. The difficulties experienced by most CSOs in ensuring support from national government, local municipalities or religious leaders, the financial constraints faced due to ongoing dependence on outside funding, and the resulting challenges in establishing follow up projects or structured opportunities for exchange hinder long-term, community-inclusive reconciliation. Likewise, it appears a challenge to target the participants who are most in need of such programmes. Hence, *beyond* the actual implemented programmes the challenges are apparent. While it becomes clear that the CSOs provide the facilitating space to work on interpersonal reconciliation, how this process works in practise requires more attention. The following chapter will examine how contact between participants potentially triggers processes of attitude change.

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[42] Author's interview with Talal Zeidan, Treasurer of Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation, Beirut, 27 April 2016.

3. Processes Of Change Through Contact

While the previous chapter focused on the ability of the CSOs to create a facilitating space for interpersonal reconciliation, this part explores how the reconciliation-oriented programmes of CSOs seek to mediate participants' attitude change in order to erase and redefine the antagonistic and adversarial relations formed during conflict. The first part concerns the question how CSOs seek to change the attitudes of the participants through contact. Recent academic work "suggests that four interrelated processes operate through contact and mediate attitude change: learning about the outgroup, changing behaviour, generating affective ties, and ingroup reappraisal" (Pettigrew, 1998:70). To deepen the discussion, several relevant mechanisms that constitute processes of social boundary change, as identified by Tilly, are introduced to analyse the experiences of the participants.

3.1. Mediating Attitude Change: CSO perspective

3.1.1. Learning about the Outgroup

It is often assumed that contact situations provide a new learning experience that corrects negative views of the other group, hence contact reduces prejudice. Interestingly enough, the dominant consensus of cognitive analyses suggests that most contact situations do not yield positive outcomes. How is this consistent with the research literature that does suggest positive effects? The reason is simple: learning about the outgroup is just one of the processes involved, and their *interrelation* leads to an improvement in attitudes (Pettigrew, 1998).

At the core of all programmes is the assumption that contact fosters learning about the other, yet each CSO adopts its own approach. In analysing how the CSOs seek to facilitate this process, the co-existence and confrontational approach to learning will act as a point of reference, which Maoz applied in his research on Jewish-Palestinian planned encounters. Most CSOs adopt the co-existence model, which is positioned on one side of the spectrum. In the spirit of the Contact Hypothesis, these programmes stress the commonalities between the participants and aim to further mutual understanding and positive attitudes by fostering a "feeling of togetherness and connection" (Maoz, 2004: 443). Adyan's approach is exactly that, Mayssam Imad explains: 'The main target is to live together and for them to know each other. To live the co-existence and not to keep on the stereotypes they have from their parents, from the war, from the media... So we want them to experience what it means to live with the other and to base their knowledge on this experience'.[43]

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[43] Author's interview with Director Nayla Tabbara, Program Coordinator Mayssam Imad and Community Outreach Coordinator Nagham Tarhini of Adyan, Beirut, 13 April 2016.

On the other side of the spectrum is the confrontational model, which emphasizes the conflict, inequality and power relations between the opposing sides, with the aim of raising awareness about the asymmetrical relations (Maoz, 2004). Only the reconciliation project of PHRO in the aftermath of the Nahr el Bared crisis was based on this model: 'We tried to loosen the tensions between the community and the Lebanese government and those who have a strong critique on the Lebanese government and its way of understanding the concept of losses and victims. [...] We try to reconciliate, we try to take the anger out, their feelings and we try to understand how we can work with this situation better. We are all victims in this,' according to Raji Abdel Salam.[44] Only DLR and MARCH try to find a balance between the focus on co-existence and confrontation. 'On the level of individuals they might express and bring up the conflict, talk more about the conflict. But at the same time it is also about highlighting the similarities and the common points between each other,' according to Talal Zeidan.[45]

3.1.2. Changing Behaviour

Contact also has the potential to change the behaviour of the participants, as "new situations require conforming to new expectations" (Pettigrew, 1998:71). The resulting new behaviour might potentially lead to attitude change, resulting in the acceptance of members of the outgroup. This is based on the premise that the discrepancy between new behaviour and old prejudices is solved through a change in the individual's attitude (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997 in Pettigrew, 1998).

As said before, most programmes are based on the assumption that intergroup contact facilitates learning, and this would lead the way to a change in behaviour. Yet, there are very few evaluations conducted that provide evidence for this anticipated transformation. While CSOs at times provide information on outputs in terms of numbers or the level of the satisfaction with the programme, the actual outcome in terms of behavioural change is not systematically monitored and evaluated by most CSOs. Elias Ayoub is frank about the shallow M&E: 'I feel that our numbers are outlandish, they're fantasy. This is something I think we haven't done a good job at and, again, I think RTP recognizes that, and it is nothing that hasn't been said in countless meetings and Skype calls'.[46] As the programmes are reconciliatory in nature, seeking to address antagonistic and adversarial relations, a proper M&E system appears indispensable to examine the effectiveness of the programmes and to improve it accordingly.

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[44] Author's interview with Raji Abdel Salam, Board Member of Palestinian Human Rights Organisation, Beirut, 24 May 2016.
[45] Author's interview with Talal Zeidan, Treasurer of Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation, Beirut, 27 April 2016.
[46] Author's interview with Elias Ayoub, Country Director Right To Play Lebanon, Beirut, 23 March 2016.

Nevertheless, M&E on the 'Better Together' project of SFGC and DPNA provides some insights into the behavioural changes of the participants. The mid-term evaluation, based on 100 surveys, four focus group discussions and monitoring data, shows that 75 per cent of the participants think their response to conflict has changed over the course of the programme. Likewise, in comparison to the baseline evaluation, the participants experienced a decline in prejudice toward the other. Reservations linked to different nationalities declined from 20 to 14 per cent, reservations towards other religions went down from 22 to 16 per cent and those to different cultures and traditions decreased from 38 to 25 per cent (SFGC, Mid-term Evaluation Report, June-July 2015).[47]

3.1.3. Generating Affective Ties

While emotions play a critical role in intergroup contact, they have not been touched upon until now. Generally, repeated contact reduces anxiety and optimal contact increases positive emotions. In the latter case, this is often connected to empathy. Pettigrew's model demonstrates a strong path between intergroup friendship and affective ties, lending support to the statement that friendship across boundaries leads to a reduction in prejudice (1998).

This brings up the question whether CSOs experienced an increase in affective ties among the participants and an increase in intergroup friendships, as the theory posits. DPNA stated: 'Of course the project was successful, they are friends now even beyond the project. We don't question that'.[48] The mid-term evaluation on their project supports this claim as 83 per cent of the surveyed youth indicated they interact with their fellow participants outside the programme. An example of how initial disagreement can lead to a friendship is that of the Syrian boy Adnan and the Lebanese girl Mariam: 'Over the duration of the camp [...] Adnan and Mariam began to recognize familiar marks of trauma and fear in each other. A tentative friendship formed between them'.[49] The forming of affective ties and friendships was clearly visible during my visit to the Cultural Cafe in Tripoli, where youth from two former rivalling neighbourhoods run the cafe together. This corresponds to

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[47] It must be noted that this mid-term evaluation tracks the behavioural changes of the participants within the programme. It therefore does not shed light on the question whether these changes are sustained beyond the context of the programme.

[48] Author's interview with Elisa Shamma, Project Manager of DPNA, Beirut, 14 April 2016.

[49] The tensions between Adnan and Mariam were a direct result of the clashes between the Lebanese Army and extremist groups fighting the Syrian government, who were present on Lebanese ground in the border town of Arsal in the Bekaa Valley. As the camp had just started when the clashes erupted, the summer camp was forced to relocate to secure the safety of the participants. Besides the issue of violence, tensions also rose between some of the participants. While Adnan fled from Syria after his arrest and torture by government forces, Mariam expressed her frustration with the actions of the opposition forces. Their heated exchange, as reported by SFGC in their blog on the summer camp where Syrian refugees and Lebanese youth came together, "took a turn for the worst, escalating from off-colored language to threats" (Emma Fredieu and Ramy Barhouche, SFGC blog, August 2014).

Farah Wahab's reasoning that once the youth see the common points, being all unemployed, poor and uneducated, they will unite: 'They are friends now. Best friends actually'.[50]

Interestingly enough, most CSOs do not mention an increase in affective ties as a result of the programme. In response to the question whether former participants would have a tea together after the project, the answer of FDCD was simple: 'I don't have information about that'.[51] The absence of information could be a direct result of the lack of M&E in most programmes or it might be linked to the fact that the formation of affective ties is not their prime focus, as the programmes merely aim at increasing understanding between the participants and not so much track whether friendships have been formed.

3.1.4. Ingroup Reappraisal

Until now, the processes have mainly centred on the individual's behaviour towards the out-group. The last process focuses on the complete opposite: new experiences and perspectives may also give rise to a reshaping of the views participants have of their *own* group: ingroup reappraisal (Pettigrew, 1998).

The CSOs shed little light on this particular process. Perhaps again due to a lack of M&E or because a change in the perception of the participants' own group is not something taken into consideration when reflecting on the attitudinal changes, as most programmes focus on learning about and understanding the other. However, this cannot be ascertained with certainty. What does come to the fore during interviews is that religious or ethnic identity holds a firm grip on groups in the context of Lebanon, as identity is more communal than national in nature, and that critical reflection of one's own group is not self-evident and a rather sensitive issue. As Talal Zeidan explains 'It is the fear of changing the identity. [...] Till now we have a problem, even in the identity, which brings up fear. Because we do not have a common identity'.[52]

3.1.5. Conclusion: Attitudinal Change through Contact?

Outgroup learning has been noted by all CSOs as a means to further reconciliation as it allows the participants to base their knowledge on actual experiences rather than prejudices and stereotypes. Yet, it appears most processes on attitudinal change cannot be ascertained with certainty, as relatively few CSOs monitor and evaluate the experiences of the participants. For those programmes

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[50] Author's interview with Farah Wahab, Programme Coordinator MARCH, Beirut, 17 March 2016.
[51] Author's interview with Fadwa Ghaddar, Programme Officer of Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue, Beirut, 18 May 2016.
[52] Author's interview with Talal Zeidan, Treasurer of Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation, Beirut, 27 April 2016.

that have conducted M&E, data show that a change in behaviour and even attitudes has occurred and that intergroup friendships have been build. Thus, the findings suggest contact sets into motion the processes of attitude change, with outgroup learning as the most influential process.

3.2. Mechanisms of Social Boundary Change: Participant and Trainer Perspective

While Pettigrew's interrelated processes certainly point out several interesting phases, it reveals little about *how* this change exactly comes about, nor does it answer the question: "How do divisions between us and them change, such that yesterday's enemies becomes today's friends?" (2004:213), a question posed by Charles Tilly. Linking this to the reconciliation programmes, this part addresses how antagonistic and adversarial relations that were formed during conflict are erased and redefined. To be more specific, how did the social boundaries that separated groups change in the space created by CSOs to further reconciliation?

Tilly argues that "several causal mechanisms" (2004:213) can provide the answer to the question on social boundary change. Yet, what are mechanisms exactly? Mechanisms are the building blocks of which processes are made of. In that light, processes of social boundary change are "frequently occurring combinations or sequences of mechanisms" (Tilly, 2005:28). Four features are expected to be present in the realization of a social boundary: "distinctive relations on each side of a separating zone, distinctive relations across the zone, and shared representations of the zone. Boundary change consists of formation, transformation, activation, and suppression of such four-part complexes" (Tilly, 2004:215). Yet, caution is required as there is hardly any empirical evidence available, which Tilly acknowledges himself, stating that "no one has systematically catalogued, much less verified, the crucial mechanisms of boundary change" (2004: 213).

To shed light on the process of social boundary change, the experiences of participants and trainers will be analysed with the help of relevant mechanisms that are at work in the reconciliation space. The part is based on the participant experiences of Gloria Tauk (20, Adyan), Talal Zeidan (DLR) and MARCH' participants Tarek (26), Youssef (21), Taha (15) and Omar (15), and that of trainers Khaled Merheb of MARCH and Ali Haidar of ULYP.

3.2.1. Brokerage - Getting the Chance to Meet

The mechanism of brokerage refers to "the joining of two or more previously less connected social sites" (Tilly, 2001:26), a mechanism that clearly stands out. For several participants it was the first time they had the opportunity to meet people from another religion or geographical area. According

to Talal it was a turning point: 'As a participant I got the chance to meet people from different backgrounds, from different societies. [...] the Christian neighbourhood, the Muslim neighbourhood, the Druze neighbourhood, the Armenian neighbourhood, this becomes an obstacle for citizens to meet each other. There is no common ground'. Being from a Druze community in a Druze village in Mt. Lebanon, DLR's programme gave him the chance to meet, discover and talk to youth from other backgrounds. [53]

Gloria, from the Maronite Catholic village of Bcharri in Northern Lebanon, participated in Alwan's Youth Club programme which links schools from different religious backgrounds: 'It gave me the chance to live with and interact with people from different sects and different religions, such as having lunch together, visiting each other's religious places and having lectures about each other's communities and traditions.'[54] Similarly, most of the youth in two adjacent neighbourhoods in Tripoli, each with a different religious background, had never crossed the border to the other side before participating in MARCH' initiative, fearing that it might endanger themselves.[55]

These findings suggest CSOs have the ability to facilitate the interaction between groups or sites from different religious or geographical areas that were previously unconnected. This is in line with Cousens & Kumar's (2001 in Omach, 2014) observation that CSOs often function as a bridge-builder between different groups that experience feelings of enmity against each other.

3.2.2. Boundary Deactivation – From Foes to Friends

Boundary deactivation refers to a decline in the salience of the us-versus-them distinction while boundary activation increases the salience of boundaries. It is a mechanism that *constitutes* boundary change, thus producing its effect (Tilly, 2004). MARCH' initiative to bring youth from the warring neighbourhoods of Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen in Tripoli together for a play based on their own experiences, significantly changed Tarek's (26) perception of youth from the other neighbourhood, and he no longer sees them as his enemies but as his friends.[56]

Tarek arrived at the first rehearsal with the idea of fighting the other side, he recalls, and some participants even arrived with weapons. During the first two days, the groups were entirely separated as anger, suspicion and mistrust preventing them to mingle. The salience of the boundaries were high, and may even have risen at first given the wave of emotions. Step by step the

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[53] Author's interview with Talal Zeidan, Treasurer of Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation, Beirut, 27 April 2016.
[54] Survey, Gloria Tauk, Adyan's Youth Club programme, Bsharre, 9 June 2016.
[55] Informal interview with Tarek (26), Youssef (21), Taha (15) and Omar (15), Cultural Cafe, Tripoli, 19 April 2016.
[56] Informal interview with Tarek (26), Youssef (21), Taha (15) and Omar (15), Cultural Cafe, Tripoli, 19 April 2016.

participants started to talk to each other, shared their experiences in order to write the script for the play, and realized both sides were suffering from poverty, unemployment and violence. Taha (15) remembers one instance in which he realised the group no longer thought along the lines of our people versus their people, when a group from Jabal protected Tabbaneh participants as a guy from Jabal tried to pick a fight. He himself also came to realize that not all Alawites are responsible for the death of his brother in a mosque bombing in Bab al-Tabbaneh. As the us-versus-them distinction disappeared, friendships were formed: Tarek recalls that he used to hate Youssef from Jabal the most, now he loves him the most.[57]

Slowly the us-versus-them distinction lessened between the participants and the boundaries' salience gradually declined between the groups, opening up opportunities for teamwork and empathy. Tarek and Youssef have plans to open other branches of the Cultural Cafe with the idea that they would manage the cafe in each other's neighbourhood to spread the message that reconciliation is possible.[58]

3.2.3. Erasure – 'We are all Muslims'

The last relevant mechanism that helps us to understand how contact may trigger attitude change is that of inscription and its counterpart erasure. Inscription heightens distinctive relations by differentiating social relations on either side and across the zone more sharply from each other, with erasure resulting in the opposite effect (Tilly, 2004).

It appears that erasure is a natural consequence of intergroup learning, the first of Pettigrew's processes on attitude change. Talal, for example, noticed that most knowledge of the participants at the start of DLR's programme consisted of stereotypes and misconceptions. One of the participants, Talal recalls, approached him and asked whether he indeed was a Druze. When Talal answered affirmatively, the guy was confused as he had always been told that Druze have tails, but Talal did not appear to have one.[59]

ULYP trainer Ali Haidar likewise allows the participants to explore each other as this enables youth to learn about the outgroup, which shows that despite differences in opinion, thoughts and ideas, there are commonalities. Ali recalls one of the sessions when the pious Sunni participant Omar told Ali, a Shi'a, that he did not want to be in this session, interacting with people from other

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[57] Informal interview with Tarek (26), Youssef (21), Taha (15) and Omar (15), Cultural Cafe, Tripoli, 19 April 2016.
[58] Informal interview with Tarek (26), Youssef (21), Taha (15) and Omar (15), Cultural Cafe, Tripoli, 19 April 2016.
[59] Author's interview with Talal Zeidan, Treasurer of Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation, Beirut, 27 April 2016.

religions or branches of Islam. After the programme, Omar approached Ali, gave him a hug and said: "Some Shi'a are good." When Ali asked him what made him change his mind, Omar answered that the session made him realize that they are all Muslims, and they are killing themselves for nothing.[60]

Thus, intergroup learning allowed the participants to correct their initial prejudices and contact in general made them realize the commonalities they shared with the other group. Both processes resulted in the erasure of distinct social relations, leading to a change in their initial often antagonistic stance.

3.2.4. Conclusion: How do Yesterday's Enemies Become Today's Friends?

Three relevant mechanisms provide an explanation on how adversarial and antagonistic relations are transformed into more positive ones. First off, brokerage clearly stands out as in many occasions the participants did not have the opportunity to meet 'the other' before, paving the way for CSOs to function as a bridge-builder in creating such a meeting space. This is directly linked to the deactivation and erasure of the boundary. Contact between groups, especially when realizing a common goal through intergroup cooperation, referring back to Allport's conditions, has led to a decrease in the us-versus-them dichotomy and thus in the deactivation of the boundary. Lastly, erasure of the social boundary appears to be the result of intergroup learning, one of Pettigrew's mechanisms, as participants are triggered to tackle their initial prejudices and focus on the commonalities instead.

Having analysed both the CSOs approach towards creating a facilitating space for reconciliation and the processes and mechanisms of attitude change, it is time to turn to the last question whether, and if so how, societal segregation and political apathy impact the work of CSOs and the outcome of the programmes.

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[60] Author's interview with Conflict Resolution Trainer Ali Haidar of Unite Lebanon Youth Project, Beirut, 17 May 2016.

4. Enabling and Constraining Contextual Factors

While the attention for the role of civil society in post-conflict peacebuilding has increased, little scholarly research has focused on the enabling environment that would facilitate the work of CSOs in PCPB, Paffenholz and Spurk (2006) argue. This final chapter is therefore a response to the authors' plea to shed light on the enabling conditions that allow CSOs to play a constructive role. In light of the Lebanese context, my research has indicated that it is insightful to look at the factors that either enable or *constrain* the environment in which CSOs work. This chapter will therefore concern the question how the physical and psychological segregation of the population along confessional lines, and the lack of official top-down reconciliation in a political system dominated by sectarian interests affect the implementation of the reconciliation-oriented programmes.

In their study, Paffenholz and Spurk identify several factors that cause a deterioration of an enabling environment. First off, insecurity and fear caused by years of conflict can result in hesitation on the side of the population to participate in CSO initiatives as they are still observing the development of new power relations (Pearce, 2005 in Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006). Similarly, when the state is weak in a post-conflict setting, the influence of uncivil groups increases, limiting the potential of CSOs to work on interethnic understanding as people are inclined to strengthen ties and seek protection with their own group when the state is unable to provide security. An additional factor is the instrumentalization of CSOs by political elites on the basis of 'ethnicism' as in most post-conflict contexts "civil society tends to be organized along conflict lines, thus fostering clientelism, reinforcing societal cleavage and hindering democratization" (2006:12). Lastly, cash inflows in the form of aid can do harm in delicate post-conflict situations in which the social fabric is heavily affected by conflict, Anderson observes (1999 in Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006). With these factors in mind, light will be shed on how societal segregation and political apathy either work as enabling or constraining factors for the environment in which the CSOs work.

4.1. Societal Segregation

Lebanon post-war society is more segregated than ever (Larkin, 2009). Separated residency and educational systems reinforce the physical segregation of the population (Larkin, 2009; UNDP, 2014). Likewise, the psychological splintering of space by sect is a direct consequence of the war (Khalaf, 2002 in UNICEF, 2011), which continues to raise imaginary barriers between people. This is aggravated by the absence of an overarching Lebanese national identity as people identify more in terms of their communal identity than a collective one, resulting in entrenched divisions that continue to separate Lebanese society (Abraham, 2008 in Turkmen-Dervisoglu, 2012).

As such, societal segregation is far from an enabling environment for CSOs to be able to play a constructive role. Several social and psychological obstacles stand out. First off, nearly all CSOs mention the lack of public places for people to meet as one of the main barriers to successful, sustainable reconciliation. Elissa Shamma even suggests that the system itself does not allow people to co-exist, taking the separate shifts in schools for Lebanese children and Syrian refugees as an example. Some CSOs therefore work on creating such a space, with the Cultural Cafe as an outstanding example, allowing residents from the warring neighbourhoods in Tripoli to meet on neutral territory. Similarly, DPNA set up 'the Gathering' as a meeting space for youth from all denominations after projects end.[61]

Community resistance is likewise an apparent obstacle mentioned by several CSOs. On numerous occasions, CSOs had to spend considerable time and effort convincing the participants and their surroundings of their true intentions. Morgane Ortmans recalls the outreach phase of one of SFCG's projects in which both Lebanese and Syrians were targeted. The team spent four to six months talking to the locals as a way of introducing them to the project and to establish trust. This was followed by separate meetings with Syrians and Lebanese, and in the final stage one-on-one meetings with both groups could be organized.[62] Adyan initially experienced active opposition by parents, who were afraid that the projects activities that introduced the students to other religions and geographical areas was merely a means to convert them. Adyan resolved these issue by sending a permission letter to parents and invited them to assist during the sessions.[63] The only way to reassure the community is through understanding their fears, Elissa Shamma argues, an adage CSOs adhere to as many CSOs work with local partners to build trust in the communities.[64]

On other occasions CSOs faced active resistance within the community in implementing their projects. Often, opposition fades after the community understands the aim of the project and realizes the potential positive effects it may trigger. During a focus group discussion in the Bekaa as part of the Better Together project, one of the participants mentioned: "The theatre play changed the parents' opinions and they emboldened us when they saw the success of the project through the play".[65] Yet, other theatre performances, such as a play about the love between a Syrian and Palestinian, touched upon a too sensitive topic. Several spectators cursed before leaving the play.

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[61] Author's interview with Elisa Shamma, Project Manager of DPNA, Beirut, 14 April 2016.
[62] Author's interview with Morgane Ortmans, DME Coordinator Search for Common Ground, Beirut, 1 April 2016.
[63] Author's interview with Director Nayla Tabbara, Program Coordinator Mayssam Imad and Community Outreach Coordinator Nagham Tarhini of Adyan, Beirut, 13 April 2016.
[64] Author's interview with Elisa Shamma, Project Manager of DPNA, Beirut, 14 April 2016.
[65] Search for Common Ground, Mid-term Evaluation Report, June-July 2015: 21.

One participant recalled: "Someone was offensive and told me that the project was filling my head with wrong ideas and wasn't convinced of the goodness of the project."[66] The first play initiated by MARCH even led to verbal threats – 'I will kill you' – being uttered against the participants, and until this day the Cultural Cafe faces considerable community opposition which extends beyond the realm of local politicians and religious figures.[67]

This brings us to the third obstacle, namely that of a general suspicion towards CSOs in poverty squares and areas where tensions are tangible. Farah Wahab recalled that people in Tripoli did not initially trust MARCH, an NGO from Beirut that is willing to help people without wanting anything in return.[68] Ali Haidar noticed similar sentiments when talking to Palestinian parents in preparation for the Frame by Frame programme. Given the bad experiences with their own organisations, such as UNWRA, Ali argues, they have no faith in NGOs, feeling used for funds and consider participation a waste of time.[69] Raji Abdel Salam mitigates this lack of trust by locating his office in one of the refugee camps PHRO is active in, so 'I understand somehow what they feel.'[70] Likewise, he mentions outreach as an important phase, mobilising mosques, schools, Lebanese partners and local organisations to reach the people. In that regard, Elisa Shamma recalls a Syrian girl who was not allowed by her parents to join a summer camp as she had to sleep over. DPNA's newly appointed female field coordinator from the area the project were to take place, visited the parents to talk about their concerns. With a Palestinian-Syrian background herself, the field coordinator better understood the underlying cultural and religious considerations of the parents.[71] Awareness of cultural factors is mentioned by most CSOs, all whom work closely together with partners from the areas or communities they are active in. Another approach adopted by CSOs is to ensure a balanced confessional and gender representation within their team to overcome the suspicion on the side of the community concerning their programmes.

Thus, the lack of public places to meet with people from other sects, the resistance on the side of the community which does not always fade away, and a general suspicion toward NGOs, that despite strategies to enhance trust takes years to build, are several factors that have the ability to jeopardize, counter or hinder the effect of the reconciliation initiatives.

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[66] Search for Common Ground, Mid-term Evaluation Report, June-July 2015: 34.
[67] Author's interview with Farah Wahab, Programme Coordinator MARCH, Beirut, 17 March 2016.
[68] Author's interview with Farah Wahab, Programme Coordinator MARCH, Beirut, 17 March 2016.
[69] Author's interview with Conflict Resolution Trainer Ali Haidar of Unite Lebanon Youth Project, Beirut, 17 May 2016.
[70] Author's interview with Raji Abdel Salam, Board Member of Palestinian Human Rights Organisation, Beirut, 24 May 2016.
[71] Author's interview with Elisa Shamma, Project Manager of DPNA, Beirut, 14 April 2016.

4.2. Political Apathy

The state-sponsored amnesia that prevailed after the civil war is usually attributed to the impossibility of agreeing on a single historical narrative by the various confessional groups given the multitude of versions on Lebanon's history, the delicate balance that needs to be maintained within the sectarian system, and the political considerations and personal interests on the side of the political elite who have repeatedly torpedoed a state-led investigation into the war (ICTJ, 2014; Barak, 2007). Thus, as Young observes: "Truth is usually sacrificed at the altar of compromise" (2000:45). The adage of turning the page without reading it first, the sectarian divisions that dominate the political arena, the political elites' uncompromising attitude, and their interest in maintaining the status quo have led to an indifferent attitude on the national level towards reconciliation initiatives, undermining the possibility toward national reconciliation (Klap and Yassin, 2008), and possibly also poses challenges for interpersonal reconciliation on the community level.

Allport's condition of institutional support in contact situations already revealed the sensitivity of the topic of reconciliation and the fear of local authorities to lose their base of support through social cohesion initiatives. Part II also discussed the strategies utilized by CSOs to seek institutional support or to ensure the implementation of projects, ranging from none, to pragmatic to structural contact with local powerholders. Yet, little light has been shed on how institutional actors frustrate or enable the work of CSOs.

In several instances, CSO activities were actively hindered by local authorities. MARCH's Cultural Cafe has been targeted from the outset, according to trainer Khaled Merheb. A number of allegations were made by local politicians concerning the alleged harassment of women in the cafe, and several participants and trainers were verbally and physically assaulted.[72] Not only local political actors have an interest in obstructing the initiatives, the growing influence of religious authorities is mentioned by several CSOs as a worrisome development. In the Palestinian refugee camp Ain el Hilweh, RTP was stopped by an DAESH sympathizer, threatening to bring in his men and their guns to hurt RTP's staff.[73] Likewise, religious authorities in Tripoli requested an official meeting with Offre Joie, urging them to leave their neighbourhood, which OJ resisted after the local population successfully stood up against its religious leaders.[74]

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[72] Author's informal interview with Khaled Merheb, Lawyer and trainer MARCH, Tripoli, 19 April 2016.
[73] Author's interview with Elias Ayoub, Country Director Right To Play Lebanon, Beirut, 23 March 2016.
[74] Author's interview with Marc Torbey el Helou, Activities Coordinator Offre Joie, Beirut, 18 May 2016.

However, in other cases the authorities enabled the work of CSOs. Several examples of cooperative municipalities were mentioned, which facilitated or hosted events or provided lists of schools for the CSOs to work with. Yet, even in case of cooperative authorities particular care is needed. As Elissa Shamma of DPNA notes: 'They are fine unless you tackle politics, unless they see this project will trigger people talking about these issues in the streets. [...] We cannot come directly and say we bring together communities and let's talk about problems. [...] And that is how we learned as civil society to sugar-coat everything.'[75]

What does the influence of local political and religious leaders imply for the enabling environment? Two apparent developments were observed by CSOs as potentially jeopardizing the long-term effect of reconciliation-oriented programmes. First off, the recruitment of vulnerable youth by religious authorities is a worrisome development. Due to large-scale poverty and despair, the Palestinian youth that PHRO works with are an easy target for radical mosques, according to Raji Abdel Salam: 'Most of them either need to feed themselves or their families, but I see now, because we are working there, and at a certain point I want to train them in human rights, but I cannot give them pocket money so they go to the mosque and get brainwashed by some extremist guys.'[76] Tarek, a former fighter from the Bab al-Tabanneh district in Tripoli, experienced it firsthand. Yet, through MARCH's project he realized he was just a marionette in the game of local politicians and religious leaders in Tripoli.[77] A second concern mentioned by several CSOs is Lebanon's volatile environment. Its numerous political divisions and local conflicts that erupt regularly are detrimental to the sustainability of the reconciliation initiatives. Positive relations that have been built over years are destroyed within days, as soon as tensions between communities reach the level of outright clashes. Talal Zeidan recalls that 'some of the participants go back to the zero level, having the same fear because of some clashes happening.'[78]

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[75] Author's interview with Elisa Shamma, Project Manager of DPNA, Beirut, 14 April 2016.

[76] Author's interview with Raji Abdel Salam, Board Member of Palestinian Human Rights Organisation, Beirut, 24 May 2016.

[77] Author's informal interview with participants Tarek, Youssef, Taha and Omar of MARCH's Cultural Cafe, Tripoli, 19 April 2016.
To further clarify Tarek's comment, each side of the conflict in Tripoli, the Sunni residents of Bab al-Tabbaneh and the Alawite Jabal Mohsen residents, is supported by an foreign power. Saudi Arabia is financing the Sunni residents while the Syrian regime is supporting the Alawite community. Thus, the clashes in Tripoli are merely a proxy war between outside powers. According to Hafiza, one of the girls who participated in MARCH' theatre play: "The politicians benefit from the lack of incomes in Tabbaneh and Mohsen. They keep them poor and they make them fight." (Middle East Eye, 23 June 2015). Khaled Merheb mentioned during our informal interview that religious figures in Tripoli are played by local politicians. This in combination with the realization that many inhabitants depend on their local leaders for services as state presence is limited, one can place Tarek's comment into context.

[78] Author's interview with Talal Zeidan, Treasurer of Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation, Beirut, 27 April 2016.

To end with a more positive note, the Lebanese government is slowly realizing the necessity of social cohesion interventions in response to the Syrian crisis, which might give rise to a more supportive role for other initiatives. After humanitarian aid initially aggravated tensions between refugees and the host community, as aid was almost exclusively provided to Syrian refugees while their deprived Lebanese counterparts received near to no aid (Carpi, 2014),[79] SFGC recently signalled the government's willingness to incorporate social cohesion as a component of several working groups that have been formed as part of the government's Crisis Response Plan.[80]

4.3. Conclusion: Potential of Constructive Role for CSOs.

In response to Paffenholz and Spurk's plea, this chapter shed light on the enabling and constraining factors that CSOs face. Several social and psychological barriers that originate from the physical and psychological segregation may prove detrimental to the project implementation. On the community level, few places exist for participants to meet beyond the project, local opposition to the projects does not always fade away, and given the limited time span of most projects, engaging participants and establishing trust can be a difficult and time-consuming task. Likewise, as CSOs seek to bridge the gap between an indifferent political attitude toward reconciliation and the tensions that are visible on the local level, thereby taking on the task the government is refraining from doing, the responses by local authorities differs from a cooperative attitude to active opposition. Two distinct developments have been observed by CSOs as potentially jeopardizing the effect of the programmes, thereby limiting the constructive role CSOs can play: both the recruitment of vulnerable youth by radical mosques and the occurrence of clashes that may destroy positive relations that took years to build are concerning developments.

Connecting this to the factors Paffenholz and Spurk highlighted, insecurity and fear on the side of the population is indeed prevalent in certain communities the CSOs work, at times resulting in opposition to the initiative. Uncivil groups, when broadly interpreted as any actor that has an interested in exacerbating or sustaining divisions among the population, indeed have the influence to

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[79] Several CSOs mentioned this development during the interview, arguing that initially the Lebanese population was very welcoming towards the Syrian refugees, providing them with shelter and food. Yet, as funds began pouring into Lebanon in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, the poor Lebanese – more than a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line – witnessed the aid almost exclusively being distributed among the Syrians. The initial hospitable attitude on the side of the Lebanese changed to an antagonistic stance, causing tensions to grow between the groups. CSOs argue that it took years before the international community realized that their unequal distribution of humanitarian aid gave rise to significant tensions (PHRO, DPNA, SFCG), and the step from relief to empowerment was only taken after two years.

[80] Author's interview with Morgane Ortmans, DME Coordinator Search for Common Ground, Beirut, 1 April 2016. / Together with the United Nations, the Government of Lebanon has developed the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan to coordinate the humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis in cooperation with IGOs and CSOs to ensure stability in Lebanon (UNOCHA, 2014).

limit the potential of CSOs to work on interethnic understanding. The instrumentalization of CSOs by political elites is not the case with the non-political and independent CSOs in this research, referring back to the distinction between 'al- mujtama al-ahli' and 'al-mujtama al-madani' type of civil society.[81] And as witnessed, aid flows did more harm than good for relations between Lebanese and Syrians in the past couple of years, although the government is slowly realizing the necessity of social cohesion initiatives in response to the Syrian crisis. What could be added to the list of factors potentially deteriorating the enabling environment for CSOs is the absence of public places for people to meet and the low lack of trust in NGOs in certain communities. Likewise, the recruitment of vulnerable youth by radical groupings and the outbreak of hostilities have the potential to undo the positive effects of reconciliation projects.

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[81] in the Arabic language there are two terms for civil society, namely 'al- mujtama al-ahli' and 'al-mujtama al-madani'. While the first term places kinship relations centre stage, "[a]l-mujtama al-madani carries a willingness to move away from traditional structures and perceptions" (Traboulsi quoted in Bernhard Hillenkamp, 2005). CSOs in Lebanon are often an al-ahli type, but the CSOs involved in this research are of an al-madani nature.

5. Conclusion

This thesis has examined how CSOs that work in the field of peacebuilding in Lebanon in areas where sectarian tensions are tangible attempt to erase and redefine the antagonistic and adversarial relations formed during violent conflict through a process of bottom-up, interpersonal reconciliation on the community level. Viewed through the lens of Allport's Contact Hypothesis, the findings suggest CSOs are able to foster dialogue and work on the participants' underlying misconceptions and prejudices *within* the facilitating space they created. Yet, challenges are apparent in establishing structured opportunities for exchange and community-inclusive reconciliation *beyond* the scope of the programme.

This research also provided an insight into how the process of changing negative relations into positive ones occurs. While relatively few data are available, as actual outcomes in terms of attitude change are not systematically monitored and evaluated by most organisations, Pettigrew's process of learning about the outgroup appears an essential step in this process. Tilly's social boundary mechanisms shed a more in-depth light on the experiences of the participants. In order for the mechanisms to be set into motion so that boundaries are deactivated and erased, in which Allport's conditions of intergroup cooperation and common goals are essential, different groups need to meet: the mechanism of brokerage. Thus, CSOs take on the role of bridge-builders.

On a practical level, this case study has provided an in-depth understanding of how the dynamics in which CSOs work, namely societal segregation and political apathy, impact their work. In response to the plea of Paffenholz and Spurk, this thesis has revealed the factors that can potentially lead to a deterioration of an enabling environment. On the level of societal segregation, the absence of public places for people from different confessions to meet hinders long-term reconciliation beyond the scope of the project. Likewise, community resistance to the initiatives can deteriorate the enabling environment, as low levels of trust in NGOs is apparent in certain communities. However, in many cases the suspicion fades away after trust has been established between the community members and the CSO – a process that takes considerable time and effort. Political apathy, on the other hand, also gives rise to several concerns which mainly centre around opposition by local political actors to the work of CSOs. Yet, two worrisome developments stand out for its detrimental effect on the achievements of the programmes: the recruitment of vulnerable youth by radical (religious) groupings and the outbreak of hostilities that may undo the positive effects of the reconciliation projects.

5.1. Discussion

Three of the contact conditions as laid out by Allport's Contact Hypothesis, namely that of equal status, intergroup cooperation and common goals, are either explicitly or implicitly part of a vast majority of the programmes. These conditions serve as the *means* through which the CSOs hope to stimulate dialogue and to bring about the attitudinal or ideational changes. As the findings show that CSOs are able to create a facilitating space for reconciliation, these conditions indeed appear to facilitate a successful contact situation.

Allport's fourth condition, that of institutional support, requires more attention. This study has revealed the sensitivity of the topic of reconciliation, and the fear of uncooperative local authorities to lose their base of support through reconciliation initiatives. As such, the difficulties experienced by CSOs in implementing their projects often centre around a lack of support from local political or religious actors. While academic research pointed out that Allport's contact conditions merely act as facilitating rather than essential conditions (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006), the findings lead me to argue that institutional support seems to be an essential prerequisite for programmes to bring about a positive change in relations that are sustained beyond the realm of the project and that can trigger community-inclusive reconciliation. Hence, I agree with Omach, who argues that "Engagement by the state is therefore vital. Lack of commitment and repression by the state constrains and undermines civil society activities" (2016:16), a process pointed out by several CSOs.

Yet, the reconciliation-oriented initiatives based on the premises of the Contact Hypothesis face several constraints that can be traced back to the very design of the programmes, as observed by Cornell (1994). One of the design limits within the sphere of influence of the organisations themselves is whether they target the participants that would benefit most from the programmes. While several organisations work in poverty squares and areas where tensions are tangible, some organisations focus mainly on university students. My observation is that those most in need of the reconciliation-oriented projects are not found in universities. While it is a challenge to include a more prejudiced individual in the contact situation, an issue raised by Everett (2013), I would advocate for a more active recruitment strategy and the establishment of vulnerability criteria that can guide the selection procedure of these CSOs in the future.

This study also analysed the process of attitude change through Pettigrew's four interrelated processes and Tilly's social boundary mechanisms. It appears that Pettigrew's processes serve as an overview of the *stages* people go through in the process of attitude change, whereas Tilly's social boundary mechanism approach, although it should be noted that hardly any empirical evidence is

available on these crucial mechanisms, dives more into *how* exactly adversarial and antagonistic relations are erased and redefined. These mechanisms thus constitute the change.

While each author's distinct perspective adds valuable insights, the approaches are interconnected in some respects. The findings emphasize Pettigrew's process of learning about the outgroup as an essential step. Projects allow participants, sometimes for the first time, to meet with people from other religious or ethnic backgrounds and base their ideas about 'the other' on actual experiences rather than mere prejudices. This process can be directly linked to Tilly's mechanism of brokerage, as CSOs have the ability to facilitate the interaction between groups or sites from different religious or geographical areas that were previously unconnected. When combining the two lenses, common goals, intergroup cooperation and intergroup learning are indispensable elements for the mechanisms of boundary deactivation and erasure to be set into motion and, thus, for contact to transform the antagonistic and adversarial relations into more positive relations.

This brings us to the last question: how to evaluate the work of the CSOs? Orjuela (2003) pleas academics to focus critically on the impact of small-scale activities and its link to the wider conflict context. Yet, given the fact that CSOs in the field of peacebuilding take on a task the Lebanese government neglects from doing, as political actors are indifferent and apathetic towards reconciliation, it is necessary to sketch a realistic picture of the impact CSOs can achieve through their programmes in light of the enabling and constraining factors that CSOs face. Due to the difficulties in attaining institutional support that several CSOs have experienced, the indifferent attitude toward reconciliation on the political level, the societal segregation, and the social and psychological barriers that at times give rise to resistance in communities towards reconciliation-oriented programmes, it is the impact the programmes have on the participants that should be evaluated. As Cornell argues, "the only real criterion for assessing programs of intergroup contact is the extent to which they achieve their goals," (1994:31) referring to the goals set by CSOs in their project proposals. I therefore agree with Lemish that "the primary accomplishment of the Contact Approach in plural societies is that [...] meetings [between groups] take place" even if this means that the conflict itself is only superficially changed by these encounters (1986:19 in Cornell, 1994). In line with Cousens and Kumar's observation (2001 in Omach, 2014), this research indicates that CSOs are indeed the actor that can facilitate those encounters, serving as a bridge-builder between antagonistic groups in Lebanon.

5.2. Further research

- As this research covers a single research episode, I was unable to observe the changes in attitude over a longer period of time. In order to conclusively establish a link between the

approach of a reconciliation-oriented programme and the change in the attitude of the participants, further research could track the attitudinal changes of the participants, starting with a baseline study, moving to a mid-term, final and post-programme evaluation. A proper monitoring and evaluating system would enable the researcher to establish such a link.

- Further research could also be dedicated to a comparative study on the different approaches utilized by CSOs toward interpersonal reconciliation in order to assess the impact and effectiveness of the programmatic content of each of the initiatives separately, rather than addressing the general question how CSOs seek to further the process of interpersonal reconciliation which was the focus of this study.

- To address the wider impact of the reconciliation-oriented programmes, a study should address whether the positive experiences between the participants in the contact situation are extended to their communities. And if so, how does this process work when people have not been part of the contact situation themselves?

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7. Appendices

7.1. Description of CSOs involved in the Research

- Adyan

Since its founding in 2006, Adyan has established four departments – Cross-Cultural Studies, School education on Coexistence, Solidarity, and Media - through which its programmes are implemented. Its mission is to work on "valuing religious diversity in its conceptual and practical dimensions, and on promoting coexistence and diversity management among individuals and communities, on the social, political, educational and spiritual levels," thereby "fostering peace, social cohesion and spiritual solidarity." In this research I focused on the Alwan School Program for Education on Inclusive Citizenship and Coexistence, which brings together youth clubs from different religious and geographical areas. (http://www.adyanvillage.net/).

Persons interviewed: Director Nayla Tabbara, Program Coordinator Mayssam Imad and Community Outreach Coordinator Nagham Tarhini, Beirut, 13 April 2016.

- Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation

DLR's approach is "finding common ground based on reconciliation and inter-religious dialogue," by "building dynamic bridges to connect and co-opt all factions of society to the wider population." Its main programme is the Interreligious Academy. DLR also organizes events through universities and schools that foster reconciliation and inter-confessional dialogue, since the NGO was officially launched in 2011. (http://dlrlebanon.org/)

Person interviewed: Accountant Talal Zeidan, 27 April 2016.

- Development for People and Nature Association

DPNA's mission is "to empower, mobilize, and enable citizens to change and meet the needs of the communities, as individuals and/or groups, specifically the marginalized communities in rural, bordered, and poverty areas, through human rights based approach." In the Better Together project, which I used as a case study in this research, DPNA was Search for Common Ground's local partner in the South. The programme aimed at establishing respectful and empathetic relations and trust between Syrian refugees and Lebanese Host communities. In four areas in the South - Saida, Tyre, Jezzine and Nabatieh - a summer camp was organized for the youth, and the participants came together for activities and community events for six months thereafter (http://www.dpna-lb.org/).

Person interviewed: Project Manager Elisa Shamma, Beirut, 14 April 2016.

- Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue

FDCD's strategic plans aims at "Creating spaces of dialogue and understanding for people of different faiths, ethnicities and nationalities to break down barriers of mistrust and create bonds of peace," through its peacebuilding and conflict resolution programme and its citizenship and human rights programme (http://www.fdcd.org/)

Person interviewed: Programme Officer Fadwa Ghaddar, 18 May 2016.

- MARCH

"MARCH's mission is to educate, motivate, and empower citizens to recognize and fight for their basic civil rights, raise a tolerant open Lebanese society in order to foster diversity and equality and reach a genuine reconciliation among the various communities." This research focuses on MARCH' initiatives in Tripoli, namely the play that resulted in the documentary "Love and War on the rooftop – A Tripolitan Tale," the play "Clashes of Laughter" and the Cultural Cafe (https://www.marchlebanon.org/)

Person interviewed: programme Coordinator Farah Wahab, Beirut 17 March 2016; Trainer Khaled Merheb and participants Tarek (26), Youssef (21), Taha (15) and Omar (15), Tripoli, 19 April 2016.

- Offre Joie

Offre Joie's values of love, respect and forgiveness guides the NGO's work since it was founded in 1985. It brings volunteers from all confessions in Lebanon together "to promote unity and solidarity across social and religious barriers." Offre Joie's activities include camps, rehabilitation actions, trainings and civic demonstrations (http://www.offrejoie.org/).

Person interviewed: Activities Coordinator Marc Torbey el Helou, Beirut, 18 May 2016.

- Palestinian Human Rights Organisation

The PHRO, established in 1997 and based in the Mar Elias Refugee Camp, "is devoted to the promotion, protection and defense of the Human rights of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon and the wider MENA region." Through its dialogue activities, it aims at addressing the gap between Palestinian Refugees and the Lebanese host community (http://www.palhumanrights.org/).

Person interviewed: Board Member Raji Abdel Salam, Beirut, 24 May 2016.

- Right To Play Lebanon

Right To Play uses the transformative power of sport and play to work on three main areas which are critically impacting the development of a child: quality education, health practices and peaceful communities. In the peaceful communities pillar, the Sports and Humanitarian Aid project funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in partnership with War Child Holland, UNICEF and the Royal Dutch Football Association, brings Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese youth together through football (http://www.righttoplay.com).

Person interviewed: Country Director Elias Ayoub, Beirut 23 March 2016.

- Search for Common Ground

SFCG started working in Lebanon in 1996 "to distil such tensions and breed norms of coexistence through participatory programs and socially-conscious media." Through its transformative approach to conflict, SFCG worked with its local partners DPNA and the Lebanese Organisation for Studies and Training on the 'Better Together' project, which serves as a case study in this research. (https://www.sfcg.org/lebanon/)

Person interviewed: DME Coordinator Morgane Ortmans, Beirut, 1 April 2016.

- Unite Lebanon Youth Project

ULYP was founded in 2010 to "propel a paradigm shift in Lebanon from a nation that is divided along religious, political, socio-economic, and ethnic lines to one where people can co-exist, unit and work together for a better future" Through its programmes it gives underprivileged Lebanese and refugees from Syria and Palestine access to quality education (http://www.unitelebanonyouth.org/).

Person interviewed: Conflict Resolution Trainer Ali Haidar, Beirut, 17 May 2016.

7.2. Topic Guide

Introduction

1. Personal introduction + Aim of research

2. Position of interviewee?

3. How would the interviewee define the process of reconciliation?

4. Why is there a focus on reconciliation in the projects? Why is it deemed important?

How does the physical and psychological segregation of the population along confessional lines affect and impact the interpersonal reconciliation efforts of CSOs on the community-level?

5. How would the interviewee describe the relationships between the various religious and ethnic groups that the organisation is active in?
    o high/low degree of contact or interaction?
    o warm/cold relations?
    o Negative/positive contact?
    o high/low level of animosity?
    o high/low level of trust?

6. Do you agree with the statement that the local population is physically and psychologically segregated along confessional lines?

7. How would you describe the degree of peaceful co-existence between various groups?

8. What are the main issues that form a barrier between the different ethnic and religious groups?

9. How does the physical and psychological segregation hinder the process of reconciliation?

10. Does the fact that the CSO is located in Hamra/Achrafieh/..., which is a mixed and liberal neighbourhood, affect the way the Lebanese society is perceived by the CSO?''

11. How are CSOs viewed by the local population?

How do CSOs utilize means such as inter-confessional dialogue, formal and non-formal peace education and joint projects to contribute to the building of positive relationships between former adversaries?

12. Through which programmes does the CSO try to contribute to the process of reconciliation?

13. Why is [education] [dialogue] [joint projects] considered the key to success?

14. What is the   ....   of the organisation? Why is the focus on that?
    ✓ Target group
    ✓ Target area
    ✓ Target level (local, regional, national)

15. Is there a focus on the following in the programme?
    - ✓ re-humanization
    - ✓ traumatic events in the past
    - ✓ healing and forgiveness
    - ✓ creating trust

16. Why did the organisation choose to bring people from different groups together in order to facilitate reconciliation?

17. Is the approach within the programmes confrontational (emphasize the conflict and power relations to raise awareness) or non-confrontational (the co-existence model promotes tolerance and understanding)?

How do CSOs contribute to a change in attitude in order to overcome the antagonistic and adversarial relations constructed during conflict?

18. How have the traumatic events of the past influenced the identity of the people?

19. Is the war part of peoples' identity?

20. Is there something such as a Lebanese identity? Or do people often reconcile communal identity with national identity?

21. Does the CSO attempt to address misconceptions, prejudice and stereotypes towards the other group of its participants? What does it try to change about the societal beliefs?

22. Is the encounter during the duration of the project sufficient to change their attitude towards the other group beyond the contact situation?

Outcome?

23. What impact do the programmes aimed at interpersonal reconciliation have on the participants? Is a change in behaviour or attitude visible?

24. How does the CSO evaluate the impact of its programmes?

25. How is ensured that the lessons learned during the project have a sustainable impact on the lives of the participants?

26. How are changes in attitude/beliefs extended to the wider context? Is the community involved in the projects?

27. Are communities generally willing to participate in the projects? Have you encountered any resistance?

28. Are influential actors at the grassroots level involved in the projects?

29. Does the CSO cooperate or coordinate with other organisations in field or with local actors, such as political leaders or religious institutions?

How does the lack of official top-down political reconciliation affect and impact the interpersonal reconciliation efforts of CSOs on the community-level?

30. According to your knowledge, what is currently being done on the national level to further reconciliation?

31. Is the political context considered a hindering or enabling factor for the process of reconciliation? How does it affect social bonding between groups?

32. What are the difficulties CSOs face with regard to the national context? How does this affect their work?

33. What should be the role of the state in fostering reconciliation in a post-conflict context?

34. Is there any sort of cooperation, contact or support between the CSO and the government?

35. Is the CSO financially supported by the state?

36. Does the CSO take on a advocacy role vis-á-vis the authorities to bring the issue on the political agenda?

37. Do you agree with the common held view that in order for reconciliation to be effective it should be top-down and bottom-up simultaneously?

7.3 Adyan Participants' Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

ALWAN CLUB AND YOUTH NETWORK EXPERIENCES

Name:

Age:

1. How would you describe the relations between the various religious and ethnic groups in your hometown or region in terms of:
   o Homogenous or heterogeneous population
   o High/low degree of contact or interaction
   o Warm/cold relations
   o High/low level of animosity
   o High/low level of trust

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Given your own experiences, do you agree with academic research that defines the societal situation in Lebanon and its population as physically and psychologically segregated along confessional lines?

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Did your high school offer you education on subjects such as peaceful co-existence or inclusive citizenship outside of the Alwan Club? Do you agree with the (absence of a) curriculum?

_____
_____
_____
_____

FOCUS OF RESEARCH

This research seeks to shed light on the role Lebanese Civil Society Organisations can play in the field of interpersonal reconciliation. Through the lens of inter-group contact theory several community reconciliation programmes are researched. In this regard, I have placed my research in a post-conflict political context where top-down reconciliation efforts are not or rarely pursued and a local environment where the population is often physically or psychologically segregated along confessional lines. The research so far centred around interviews with representatives of CSOs, the analysis of project programmes and a special focus on the constraints the CSOs face in their work. This research is, however, not complete without the experiences of the participants to create a complete picture of the effect of the programmes.

4. In what way did the Alwan programme and its focus on religious pluralism, citizenship and coexistence add new perspectives to your own perception or views?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Which other Alwan Club was your club linked to for the inter-club activities? What were the differences in term of geographical or religious background? Did you ever visit that part of the country before the programme?

_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Did the inter-club activities that you participated in change your perception of people from different religious and geographical backgrounds in terms of e.g. a reduction in prejudice or an increase in knowledge about their ideas and beliefs?

_____
_____
_____
_____ ____

7. Do you recognize one of the following impacts as a result of the Alwan program?

Impacts / response	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Learning about other religions and geographical areas in Lebanon	5	4	3	2	1
Change in behaviour towards and perception of people from other backgrounds	5	4	3	2	1
Developing friendships with people from other backgrounds	5	4	3	2	1
Reconsidering your own group's attitude and behaviour towards other groups	5	4	3	2	1

Please clarify your answers given above:

_____
_____
_____

8. How did your parents and immediate surroundings initially respond to the idea of the Alwan programme and its focus on religious diversity, co-existence and collaboration with different regions and communitarian affiliations? Have you noticed any change in their stance as time passed?

_____
_____
_____
_____

9. How are you currently promoting the values of Adyan within the Youth Network? Do you feel you are making a sustainable contribution to the work of Adyan? If so, how? If not, why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

10. Do you believe your participation in Adyan's programmes made a sustainable impact on your life?

_____
_____
_____
_____